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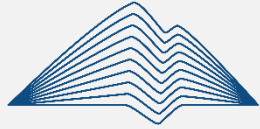
Migration Impact Assessment to Enhance
Integration and Local Development in
European Rural and Mountain Regions

# 13 ACTION RESEARCH REPORTS

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

# 13 Reports on

# Action-Research Results

# in Each Case Study

## Deliverable 5.3

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# Contents

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# Introduction

**Authors**: Andrea Membretti and Monica Gilli

This report presents the results of participatory action research (PAR) conducted in the 13 MATILDE regions between mid-2021 and early 2022, focusing on TCNs integration paths and on the role of migrants within processes of local development in rural and mountain areas of Europe. In each country, activities took place under the coordination of the Local Case Study Working Group, with full involvement of local stakeholders and good media coverage in most cases.

For each of the 13 case studies presented, the authors introduce the objectives of the local action research, then identify and describe the actors involved (focusing on TCNs), the type of activities actually carried out and the main outcomes achieved, considering also the impact in terms of change eventually produced (e.g., new perceptions and representations about the role of migrants, self-consciousness of TCNs with respect to their contribution to local economies and societies, etc.).

Particular attention is paid to the reflexive analysis of the participatory research tools used (referred to MATILDE Toolbox) and how they have been modified and adapted to the needs of the territorial contexts investigated (for example, to respond to the challenge posed by the pandemic or to face peculiar local challenges).

The national reports presented here should be read in relation to their being place-sensitive and contextual: in each case study, in fact, the research tools used and the approaches adopted constitute a particular territorial declination of the broader heuristic and conceptual approach developed by MATILDE since WP2. Moreover, each case study has been focusing on peculiar thematic issues, specifically relevant at local level, with respect to local economy, society and territory, in relationship to the phenomenon of international immigration.

Case studies here discussed are located within regions where local partners operate, and thus action research activities rely on their expertise and connection with local stakeholders. WP5 action research activities have explored socio-cultural perceptions and representations about the local impact of migration while, at the same time, their goal was to involve local communities (and TCNs in particular) towards new social consciousness and possible paths of change. National

reports stress how territorial differences influence these representations of the migratory phenomenon, while attention is paid to how these perceptions are constructed and reproduced through time by different social groups of migrants and of locals.

# Austria: Vorarlberg:

## The potential of local structures for social integration

**Authors:** Ingrid Machold, Lisa Bauchinger, Thomas Dax, Caroline Manahl und Magdalena Hörl

# Summary

The case study of Vorarlberg aims to better understand processes and patterns of social integration with regard to forced migrants and local inhabitants at the example of three selected rural and mountainous municipalities in the southern part of Vorarlberg. The main interest lies in the identification and analysis of local structures and their potential to enable and support social integration activities. To gain a comprehensive picture both perceptions of local actors of the receiving society and those of forced migrants living in these municipalities have been included. Local structures offer a variety of opportunities to promote the establishment of social contacts, while in each municipality initiatives, offers and networks developed differently. However, across all differences the foundation of almost all activities of social integration is voluntary work. Activities for forced migrants are based on voluntary work regardless of their primary aim or background, while social integration processes of forced migrants are heavily influenced by timing and the status of the asylum procedure.

# Description of activities

## Case Study objectives

The case study of Vorarlberg aims to better understand **processes and patterns of social integration** with regard to asylum seekers and refugees (in the following sections named forced migrants), and local inhabitants at a municipal level (OECD 2018). The main interest herein lies in the identification and analysis of **local structures and their potential to enable and support social integration activities**, including municipal offers, activities of associations and voluntary work/civil society engagement. It aims to identify specific challenges and needs of rural municipalities as well as to reflect on opportunities of social integration processes by answering questions of how, and in what way contacts and social relations between forced migrants and locals are established and maintained, how these structures meet the needs and expectations of forced migrants and local actors alike, and how local structures of social integration impact on the integration of forced migrants in other domains (such as employment, housing, education and health). The time frame was set on 2015 and the years after, however integration activities before 2015 were also included in the analysis if they are relevant for present perceptions and activities of local actors.

Based on the project's selection criteria (D5.2) and in consultation with the local case study working group[1] three rural municipalities with distinct socio-economic and territorial characteristics and different experiences with the influx of TCN in the southern part of Vorarlberg were selected as focal points of this case study:

The three municipalities show quite distinct characteristics with regard to their territorial features and the socio-economic characteristics leading to different background settings for local

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[1] At the time of the selection, the local case study working group consists of participants from the research partner, the local project partner and the coordinator for refugee integration in the southern part of Vorarlberg.

structures of social integration. The municipalities may shortly be characterized in the following way[2]:

- A vital market municipality with an industrial history in close proximity of the district's capital Feldkirch, with about 6,500 inhabitants (Frastanz)
- A small mountain village of less than 1,000 inhabitants (Innerbraz)
- A small market municipality dominated by tourism, representing the 'centre' of a mountain valley, with about3,900 inhabitants (Schruns)

To include both, the perceptions, experiences and actions of the local actors and of forced migrants living in these municipalities, a twofold approach was pursued:

- An **analysis of the local structures of social integration** in each municipality, visualized by an institutional mapping of local initiatives and institutions.
- An **analysis of the integration pathways of forced migrants** focussing on relevant steps of integration and important contact persons by way of social mappings with forced migrants. Questions like how do forced migrants perceive their life worlds, their relationships within the community, their access to resources and their agency, were of particular interest.

Access to the field of enquiry was pursued via the snowball method, which is very suitable for identifying networks, relationships and prevailing mechanisms of social inclusion. We identified the mayor of each municipality who were briefed on the aims and intentions of our action research activity as initial contact person. The mayors in turn provided a first set of information on community activities and identified a range of relevant local actors. Starting from these contacts we tried to capture the most relevant nodes of actors and relationships for refugee care and support at local level, bearing in mind that the wealth of support activities by local volunteers we could not include in our action research activities. When mapping the different local actors in each municipality the time dimension was an important factor, because particularly in one of the

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[2] Detailed information about migration history, existing conditions, activities and future challenges of these three municipalities in relation to the specific research topic has already been delivered in D5.2.

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municipalities (Schruns) an important network already started in 2004 affecting still present activities.

To reach forced migrants of the observed municipalities (or at least living there during their asylum procedures) we asked local actors for suitable contacts. Only when local actors were willing to arrange those links to forced migrants we were able to contact them and arrange a meeting to do the social mapping exercise.

## Timing and main activities performed

To analyze processes and patterns of social integration of forced migrants - a number of qualitative methods were applied in order to capture a broad picture of integration activities. Table 1 gives an overview of all research activities in WP 5 in a timeline.

| Stage | Time (months) | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | August 2021 | September 2021 | October 2021 | November 2021 | December 2021 | January 2022 | February 2022 |
| Institutional Mapping | X | X | X | X | X | X | |
| Social Mapping | | | X | X | X | X | X |
| Case Study Working Group | | | | | X | X | X |
| Internal Reflection Group | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Report writing | | | | | | X | X |

**Table 1: Time table of research activities**

Action research activities were started through a process of institutional mapping of relevant actors and initiatives of social integration. This included interviews and focus group meetings with local actors in each of the three selected municipalities in order to identify relevant activities provided at local level, especially those that were initiated in 2015 and afterwards.

Based on existing knowledge of the local partner "okay.zusammen leben", we grouped the local structures in three categories:

- Municipal services at community level, led or accompanied by professionals, and often supported by voluntary work

- Associations, not necessarily linked to integration activities but with refugee engagement
- Actions and initiatives by volunteers/civil society actors in the context of forced migration

Table 2 provides an overview of local institutions and actors relevant engagement for forced migrants observed through our action research activities, which is by no means an exhaustive list of activities.

| | Frastanz | Innerbraz | Schruns |
|---|---|---|---|
| Municipal services at community level, often supported by voluntary work | - Low threshold German lectures for women<br>- Family guide (Familienlotsin)<br>- Former neighborhood aid, now integration activities<br>- 'Naflahus' in Feldkirch (meeting location with several offers)<br>- Regional coordinator of refugee care | - Core team of volunteers coordinated by mayor (plenty activities, e.g. organization of festivities)<br>- Meetings at "house Klostertal"<br>- Regional coordinator of refugee care<br>- Former neighborhood aid, now integration activities | - 'Jam' (youth centre) with several offers (language and sewing café)<br>- Regional coordinator of refugee care<br>- Voluntary refugee coordinator of Schruns (organization of festivities, etc.)<br>- Former neighborhood aid, now integration activities |
| Associations, not necessarily linked to integration activities but with refugee engagement | - ATIB (Turkish Islamic Union) with clothing exchange activities<br>- Soccer club<br>- Aerobic club | - Soccer club | - Soccer club<br>- 'Kunstforum Montafon' (exhibition location, creative classes)<br>- museum of local history |
| Actions and initiatives by volunteers/civil society actors in the context of forced migration | - Sewing workshop "kultur10vorne"<br>- German Café of the Parish<br>- Bilateral accompanying | - German classes<br>- Sports activities on a regular basis (soccer, volleyball)<br>- Different activities (cooking, baking, knitting, playing board games etc.)<br>- Bilateral accompanying | - German classes<br>- Platform "we need these children"<br>- Humanity Memorial Group<br>- Bilateral accompanying |

**Table 2: Overview of local institutions and actors of social integration in each municipality**

After initial interviews with mayors of each of the three municipalities and the responsible regional coordinator of refugee integration, the snowball method was activated. Through widespread support, in total **29 local actors could be** involved in the analysis of local structures of social integration. 22 persons were interviewed individually or with their partner, and three small-scaled focus groups with seven individuals were conducted in the beginning of the process. Another two focus groups with eight individuals were conducted at the end of the action research process (in sum **five focus groups**).

These personal exchanges were essential to be able to draw a picture of the local structures. The multitude of local actors was decisive throughout the process as they acted as gate keepers who initiated first contacts with forced migrants. These contacts enabled in the second phase a total of **16 social mappings** with 25 forced migrants.

Accompanying our empirical research, we installed a **Case Study Working Group** with local and regional stakeholders. Since December 2021 two Case Study Working Groups were organized as focus group. We were able to present and discuss preliminary results of our action research and provide an outline on further intended activities during WP6 implementation. It was of key interest to local and regional stakeholders to reflect on the integration activities and structures established since the refugee crisis in 2015/2016, learn from these experiences and identify success factors for future adaptation in their work with the municipalities.

The **internal reflection group** of the scientific (BAB) and the local partner (okay) met on a regular basis to discuss concepts, methods and detailed steps in the research process. Most important aspects were the discussion about the content-related topics, the methodological approach, the selection of target groups as well as the division of responsibilities and tasks. Results of these discussion were implemented in action research activities and presented at meetings of local Case Study Working Group.

The big distance between the location of the research institute in Vienna and the case study region in Vorarlberg was an important challenge for conducting the action research. Thus, advanced planning and scheduling was extremely important, but not always feasible due to constantly changing pandemic restrictions.

# Tools and approach

Action research is based on different qualitative methods. The analysis of local structures of integration activities of each municipality was elaborated with the help of local actors using **qualitative, problem-centered interviews** and **focus groups**. Findings from these methods led to an institutional mapping exercise, which was done by the researchers trying to visualize existing structures and highlighting relationships between actors (ESPON 2018). The method of **social mapping** was used to visualize key activities and relevant contact persons for forced migrants since their arrival in Vorarlberg.

Most of the **problem-centred interviews** were carried out by two interviewers, one taking the lead role in asking questions. Interviews lasted between 45 min to 2h. All, but one interviewees gave permission of being recorded. After each interview a comprehensive protocol was generated.

**Focus groups** are a special form of group discussion, where data is collected through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher or the participants (see Kordel et al. 2021). In the case of Vorarlberg, we decided to have two types of focus group, depending on the target group and constraints by pandemic restriction measures. One type of focus group involved local actors from the same municipality talking about their past experiences of working with forced migrants. In this case we used the guidelines to ensure that all relevant topics were covered in the focus group. During lively discussions participants commented and added information to other participants inputs. This was particularly important because the active period of engagement had already taken place some time ago. It was also important to reflect their experiences as a group, since each individual perception is kind of singular. The second type of focus group involved local and regional actors and was conducted as Case Study Working Group meeting. Therefore, synthesis of project findings and conclusions for future prospects were the main topics.
The length of the focus groups was between 1,5 and 2,5 hours and took place at private homes, work places or online. The focus groups were recorded and detailed protocols were produced.

**Social mapping** is a participative method and suitable for research questions with regard to life perceptions, community involvement and agency, and access to resources (Kordel et al. 2021). In our case study work the aim of the method was to find patterns of (un-)successful social integration of forced migrants by asking them about their activities and important contact persons

since their arrival in Vorarlberg. The main reason for choosing this method was that it added visibility to the content of the interviews, allowing the relationships of the interviewees to be shown more clearly. Icons with different symbols (pictures, logos) were prepared to map activities and places in the municipality as well as all kinds of relationships (volunteers, family, friends, colleagues). Additionally, blank cards were used to add new activities and persons not yet illustrated by icons. In accordance with the interviewee the researchers placed the icons on the map.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Arbeit** | **Zu Hause** | **Schule** | | |
| **Maria Rast** | JUGENDHAUS FRASTANZ | FC KLOSTERTAL 1977 | AMS Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich | |

**Table 3: Icons with symbols of activities, places or people.**

Social mappings were conducted by two or three interviewers, if no short cut re-scheduling because of pandemic restrictions was necessary. The duration of the social mappings was between 45 min and 2 hours and took place at private homes or in semi-public places, such as the soccer club. The social mappings were recorded and transcribed.

The target group had very different knowledge of German. Some had excellent German skills and others almost none. Thus, using the visualisation has been extremely helpful. Furthermore, the visual map enabled a good structuring of the interview, both, interviewees and interviewers were easily able to return to information that had been told earlier in the interview and allowed a relaxed conversation.

## Actors involved and target group

The following table presents an overview of all persons involved during the action research process.

| | problem-centred interviews with local actors | focus groups (FG) with local and regional actors | social mappings (SM) with forced migrants | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Frastanz** | 8 individuals | | 7 SM (9 individuals) | 17 |
| **Innerbraz** | 5 individuals | 3 FG (7 individuals) | 3 SM (5 individuals) | 17 |
| **Schruns** | 7 individuals + 1 couple | | 6 SM (11 individuals) | 20 |
| **Regional level** | 1 individual | 2 FG (8 individuals)[1] | | 9 |
| **Total** | 23 individuals | 5 FG (15 individuals) | 16 SM (25 individuals) | 63 |

*[1] 3 participants were interviewed individually as well*

**Table 2: Overview of participants of action research activities**

About 35 local actors were involved in the action research process carried out in the municipalities of Frastanz, Innerbraz and Schruns. With regard to their institutional background they were either municipal or regional representatives, or active in an association, initiative or network. Most of them worked on a voluntary basis. Age classes ranged between 30-85 years with an emphasis on people in retirement. Many had a background in the social, educational or health sector. Gender relations as a whole were rather balanced with a focus on males in political representations and on females among volunteers and professionals (e.g. refugee coordinators).

25 forced migrants participated in 16 social mapping exercises. Most participants originally came from Afghanistan (9 forced migrant), the others from Syria (7), Iraq (4), Lebanon (2), Iran (2) and Ukraine (1). Almost all of them got some kind of right of abode in the meantime, mostly as recognised refugee but also through a permission to work via the red-white-red card. Two of them are already Austrian citizens and two still in the asylum procedure. Most of them live with their families. Age ranges between 19-60 years with a dominance of the 30-40 years age group. Gender relations are almost equally balanced with 14 female and 11 male participants. Nine forced migrants live in Frastanz (or have at least lived there during the asylum procedure), five in Innerbraz and eleven in Schruns.

# Setting of the activity

**Interviews**

First contacts with municipalities proofed to be quite distinct. While one municipality was excited to participate and intended to collaborate intensively on the subject, the second was indifferent and the third municipality even quite reluctant, due to restrained municipality resources. But after having convinced them about the aims and main target groups of the study, they agreed to participate and the interviewees were free to share their knowledge and contacts.

Most interviews took place in a very agreeable atmosphere, where interviewees were pleased to be able to talk about their experiences. Some interviewees became emotional when recounting particularly pleasant experiences or challenges. They appreciated to reflect on their activities and realised the amount of activities they have conducted. Some individuals showed frustration about past experiences, particularly because of the perceived lack of acknowledgement and gratitude from the regional and national level.

**Focus Groups**

In total we conducted five focus groups, two online and three face-to-face. In one focus group volunteers were rather sceptical at the beginning but explaining focus and aim of the case study eased the strain. The others were conducted in a relaxing atmosphere.

Two focus groups (one face to face, one online) were organized as case study working group meetings and therefore of a more formal character.

Modifications in the organisation of focus groups were due to pandemic restrictions. In face to face meetings, through which we want to catch the local atmosphere, appreciate the specific surroundings, and benefit from a more informal exchange, the number of participants had to be reduced considerably. The one focus group, which was organized for a larger group had to be carried out online in the end and although it was possible to develop a lively discussion the online format lacks illustrative details of local context information and informal exchange.

**Social mapping**

In most cases we were invited to the homes of the refugees or interviews took place in a semi-public place, such as the soccer club or a social encounter venue. After the official part, we were

almost always served beverages and sweets from their home countries. This post-interview exchange allowed us to continue talking in a more informal setting and gain additional interesting information. The setting was always relaxing and the interviewees were open to tell us their stories. Some interviewees got emotional when talking about challenging times in their home country or in arriving in Austria.

It was helpful to dispose of a good knowledge of local activities and structures before starting the social mapping. A thorough preparation of the icons helped to keep all specific offers in mind and enabled us to do a detailed inquiry. Furthermore, mapping slows down fast track of narrative in interviews and helps to ask specific and concrete questions.

The social mappings were not planned for a group of participants, but rather as single or double-interview of family members. In few cases also volunteers accompanied the process.

For two interviews, interpreters were involved as German skills were very basic. It turned out to be extremely helpful to have a briefing session with the interpreters before the social mapping to provide information about the project, the method and their role during the interview.

Thus, the tool was modified in order to focus on individuals rather than on a group of participants, which gave us the opportunity to learn a lot about individual key experiences and the relevance of specific contacts. Furthermore, limited German skills would not have allowed a thorough and more abstract discussion. We also used prepared icons instead of drawing them by the interviewees themselves as asking forced migrants to draw can be intimidating and hindering the flow of the conversation. Both modifications proofed to be very useful and conducive in the context of social mappings with forced migrants.

## Eventual interactions

Interpretation of interviews is also influenced by observations and eventual interactions at staying in the field. These informal "contributions" raised supplementary aspects and support understanding of life worlds of TCNs.

At the current time, we have collected photos of participants at social mappings, where consent has been given. Moreover, the local case study working group (CSWG) with stakeholders of different governance structures has been established. Hereby, an important tool was created to discuss the case study approach with local and regional key actors in the refugee field. The CSWG enables regular consulting, reflecting findings of the study and further approaches for municipalities, beyond discussions and observations in the field. It is an on-going activity, and the next meeting is scheduled for March 2022. Furthermore, a larger event with all local stakeholders and interviewees will be organised in spring of 2022. More detailed planning for this event will take place in close collaboration with the CSWG. Research activities also fit to the focus of the Federal State on "lessons learned" from forced migrants integration since 2015. The analysis of the potential of local structures for social integration hereby complements the analysis of regional labour market structures, housing development and offers of language courses.

# Main outcomes of action research: processes and patterns of social integration

The next sections give an overview of local social integration structures for forced migrants. Each municipality will be analyzed with regard to the development and maintenance of its institutions, initiatives and networks, visualized by an institutional mapping. This is followed by a more general discussion on structures of social integrations and insights from social mappings.

## Analysis of the local structures of social integration in the municipality of Frastanz

Frastanz is a small early industrialized town in the immediate neighborhood of the agglomeration of the Rhine valley. Because of its history of industrial sites, immigration of foreign citizens has been an important issue since long (e.g. guest worker immigration, forced migration of Balkan wars). During the 1990is the parish of Frastanz was already strongly involved in organizing

activities for migrants. Activities of the parish declined with the death of the former priest, however, in 2014 in expectation of incoming forced migrants, the parish initiated a meeting for volunteers with the aim to organize support measures. It started with an invitation of forced migrants of the nearby refugee accommodation centre to engage in the "house of encounter", a modernized parish center, where volunteers and refugees could meet for coffee and conversation. Hereby the "German café" has been developed, an initiative cared for by volunteers, supported by the parish, and taking place every 3 weeks until March 2020, when pandemic restrictions made such kinds of meetings impossible. Over the entire period forced migrants were individually accompanied by volunteers.

From 2015-2016 refugee accommodation in Frastanz was concentrated in a large empty industrial hall, with room for 66 individuals. After its closure forced migrants (mostly families) were spread to other apartments. During the period of concentrated refugee accommodation some activities took place, like joint cooking or baking, or the organization of a flea market. Also, the local Islamic religious group (ATIB) made space available, where, initiated by a volunteer, clothes and household goods were provided and distributed to forced migrants, which was very well received at the beginning, but ceased to exist after needs could be met. Furthermore, several female forced migrants used a well-established local sports offer (aerobic club) for free, which was offered in an uncomplicated low threshold manner.

Municipal meeting offers (such as cultural festivities, information and education offers for parents, intercultural cooking, low scale German class) have not been focused on forced migrants; though they reached some individuals (mostly women and families).

While some needs of forced migrants have been met within the municipalities Frastanz, other needs (like low-threshold meeting points) have been better met by a municipal project, the "Naflahus", in the neighboring district's capital Feldkirch, easily accessible from Frastanz. This new location and meeting point was set into action in 2016 by the city of Feldkirch. Several activities have taken place since the opening, starting with the initiating activity of the provision of clothes and household goods, which was open for all interested forced migrants in the wider area (in the beginning 50-70 forced migrants came), accompanied by the opportunity to meet at the "Monday's café" (language café), which is still ongoing on a weekly basis. Another activity which is still in place, is the "sewing workshop". In addition, children can be brought along to most of the projects, where

they are looked after by paid staff. All activities are run by volunteers, albeit supervised by the coordinator of refugee care.

Independent from these activities, an association named "kultur10vorne" established a sewing workshop, where five male forced migrants practiced sewing on a regular weekly basis. During the four years of its existence, they were quite successful in sewing more than 1.000 bags and doing several exhibitions. When the participants got regular jobs these activities ceased.
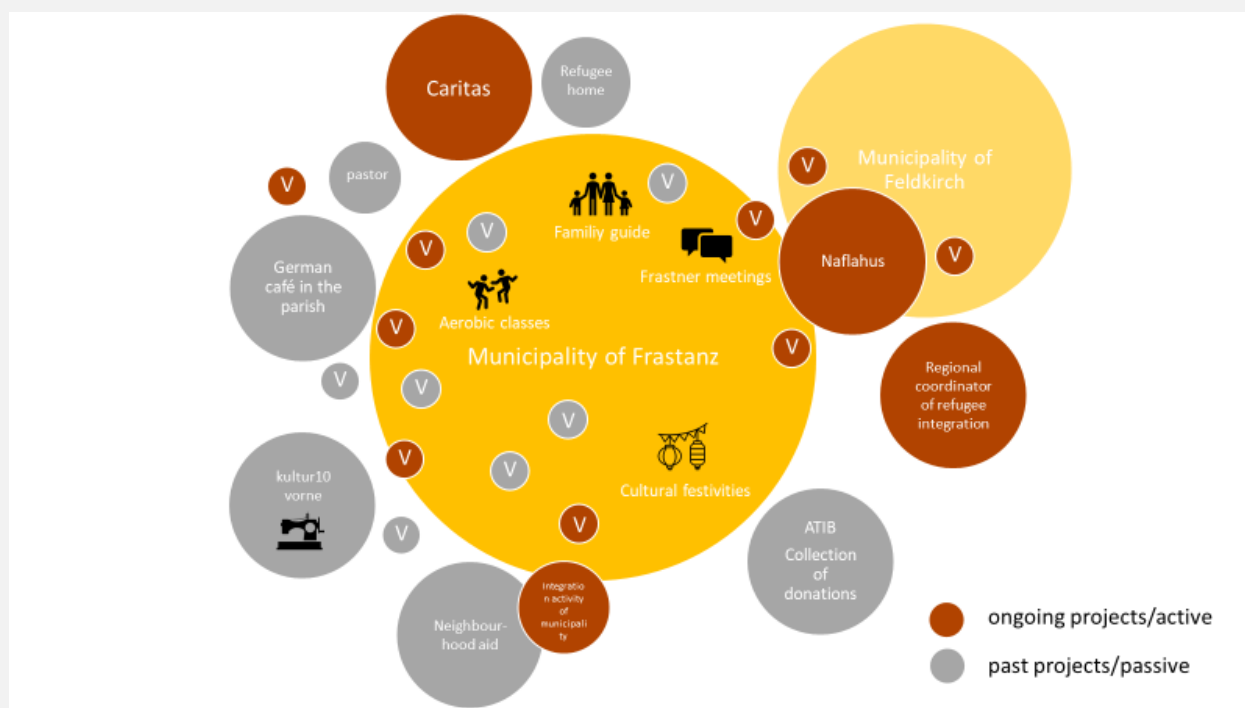


**Figure 1: Institutional map of Frastanz**

## Analysis of the local structures of social integration in the mountain village of Innerbraz

Refugee care in Innerbraz started when the first refugee home (for 11 single men) was opened in November 2014. The mayor at the time reacted very quickly to the challenge of the integration of new arrivals into the local community. He established and coordinated a team of local volunteers who developed different activities for/with forced migrants in Innerbraz in the following years. In

regular meetings this "core group" of volunteers (6-8 persons) discussed the expected needs of the incoming forced migrants and possible activities. They also introduced their group in the municipal gazette to act as contact persons for both, locals and forced migrants, for any question they may have. The mayor, as head of this group, was personally engaged and took full responsibility of the group's actions. Though he accepted that not everyone in the village was eager to offer support and that attitudes towards forced migrants within the local population were diverse. He also acted as link to Caritas (which is officially responsible for refugee accommodation and care in Vorarlberg) and to all other parties involved.

In spring 2015 a second refugee home was launched with rooms to accommodate about four families. During the peak period between 33-40 forced migrants lived in the municipality of Innerbraz, between 2014-2018 about 88 persons in total.

Activities of volunteers were extensive and developed over time, ranging from:

- <u>Provision of German classes</u>, divided into a beginner's group and an advanced group with regular classes from January 2015 to May 2018. One German class is still active now acting at a more individual basis. Also, individual learning support is still secured when required.

- <u>Offer of weekly sports activities</u> like soccer and volleyball meetings, where mostly two young volunteers played soccer with a variable number of forced migrants. Since 2017 this activity faded away, particularly due to the much lower number of forced migrants in the village. However, the local soccer club also invited interested forced migrants and made it possible to continue with sports activities..

- <u>Organisation of regular meetings</u> (at least once a month) of locals and forced migrants in the regional long-term care facility located in Innerbraz with up to 45 participants. Forced migrants and locals introduced their respective countries and values to each other. This activity was organized and moderated by the mayor.

- Organisation of various <u>festivities</u> ("multicultural Christmas" celebration, birthday parties, card game nights …)

- More <u>informal activities</u> like cooking, baking, knitting (particularly for women), hiking, repair works on bikes, playing board games etc.

- Involvement of forced migrants in <u>local activities</u>, which were partly supported by the "neighbourhood aid" or "integration activities" by the municipality. Forced migrants helped with woodworks, shovelling snow, smaller construction work, etc.

- Numerous <u>intensive personal contacts</u> and accompaniment of individual persons and families.

Since 2017 many forced migrants left the village, either to join family relatives in towns and cities (Feldkirch, Dornbirn, Vienna, etc.) or to find an appropriate job or housing facilities elsewhere. Some of them did not get asylum and had to leave the country. In 2021 one refugee home was still open, accommodating two asylum seeker families while another four families with an asylum status live in private and social housing facilities in the village.

The present mayor (as well as school teachers and other volunteers) still supports forced migrants in need, now on a more individual basis.
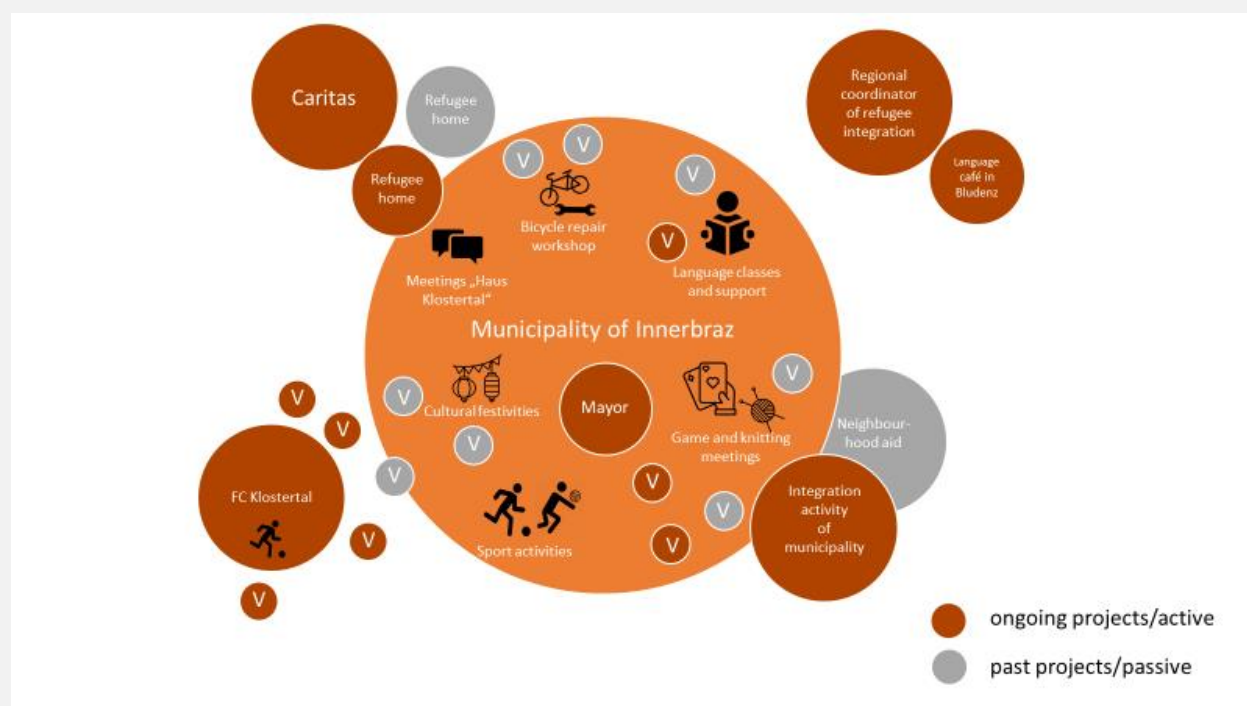


**Figure 2: Institutional map of Innerbraz**

# Analysis of the local structures of social integration in the touristic muncipality of Schruns

Schruns has had a <u>large refugee home</u> (with room for about 45-48 forced migrants), already since 2004. Communal support activities started immediately after the opening of the former hospital

for asylum seekers with German classes and festivities and further activities of volunteers like creative classes and actions (i.e. for children and mothers) were performed.

The next step of voluntary involvement took place in 2009 when the local platform "we need these children" was founded by a core group of particularly active and engaged volunteers. The main aim of the platform was therefore to inhibit deportation of well-integrated families by further supporting their integration process and the process to achieve the right of abode. The platform consisted of about 40 local stakeholders (mayor, vice mayor, parish priest, practitioners, representatives of associations, schools, kindergarten, etc.). This was the basis for contacting responsible authorities on a local and regional level (Federal state minister of integration, Federal state police department, administrative district authorities, etc.). Until 2014, the platform succeeded to get the humanitarian right of abode for all families in question (thirteen families of about 60 persons). Thereafter, the Federal state lost its competence to have a say in the process of acknowledging the right of abode, thus, the scope of action of the platform was restricted. Nevertheless, the network continues to function, albeit on a more occasional and individual level.

Some members of the platform have also been active during the so called "Sunday protests of Vorarlberg" in which local people stand up for a human immigration and asylum policy. Some activists formed a group called "Humanity Memorial Group" with a regional focus on the exchange with mayors and members of the State parliament to review and amend legal and structural framework conditions (and hindrances) of asylum seekers' integration.

In 2015, almost 100 forced migrants lived in various refugee accommodations in Schruns, about half of them in the already mentioned refugee home of Caritas. Many activities took place there, like learning support by volunteers, provision with clothes and household goods, and the provision of food by the initiative "Tischlein deck dich", an association that collects food from supermarket chains that would otherwise be wasted and distributes it to people in need.

Staff members of the refugee home have been in close contact to institutions like kindergartens and schools, the local soccer club and volleyball club, individual volunteers and neighbours. In 2015 the municipality reacted to the high numbers of forced migrants with the establishment of a voluntary refugee coordinator (performed by a male and a female volunteer). In the beginning their main work focussed on the coordination of the distribution of donations (clothes, etc.). Jointly they were contact persons of the municipality, they supported the organization of German classes and organized a yearly "festival of culture". However, the voluntary

refugee coordinator did not succeed in establishing relevant links to Caritas or other initiatives and relevant groups of local actors of refugee care.

One project assessed positively by various interviewees is the initiative "women's needle" started in 2017. The project was organized by the local youth centre with support of the voluntary refugee coordinator (by collecting sewing machines) and coordination support of the regional coordinator of refugee care. The project succeeded to reach many women with forced migration background on a low threshold. It provided informal child care and was supervised/accompanied by a staff member of the youth centre. After a Covid-19 induced break in 2020 it transformed into a women's café. The main aim is still on talking German and maintaining private networks.

The municipality has also been active in so called "integration activities", either by employing asylum seekers in the municipal's maintenance yard (Bauhof) or in the leisure facilities park of the valley, that provides sports facility offers in sports like soccer, volleyball, tennis, golf, etc. and furthermore organizes larger sports events. Particularly at the occasion of these events a lot of helping hands are needed. The responsible actor is a retiree from the municipality, who keeps close contact to the local supervisor of Caritas to recruit (young) men who are interested in such kind of work. He has also been very active as coach in the local soccer club, where he is in the executive board. In this function he supported the establishment of a soccer team called "Team International". Many young asylum seekers were eager to play soccer but were not well-practiced for regular teams. Hence, they founded an extra team where they could play (participation varied from 8 to 30 asylum seekers). The club also provided them with soccer dresses and shoes in exchange to their help at sporting events. When many of the participants were transferred to other basic care facilities in the region Team International dissolved. However, about 8-10 (young) forced migrants have succeeded to be part in one of the regular teams, and three of them work as junior coaches.
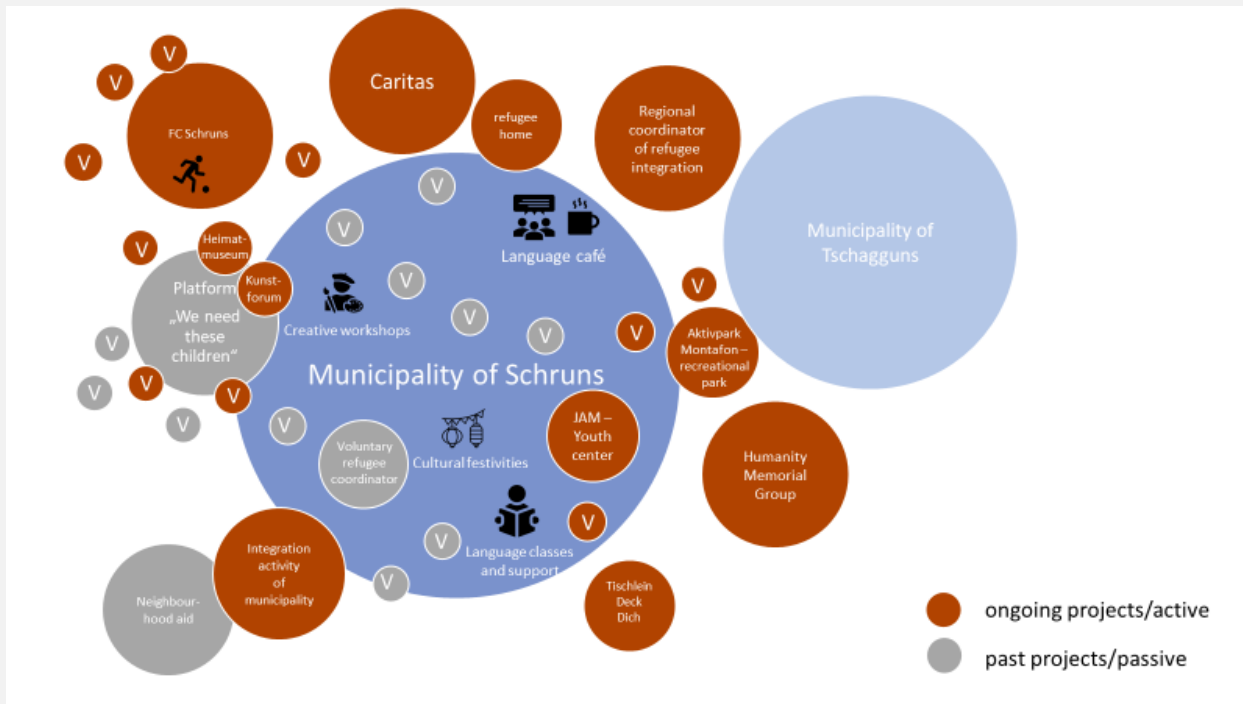
**Figure 3: Institutional map of Schruns**

# Observations on structures of social integration

The analysis of local structures of social integration in three different rural municipalities of Vorarlberg has led to a deeper understanding of the diversity of initiatives, offers, networks, etc. depending mostly on the attitude and intentions of key actors, perceived needs and institutional frameworks. Main differences occur not only due to the "institutional" background, discerning activities by municipal services, associations and volunteers (see Table 2), they also differ by the main target they pursue. The primary focus of activities ranges from **refugee aid and support** like low threshold German classes or donation of clothes and household goods, including also accompaniment of asylum seekers during the asylum procedure. Initiatives that met immediate needs of incoming forced migrants tended to end after the acute need was satisfied. Another focus lies on **initiatives to enable social contacts** and meetings particularly for forced migrants (e.g. women's needle, learning cafés) and between forced migrants and locals (festivities, meetings for exchange, like cooking, baking, sewing or cafés, etc.). The third category focusses on the **social integration of forced migrants in regular systems**, like involvement in local associations. An

interviewee underlines the importance of the integration process through low-threshold activities, such as playing soccer. It is an informal activity and there is no need for German skills.

However, across all differences the **foundation of almost all activities of social integration is voluntary work**. Activities for forced migrants are based on voluntary work, whether the activities are initiated, coordinated and supported by the municipality, based on voluntary work within associations, or formed individually in bilateral accompaniment and may have been developed into volunteer networks.

Voluntary work has a huge potential when it comes to social integration activities, but analysis reveals that **volunteers need some kind of supervision**, support and appreciation to maintain and estimate their work in a positive way, and to cope with difficulties and unfulfilled expectations. The required support for volunteers does not necessarily have to be organized in a formal setting of community or association work, as successful examples like the platform "we need these children" highlights.

Nevertheless, our interviews show that the support of volunteers by local institutions (religious institutions, municipalities) are helpful to foster activities at a long-term scale and to secure capacity for continued activities, as it was the case of the former "women's needle" group, later transformed into the "women's café". **Forming a network** of actively engaged volunteers (which does not have to be a large group) and the general **support by mayors, other influential local members or professionals in the field of asylum/integration** are key issues for longer lasting voluntary activities. The concrete activity may be terminated (due to various reasons) but the general positive attitude and willingness of volunteers to act when needed remains, as many interviewees reported.

The **impact of local structures of social integration** on other "domains" of integration is huge. In rural municipalities informal contacts are an invaluable asset particularly when it comes to job placement and housing opportunities. While the availability of jobs is also passed on by colleagues, neighbours and friends, to get an apartment seems to need more explicit advocacy by a local key actor particularly when it comes to rare and well demanded apartments of social housing. Many local actors report that such an advocacy is also helpful for getting a job or an apprenticeship place and it is absolutely necessary when asylum seekers want to take up seasonal work, which is one of the main working opportunities they are allowed to do (see also social mapping exercises with forced migrants).

During the years of 2015, 2016 and before the possibility of **"neighbourhood aid"** existed in Vorarlberg. The aim of that project was to ameliorate the exchange between asylum seekers and locals and simultaneously provide asylum seekers with a modest renumeration. The subsequent project (Caritas Vorarlberg, 2021) that aims to facilitate "integration activities" is far more administratively burdensome and is focused on small jobs for municipalities or private individuals with social need. However, during these first years of the increased arrival of forced migrants the initiative provided an important opportunity where locals and forced migrants could get to know each other. Forced migrants mostly helped in private households or gardens but also in the case of natural events (heavy snowfall, flooding, etc.). The visibility of their work was the most important feature besides having personal contact with predominately elderly locals and it contradicted the image of "being lazy" or "exploiters of the social system".

Many volunteers engaged in specific initiatives also have helped certain persons or families on a **bilateral and personal level**. These accompaniments mostly last for a longer time and include individual support with legal issues and authorities, which is needed particularly in difficult phases in the asylum procedure, or volunteers help in many other facets of administrative support, job placement and housing provision. These processes often require persistence and good knowledge of the appropriate contact points. Some interviewees expressed the wish to have a reference or key person of good legal and organizational knowledge in the municipality, where all the threads come together. Sometimes they feel exhausted by legal regulations which have been tightened in some regards over the past few years, and the complex and ever-changing administrative procedures. The **regional coordinator of refugee care** staff particularly supports small rural municipalities and volunteers in this regard, and also draws attention to the changing needs of forced migrants. Especially in recent years, when the engagement of volunteers declined these regional coordinators of refugee care were essential to keep certain local activities for forced migrants (especially for women with childcare obligations) going.

**Activities may have come to an end** because either needs of forced migrants decreased or expectations of the locals could not be met. In many cases the demands expressed at the first (big) wave of incomers simply ceased to exist, such as the need for the provision with clothes and household goods. Furthermore, forced migrants were transferred to other refugee homes or they got their right to abode and moved to another place. If they stayed in the village after recognition they mostly started a different life pattern with work duties and a family life when partners (mostly

wives with children) joined due to family reunification. Particularly in this phase social integration has an apparent **gender dimension** with males more or less integrated into work life while women being predominantly occupied with child care and having few contact opportunities to locals.

In some cases, expectations of the locals could not be met. This was particularly the case when offers have not been taken up by forced migrants (low number of visitors at festivities or in German classes, etc.) or its appreciation by forced migrants have not met the expectations of the local provider due to cultural misunderstandings. In such cases mostly incomprehension and frustration of the locals prevailed, particularly when volunteers had no respective network where they could exchange and relate experiences.

Particularly initiatives that enable contacts but also low threshold German classes and other more informal exchanges were heavily hit by **COVID-19** measures ("social distancing") to prevent the spreading of the virus. Some meetings and social get-togethers were stopped completely, others were re-started between different lockdowns. While activities in the soccer clubs re-started again when pandemic measures eased, more informal structures need more time to recover (if at all). An interviewee denoted severe setbacks in social integration due to COVID-19.

## Insights from social mappings

Social mappings with forced migrants were directed to a specific group of refugees, namely to persons who have lived in the selected municipalities for at least two years, with most of them staying there after getting the permit of residence. It is of particular interest to attain deeper understanding why this group of forced migrants are willing to settle permanently in these municipalities (when many of them leave after getting their certificate). Furthermore, we were particularly interested what role local structures of social integration played in this regard. Social integration processes are heavily influenced by timing and the status of the asylum procedure. Living conditions, needs and demands differ considerably between the time of asylum seeking and the time after receiving first recognition and right of abode. Therefore, the next paragraphs differentiate between needs and demands of forced migrants' social integration processes during asylum periods and social integration with regard to forced migrants' staying orientation.

Many interviewees arrived in one of the municipalities during the high influx of migration in 2015 and 2016. At that time municipalities were highly alert to the needs of incomers and voluntary aid was offered (to varying degrees as elaborated above). Thus, forced migrants found a mostly open and welcoming attitude by locals and many offerings for social integration at this time. Activities were not pursued in the same intensity before, or after this period.

Important needs and demands expressed by forced migrants involve the following targets.

- **Learning of the German language**

During the period of 2015 and 2016 official learning structures were overwhelmed with the acute demand of German classes. In most of the refugee homes (or basic supply facilities) low threshold German classes by volunteers were established immediately after the arrival. Volunteers, many of them retired language teachers, supported forced migrants by teaching a basic set of the German language, which one forced migrant described as a "mind cracking experience". In other cases, language learning happened to be on a more individual basis, for example with a dedicated volunteer who supported a particular person for years. In these cases, a closer relationship between these persons could be established, and interviewees stress the importance of this kind of connection relevant for many circumstances. The relationship happens to be still active for most of them, albeit to a much lesser extent (not least because of the pandemic). Language cafés were often visited on a more sporadically basis, and particularly by women. The more informal setting and opportunity to exchange was not always preferred by the visitors, particularly when some certification was required. On the other hand, it was possible to restart again after periods of non-attendance (often due to illness, childbirth etc.).

- **Handling the amount of spare time during this period of waiting**

To have plenty of time and literally nothing to do but waiting for the interview, for the recognition is a difficult psychological challenge. It is even harder if forced migrants arrive without family, which was the case for many men. Offerings by local volunteers, such as sports activities or get togethers were a welcome change for incomers and deliberately used, for example in the case of Innerbraz, where many small initiatives (jointly baking, cooking, playing table soccer, etc.) took

place at that time. If forced migrants had a specific interest, like playing soccer, this was also a key anchor activity for young males, like the "team international" in Schruns demonstrates. The low threshold aerobic club in Frastanz, on the other hand, allowed women to do some exercise and meet local women. During all these activities personal relationships may be developed and maintained. Forced migrants were also looking for some kind of work or employment to make some sense of their time and be of use for the local society. This is the case for men but also for women, particularly if they do not have child care obligations. To engage in neighbourhood aid was an important activity for interviewees. Many of the interviewees also volunteered in a formal (as trainers our groundsman in soccer clubs) or informal manner (helping others with tasks in the garden or household, delivering food during the pandemic) or by offering translation skills (particularly if forced migrants knew English). The activities described were also pursued or carried out by people with a right to stay. They offered good possibilities to be active in the local community, especially when forced migrants are not yet in paid employment. In the case of the cultural association "kultur10vorne" two interviewees talked about the importance of having a relationship with locals and persons with similar background, and a weekly structure.

- **Attaining status of recognised refugee**

In some cases, the asylum procedure was exceedingly difficult and a right to abode could only be achieved through high supportive efforts of volunteers, like the case of families of forced migrants supported by the platform "we need these children" demonstrate. But besides these cases, many interviewees report that they got particular support by various volunteers, either with regard to legal advice, or accompaniment and support at interviews and other activities that put forward the asylum process (support to compile all the relevant documents, support with contact to authorities etc.). Moreover, volunteers enable forced migrants the link to local activities and to build bridges to the receiving society in many aspects of integration, which is, last but not least, important for a positive outcome of the recognition process.

- **Educational success of children**

Many forced migrants came as families and naturally the educational success of their children play a major role for their quality of life in the new surroundings. Again, informal and individual voluntary work is of crucial importance here, as well as the support of primary and secondary

school teachers. They often work hand in hand. Support includes awareness building of mothers and parents with regard to the necessities of the Austrian educational school system (e.g. stronger involvement of parents, participation in the parents' school meetings, etc.), provision of adequate learning material (for children with foreign mother tongue) and individual training with children. These activities are not restricted to the asylum process, but also of great importance during the process of maintenance. In some cases, families decide to stay in the respective municipality because of the educational support their children receive.

## Needs and demands for social integration with regard to forced migrants' staying prospects

When forced migrants get their right of abode their living conditions change considerably. After recognition they have to look for some kind of livelihood and housing as basic care provisions come to an end. In this regard relationships cultivated and maintained during their asylum process are of crucial importance during this phase of establishing their 'new existence' as recognised refugee. Particularly individual support by volunteers is often decisive when it comes to job placement, finding an apprenticeship placement and also when looking for a new apartment. Volunteers enable forced migrants to be invited to job interviews, they organize contacts to potential landlords, accompany them to authorities or exert their influence in many other ways to enable forced migrants a good start.

However, with the time being previous key contacts often lose their immediate importance and develop more towards a personal safety net. In general, this happens because of time constraints due to employment and family obligations. In our sample family reunification was an issue for some forced migrants who united with their partners (mostly wives) and children. Hence, family life and well-being for the whole family comes to the fore. This includes particularly a socially attractive neighbourhood, possibly with access to common meeting places (e.g. common gardens), where neighbours can meet at an equal footing, as well as good support in school and local integration opportunities for children. The local soccer club is often able to meet the expectations of both, fathers and sons. While male migrants tend to develop some command of the German language, women often lack contacts and language exposure due to child care obligations, child birth, skills and limited employment integration and illness periods. Most of them are not employed and have little contact and contact opportunities with locals. Thus, particularly

for women community offers like language cafés, sewing cafés or any other low threshold offer are an important possibility to socialize and practice German language in an informal surrounding, enabling also some exchange with the receiving society.



Figure 3: Example of a social mapping

# Conclusion

Local structures offer a variety of opportunities to promote the establishment of social contacts between forced migrants and the local population. Following the contact hypothesis, opportunities for interaction are decisive to counteract tendencies of polarization. In several of our interviews we heard, that the initial reluctant attitude of many locals could be mitigated particularly through enhanced visibility of forced migrants who become active in the community. 'Gatekeepers' with good relationships to networks could ease contacts to relevant positions (e.g. municipal

administration) in the receiving society: These are of high value for integration pathways of individual forced migrants, but also for the development and recognition of local initiatives. Some concluding considerations with regard to structures of social integration:

- Individual accompaniment by volunteers is valuable in "all life situations" (asylum procedure, job and housing); albeit since 2015 "community support" has also been increasingly developed. However, questions and concerns of volunteers (if necessary also further training and supervision) should be met by a professional support structure to keep standards and not to overstrain individual capacity.
- Neighbourhoods are important local "places" to make contacts. From the social mappings instructive reports about friendships appear that have developed with neighbours. The support of neighbours is also valuable in other areas (e.g. for finding housing), but first and foremost neighbours seem to meet social and emotional needs.
- In the region of Vorarlberg, associations can be found even in the smallest communities; social mappings have shown that associations have a high potential for supporting social integration (and beyond; e.g. job search). Nevertheless, adult refugees seem to dock on to associations only in a few cases. It is advisable to investigate more intensively about the inherent cultural background and reasons of this "slow" adoption of linkages, both among arrivals and locals.
- When engagement of volunteers declined in the past few years regional coordinators of refugee care were essential to keep specific local activities for forced migrants (especially for women with childcare obligations) going as well as to ensure exchange of knowledge and good practice among small municipalities.

In Austria, recently asylum seekers are on the rise again and particularly with the war in Ukraine many protection seekers are to be expected. A thorough knowledge of the diversity and relevance of local structures of social integration strengthens awareness building of regional stakeholders who coordinate and manage integration activities. The potentials of the different structures, a sensitization for strengths and weaknesses in different circumstances may be harnessed in the near future and activities in WP6 intend to support enhanced reflection of social inclusion activities and distribution of these outcomes. Simultaneously, at the local level participative action

research led to an enhanced attention and appreciation of experiences with regard to integration activities of local actors and impacts for and perceptions of forced migrants. The discussions with other participants and interviewees added insights into individual views and concerns but also stimulated the discussion about organization of future tasks and meaningful adaptation of present activities.

## List of Good practices

- Regional coordinator of refugee care
- Neighbourhood aid by Caritas
- "Third locations" for social integration

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# Austria: Carinthia

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## Summary

In the case study Carinthia with focus on the City of Villach and its rural surrounding, the CUAS team investigated with the help of action research activities the integration processes of TCNs, in particular, forced TCNs and refugees since the 1990s. These groups were also compared to high-skilled migrants, while the particular focus was on migrant women. In total, seven activities were performed. The mixed-methods approach includes participatory observations, focus groups, social & intercultural mappings, participatory photo talks, and with the help of the online tools Mentimeter and MURAL-board, sociometric, live voting and brainstorming sessions including live clustering were performed. 26.75 hours of action research activities were carried out, involving 587 people (participants and stakeholders) directly. In addition, the meeting of the organised civil society in the field of integration was the starting point for further network meetings. The results show, that the integration processes changed since the 1990s and became more institutionalized and more formal, often with fewer informal contacts to locals. In addition, while high-qualified migrants in Carinthia are supported by the CIC, refugees mainly depend on short-time funded projects and initiatives, carried out by NGOs or volunteers. Above all, the action research contributed to the empowerment of the participating women. Their voices and interests need to be heard in the future even stronger and inclusion measures have to be tailored to the individual needs.

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# Description of activities

## Case study objectives

Villach is home to 63,236 people (1.1.2021) including 20.8% non-Austrian nationals (in comparison to Carinthia with 11.3% non-Austrian nationals). Most of the foreigners have the nationality of Bosnia & Herzegovina (1,769), Germany (1,670), Croatia (1,554), Slovenia (998), and Italy (824). About the half of the non-Austrian nationals (6,193; 47.2%) are third country nationals (TCNs) (in comparison to Carinthia with 35.0% TCNs). However, only 9.8% of all people living in Villach have a TCN background (4.0% in Carinthia). The five biggest groups of TCNs are from Bosnia & Herzegovina (1,769), Syria (757), Serbia (485), Afghanistan (481), and Russian Federation (incl. Chechnya, 431) (Statistik Austria 2021). The most frequent nationalities of TCNs reflect the countries of asylum and refugee immigration of the past. Carinthia mainly accepted refugees

www.matilde-migration.eu

during the 1990 Balkan wars and most recently from 2015 onwards. Hence, the proportion of foreigners rose relatively late.

In the case study, CUAS collaborated with the local partner, the integration office of the City of Villach, to investigate the integration process of two categories of mainly relevant foreign-born: long-term forced migrants who came to Carinthia especially from former Yugoslavia in the 1990s and TCNs, especially from Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq, who arrived during the last mayor in-migration of asylum seekers from 2015 onwards. A special focus of the case study was on the integration process of **women**.

The case study pursues the following **objectives**:

- to analyse the similarities and differences between the integration process of old and new refugees via a diachronic study.
- to investigate the arrival process and the actual possibilities for integration i.a. in the educational system, the labour market and society.
- to investigate the development of support services over time, formally and voluntary integration structures.
- to examine, if there is a difference in support between highly needed high-skilled migrants working in specialized (technology) companies and refugees.
- to analyse, what role origin, culture and religion play in the integration process in a predominantly rural area, and how the local population is perceived by TCNs.

From a spatial point of view, the **city of Villach and the neighbouring rural countryside** served as the study area. The investigation has been carried out via qualitative and participatory research approaches.

## Activities performed

### Overview

The following table gives an overview of the activities performed in the case study Villach between July 2021 and January 2022.

| Activity | Date, duration | Research methods | Participants |
|---|---|---|---|
| Arabesc Summer Festival | 31st Jul 2021 8,5 hours | Participatory observation, social mapping, interviews | 30-40 (5[3]) |
| Intercultural City Walk | 11th Aug 2021 2,5 hours | Participatory observation, intercultural map | 1 |
| Focus group "highly qualified women" (online via MURAL board) | 14th Dec 2022 4 hours | focus group, visualised live voting (Mentimeter), sociometry participatory photo talk , brainstorming with live clustering | 5 |
| Focus group "refugee women" (online via MURAL board) | 17th Jan 2022 2,25 hours | focus group, visualised live voting (Mentimeter), participatory photo talk , brainstorming with live clustering | 4 |
| International Migrants Day | 18th Dec 2021 5,5 hours | Participatory observation, short interviews | 470 (+19[4]) |
| Focus group "CIC Network Café" | 20th Jan 2022 1 hours | Focus group, participatory observation | 7 (+1[5]) |
| IDA – Ich und Du im Austausch | 26th Jan 2022 3 hours | Participatory observation, short interviews | 10 (+3[6]) |
| **7 action research activities** | **26.75 hour** | **9 methods and 2 online tools** | **587 participants** |

[3] 5 social mappings and short interviews were conducted.

[4] 19 stakeholders from different organisations participated in the packing action.

[5] 1 Moderator from CIC guided through the network café.

[6] 2 social workers from Diakonie and 1 interpreter Arabic/German managed the IDA workshop.

**Figure 1 – Arabesc women at their summer festival**

Due to the **cooperation of the City of Villach with the Arabesc Women Association** (https://www.facebook.com/Arabesc-Frauenverein-in-Villach-851061695011417), CUAS was invited to the Arabesc summer festival on 31st July 2021, lasting 8,5 hours in total, which opened the opportunity to perform the first action research activities. On this day, the target group consisted of:

- **thirty to forty women from Arabic countries** – mainly Syria and Iraq – and their female (and male up to then years old) children

The women met at the village hall, allocated by the City of Villach. The atmosphere was excited and an organised chaos, because there was a lot to do – cooking, decorating the room, arranging the tables, organising transport for some women. The two researchers from CUAS team participated and tried to assist with the preparing of the room and the dishes. Especially, when the celebrations and the joint dining started, the Arabesc women seemed to feel happy, and hilarious and everybody enjoyed the festival.

As agreed with the head of the association, who acted as the door-opener[7], the CUAS researchers used the festival as an opportunity for conducting action research activities. In concretely, they performed a **participatory observation** during the whole festival and set in social mapping and short interviews after the joint dining.

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[7] The term "door-opener" instead of "gatekeeper" (Sprenger 2022) is used in the Carinthian case study as a broader meaning. "Door-opener" is not only about giving access to a certain field, but is seen as an enabler who allows to achieve more than initially planned and with whom sustainable relationships and cooperation is build. The door-openers in the CUAS action research not only enabled the desired access (e.g. to the festival/women), but led to the emergence of various other joint activities that were not originally envisaged, and above all, contributed to the empowerment of the participating women.

For the role as participant-as-observant, the researchers informed the festival participants about the MATILDE project and the aim of the research, in order to make the observation transparent. In general, the observation took place in the environment, defined by the association (e.g. no men and after the official welcoming, no photos were allowed).

The participatory observation was a good choice as basis method, because there is no need to fully understand the (Arabic) conversation, but to get an in-depth understanding of the interactions and social interrelations in the group. However, the *three phases of conducting observation (Spradley 1980) were not passed*, due to the fact that the festival was a *one-time event*. In order to validate the observation, short interviews were conducted. The dilemma of proximity and distance was avoided at its best, because both researchers wrote an observation note in detail based on a prepared template including agreed topics and focus (e.g. arrival in Carinthia, social networks, support systems, being women/mother, emancipation) and reflected the observation together, afterwards.

Following the joint dining, the researchers tried to use the **social mapping** as a tool of action research. Due to the *context* and to avoid the disadvantage that a *level of confidence* is requested, the researchers *prepared a map of Villach* and a *net diagram* to let the women insert their most important relations to their social network. Unfortunately, it was not possible to do the mapping in the group, because of language issues and the sound level. Instead, the researchers focused on one woman each. The net diagram was used for a social network analysis. So, with a map and a net diagram per woman and "continuous note-taking" (Spenger 2022a), the researchers got an in-depth inside in the women's life in Villach and the challenges they face. In addition, the map and the net diagram were used as an *"ice-breaker"* (Kumar 2007) for short interviews.

The conducted **short interviews** were narrative interviews, that focused on the social map topics, which standardize the interviews, too. They were not recorded, but notes were taken. In total, five social maps and interviews were conducted (WP5ATK012, WP5ATK013, WP5ATK014, WP5ATK015, WP5ATK016).

Intercultural city walk

As one case study focus was also on the economic integration of migrants, the CUAS research team undertook an intercultural walk together with a representative of PIVA. Due to their work

(see 5.3.2.), PIVA knows very well about the social and economic integration process and life of migrants in Villach and **based on previous cooperation between PIVA and CUAS**, CUAS researchers contacted them. The intention was to conduct a **participatory observation** together with WP5ATK003 with the aim to create an intercultural map of the inner city of Villach. On 11th August 2021, the researchers walked together from shop to shop and restaurant to restaurant with the PIVA representative for 2,5 hours in the inner city, while WP5ATK003 gave background information, e.g. who is the owner, which nationality they belong to, what their enterprise is about, etc. The target group were

- **self-employed TCNs in the inner city of Villach.**

The researchers took the role as participant-as-observant and immerged into the everyday life of self-employed shop or restaurant owners with migrant background. Knowing that the field notes do not entirely represent the reality and are filtered by the researcher's presumptions, two researchers participated, took notes and reflected the observation together afterwards. Intentionally, the intercultural city was the first phase as described in Spradley (1980), the descriptive observation.

The further phases of observations were intended to be participatory observations in the shops or restaurants with short interviews with the owners, to get a more in-depth understanding of their relationship to the city of Villach and its people, about their life as entrepreneurs and about their future perspective. Unfortunately, these *interviews were cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions*.

*Adapted from the* **mobility map**, CUAS with the help of PIVA's expertise drew a map of the migrant led shops and restaurants the inner city of Villach. Hence, it hasn't been the migrant entrepreneurs themselves, thinking/drawing about their life worlds, but WP5ATK003 acted as *representative of PIVA's*



**Figure 2 – intercultural map of the inner city of Villach**

*clients' needs, challenges and lifeworld*. Due to the "walking observation", the *intercultural map was drawn afterwards and instead of a recording, notes were taken*. Nevertheless, the output of the observation, the intercultural city walk, was an **intercultural map** of the inner city (see fig. 2), recreated in the **MURAL-board** (via the following link, join the intercultural [City Walk Villach](#)). The findings show that many of the shops are owned and led by migrant women, e.g. a confectionery shop or an Indian fashion boutique (WP5ATK003; Klose 2020; CIC 2022a). A Syrian man, who served in a coffee shop, clarified, that he is not the boss, but his wife. She runs the enterprise, while he and their sons are employed there.

Overall, the map shows that many migrant-led shops, markets, snack or coffee bars, barbershops and restaurants exist and revitalize the "belt" of the inner city of Villach. The presence of migrant led enterprises help to revitalize vacant buildings with their enterprises on the ground floor and their flats at the higher levels. While the entrepreneurship helps them to get access to the labour market and supports their integration in the Austrian economy, their produced goods and services represent additional and new offers for the whole city.

## Focus group "highly qualified women"

On 14th December 2022, a focus group, which lasted four hours, was conducted in *online format due to the Corona restrictions*. The aim was to investigate the arrival process, the development of support services over time (formal integration structures and volunteering support offered by e.g., NGOs), the role of origin, culture and religion in the integration process in a predominantly rural province and the perception of the local population by the TCNs and vice versa.. To reach the target group of high qualified women, the CUAS researchers relied **on existing contacts build up from past projects and contacts of multipliers**, who agree to help with approaching their clients due to many years of joint cooperation. The participants were:

- **five highly qualified women,**
- **originally from Mexico, Morocco, Istanbul, Zimbabwe, India,**
- working in the fields of **human resources, social services, labour migration and sales & marketing** in Carinthia.

Different action research tools were included and adapted to the online format. Due to the *corona-related online situation*, the CUAS research team decided to design and use a **MURAL board,** which offers a *virtual whiteboard* and served as the basis for the integrated action research tools. Besides, **visualised live voting (Mentimeter),** a **sociometry**, a **participatory photo talk,** a **focus group** and a **brainstorming with live clustering** were used, which resulted in a varied and interactive process.

As an introduction to the event, the **visualized live voting tool (Mentimeter)** with the question "How comfortable do you feel in Carinthia?" was intended to achieve a smooth transition into the conversation. One out of four answer options could be chosen and the result was displayed simultaneously. In the course of the event, two more **Mentimeter surveys** with open-answer options were conducted with the questions "Arriving in Carinthia was for me…?" and "Carinthia means for me…?". The results were displayed as word clouds.

The next tool was a **sociometry.** Sociometry is generally an analysis of social groups or networks and provides information about their structure. Among other things, the influence of structural features (e.g. cohesion or social integration) on opinion-forming processes and the behaviour of group members can be studied (Diekmann 2011).

All members of the group were asked about their preference, indifference and rejection with regard to certain voting situations by asking specific questions (Schnell, Hill &
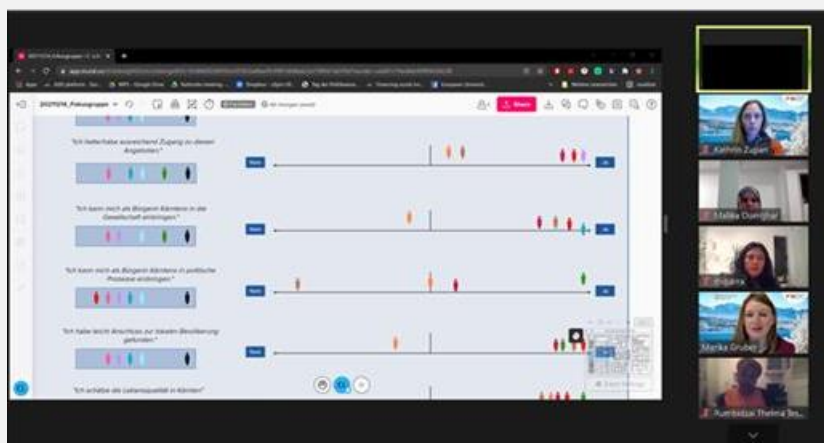


**Figure 3 - sociometry on the MURAL board**

Esser 1999). All participants and their sympathy or antipathy values were depicted on a graph (sociogram) using symbols. This method is often implemented spatially by having the people position themselves in a room.

The CUAS research team had to *move the sociogram tool from a real to a virtual space due to the COVID-19 situation.* The procedure was the following: the participants positioned themselves at the point that applied to them on the *corresponding agreement scale for certain*

*statements*. This was done by means of an *avatar on the MURAL board* (see Fig. 3). Among others, the following statements were used:

- I have consciously decided to immigrate to Carinthia.
- Carinthia is for me a province that is open to immigration.
- I have easily made contact with the local population.
- I appreciate the rurality in Carinthia.
- Being a woman: I am an emancipated woman.
- I quickly found a job according to my education.

The collected results of the **sociometry** including perceptions and experiences were then discussed among the participants, accompanied by a moderator from the MATILDE research team.

The visual method of the **participatory photo talk** was *adapted to the online format* as well. Thus, the participants were asked in advance to "pin" photographic material on the virtual MURAL board. The guiding topics were:

- Arriving in Carinthia
- Milestones in my life in Carinthia
- How I see Carinthia

The photos were then presented in the group by the respective participants, which enabled them to explain the pictures' background and to reflect on it together. The method was conceived in a mix of the "reflexive photography" (Kordel 2022) approach and the "photo elicitation" (Kordel 2022; Bignante, 2008), as the photos were taken be the interviewees and put in the context of the focus group by the interviewer with inquiries.

It was communicated that it is about sharing one's own perspective and that the photos could be removed from the MURAL board at the end of the event, as they were showing very private situations.

Finally, a **brainstorming session with live clustering** was conducted on the following topics:

- Offers of integration services
- Need for improvement
- Topics that have not yet been mentioned

The participants were able to verbalise their thoughts, experiences and associations, which were simultaneously documented by the research team. Especially with the point "Topics that have not yet been mentioned", the participants had the opportunity to mention things that had not been asked, but were still important to them. This allowed the participants to shape the research topics also to their personal interests and their daily life knowledge, about what matters most. This revealed that many more topics needed to be discussed.

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## Focus group "refugee women"

The focus group with refugee women was conducted on 17th January 2022 online and lasted 2,25 hours. The participants were **recruited through cooperation channels, e.g. the IDA project or previous MATILDE interviews**.:

- **four refugee women**
- originally from **Bosnia & Herzegovina, Morocco and Iraq**
- with currently different residence permits from **Austrian citizenship to ongoing asylum procedure**.

The structure of the focus group for refugee women was basically the same as that of the focus group for highly qualified women, except that the duration and the *tools were adapted to the needs and possibilities of the refugee women*. Due to the *online setting*, the women were again asked to fill in a **MURAL-board**, where already some methods were introduced – the **participatory photo talk** with the need for improvement of the integration processes and services and the **brainstorming** concerning integration offers. As well as with the high skilled women, the MURAL-board set the thematic frame in this focus group and guided the participating women through the focus group without losing them in the online setting. Additionally, the MURAL-board made the focus group with refugee women comparable to the one with high-skilled women, and increased the level of standardization.

For the participatory photo talk the women were asked to upload their pictures and deduced, what need to be improved concerning the arrival, the life and the support in the future, beforehand. Unfortunately, not all participating women were technically able to fill in the MURAL-board. Hence, some women sent the pictures via e-mail, which were implemented in the MURAL-board by the CUAS researchers. Besides the more abstract brainstorming, the **participatory photo talk** was

intended to get an insight in the arrival, the life and the future perspective of refugee women in Carinthia. Due to the topics over a period of time, it was kind of a ***photo-novella combined with the photo-elicitation*** due to the interviewer's inquiries (Kordel 2022; Bignante, 2008). The researchers reached a deeper understanding of the life and the perspective of refugee women through the photos and the descriptions of them. The photos were used as interventions within the focus group. However, the participants were not forced, but *invited to speak about their photos*. To introduce the participatory photo talk, the researcher team also informed about their photos added to the MURAL-board.

The **focus group** setting – even if or just because it was organised online – provided a safe environment for women from a marginalized group and empowered them as experts of their life and the different integration process stages in Carinthia. The *small group size* was set intentional, in order to *involve all participants equally and because of the emotionally charged topics*. The moderator used the topic-guide-technique to lead through the focus group, while the women filled in the content.



Figure 4 – word cloud ("Carinthia means … to me")

The first **live-voting** was used to step into the topic. The participants were asked, how they feel in Carinthia (see Fig. 4). This tool was used again as a closing, when the participants filled a world cloud "Carinthia means … to me".

In addition, **brainstorming and live-clustering** were used as participatory methods. The participants already *started the brainstorming in the MURAL-board before the focus group started*. During the discussion, one of the researchers added the brainstormed points and clustered them. The participants could directly react on their findings and further discuss different points.

International Migrants Day

On the occasion of the International Migrants Day on 18th December 2021, **different groups and associations of Carinthia (e.g. ÖIF, research group TRANS‗SPACE, SIETAR, Aarabesc Women**

**Association) collaborating with the MATILDE researchers** came together to organise a welcome event:

- for new-arriving **asylum seekers,**
- in **three asylum shelters** in Villach and the neighbouring rural municipalities:
    - smallest shelter: up to **70 male unaccompanied minors** in the age of 16 to 18 years;
    - medium-sized shelter: around **100 people**, mainly **families;**
- biggest shelter: up to **300 people.**



**Figure 11 – participants of the packing action at the International Migrants Day**

The asylum shelters are led by the Austrian Federation and intend to distribute the new-arriving asylum seekers to the shelters organised by the federal states. So, the asylum seekers are accommodated there only for a short period of time.

In order to welcome and inform them about the human rights, small presents (bonnets, scarfs or gloves, a soft drink, a cereal bar) and an overview of the human rights, translated to the most represented languages of the asylum seekers, were provided.

**19 different stakeholders from CUAS, MATILDE, City of Villach, Arabesc Women Association, SIETAR and ÖIF** attended the packing action (see fig. 4). They worked together from 9am to 2:30pm to prepare the presents.

After the packing action, the team split up to comply the conditions set by the Ministry of the Interior, which is responsible for the refugee shelters, and drove to the refugee shelters, where short interviews and participatory observations were conducted.

The main aim of the International Migrants Day was the welcoming of the refugees. Nevertheless, the participating stakeholders were aware of the MATILDE project and agreed to write short *observation logs*. Hence the **participatory observation** was unstructured and all members of the teams were "complete participants" (Mattissek et al. 2013). The situation was quite new for almost all of them and in consequence, shocking. They *reflected the situation afterwards together and exchanged feelings and findings*. The observation was enriched with at least two observation notes per shelter.

In order to validate the observations, **short interviews** were conducted in the refugee shelters. The participants talked to the refugees and the refugee worker, to get an insight in their daily life, their problems and their hopes. Especially in the family shelter, many people talked to the participants and the joining Arabesc women translated. In total, six conversations with refugees and three conversations with social workers in the shelters lasted longer. But to request them, to fill out the consent forms with the tick boxes, would *not have been appropriate in this situation*.

Focus group "CIC Network Café"

The MATILDE team from CUAS **knows about the Carinthian International Center** (https://www.cic-network.at/home/) and its integration service and support for international migrants in Carinthia, **due to previous cooperation in the MATILDE project**. They were open to further support the MATILDE project and invited the team to their regularly organised network cafés on 20th January 2022, which lasted from 6 to 7 pm. The aim of the network cafés, which is a voluntary offer, is to talk about current problems and exchange about actual issues of the CIC members. *Due to the COVID-19 restrictions at this time, the network café took place online, comprising*

- seven participants (CIC members, who are **(high -) qualified, foreign employees** from industry and training institutes, and their **families**), originally from **Barbados, Italy, Philippines and UK,**

- one female moderator from CIC.

The moderator from CIC is responsible for the communication and for consulting at CIC (WP5ATK028). Even though, the network café was organised online and in the evening, the atmosphere was positive. The moderator was able to motivate the participants to start a discussion and to talk about their problems. She took the problems seriously, but encouraged them to stay patient and positive and gave tips, how to deal with the problems.

The two participating CUAS researchers used the network café to conduct a focus group. The topics were *determined by the participants*. The moderator tried to involve all participants and directly asked questions to each of them. So, the format was *exploratory and open*, while the researchers were silent listeners and *did not involve with their questions and topics and did not choose the participants or the length*. Instead of recording and visualization, the researchers took *notes* and in addition did a **participatory observation**. Due to the described setting, the actions and reactions of the participants were not initiated by the researchers and the observation was unstructured. *The researchers were involved as participants-as-observants*. Of course, the participants were informed about the research, but they did not seem to be influenced by these circumstances in their reactions and discussions. In consequence, the researchers were able to "grasp complex issues at a glance" (Spenger 2022b). With regard to the *triangulation of focus group and participatory observation, there was no need for the three observation phases followed Spradley (1980), especially because the setting and the participants might never be the same again*.

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IDA – Ich und Du im Austausch

**CUAS and the Diakonie de La Tour are cooperating in the project IDA** (Me and You – in exchange, see 5.3.5., https://www.diakonie-delatour.at/projekt-ida). In this regard, CUAS was invited to join an IDA-workshop on 26th January 2022, to do a participatory observation. The workshop was organised in the inner city of Villach and lasted three hours. On this day, the following women participated:
- **ten women and their children** (around 10 to 15)
  - from **Syria, Iraq, Chechenia and Morocco**,
  - with different types of residence permits or stil in the asylum procedure,

- accommodated in asylum shelters or in private flats,
- two female social care workers,
- one female interpreter,
- two researchers from the MATILDE team.



**Figure 12 – IDA-workshop about healthy, self-prepared food**

Before the workshops started, the women talked to each other, the children played and the social worker prepared a small buffet. To welcome everybody, the women came together in a "morning circle", introduced themselves and told about their current emotions. The researchers also introduced themselves and explained, why they were participating. The women welcomed them – **some already knew the researchers from the Arabesc summer festival or previous focus groups**. During the workshop about healthy food (see fig. 5), the women sat around a big table in the middle, while the children were playing around them. The social workers acted as moderator and experts. Besides the theoretical and practical briefing, there was time for exchange and the women enjoyed to attend the group. The atmosphere was positive and motivated. The women wanted to share their knowledge during the theoretic part and helped together in the preparing the food.

The **participatory observation** was conducted in the everyday environment of the IDA-participants. While the participating women were quite familiar with the situation, it was new for the researchers. The *workshops were structured according to the IDA-program, but with some flexibility.* The social workers took care on the tempo needed by the women and left space for the researchers to conduct short interviews. Because of the workshop setting, it was quite easy for the researchers to take notes, which were *compared with each other after the observation.* The researchers self-reflected the observation afterwards, when writing the documentation.

At the end of the workshops, the women enjoyed the buffet together and talked with each other. The researchers took the chance to conduct **short interviews** (WP5ATK026, WP5ATK027,

WP5ATK029) based on questions about how they spend time with their children, to reach a common level of standardization. The initial question led to an *in-depth talk about the women's life in Villach*. These interviews were not recorded in this setting, but minutes were taken.

## Resulting cooperation and further actions

Due to **previous interviews and requests by the CUAS researchers and the local partner**, the MATILDE project was already well known by the stakeholders working in the network of integration services in Carinthia. Nevertheless, the WP5 activities expanded the cooperation. With the request for data provision for the D5.2, CUAS introduced the MATILDE project to the **municipal staff working in the different departments of the Villach municipal office** and to the civil society with its different **stakeholders from NGOs in the field of integration in Villach and Carinthia** (e.g. PIVA, Diakonie de La Tour, ÖIF).

On 17th September 2021, the City of Villach organised a **"meeting of the organised civil society in the field of integration"** (see fig. 6). In total, **38 people from 19 different organisations** attended. CUAS met again some stakeholders, who already collaborated with the MATILDE project,

and gained the interest of more organisations. Different stakeholders agreed to join the local case study working group and offered further cooperation. In addition, the meeting built the **starting point for further networking meetings**, which may lead to **new cooperation between the organisations**.

The **long-standing cooperation with the Diakonie de La Tour** also



**Figure 13 – meeting of the organised civil society in the field of integration in Villach**

enabled access to further focus group participants through the IDA-project, which is currently also being evaluated by CUAS. Moreover, other organisations from the network meeting organised by

the City of Villach, made **contacts to possible research participants**. In addition, CUAS also had the chance to recruit participants for the focus groups through **previous interview settings** in context of the MATILDE project.

Besides, the City of Villach paved the way for the **cooperation with the Arabesc Women Association**. The city of Villach, especially the department of integration affairs supports this (and other) association financially and promotes their events, network meetings and workshops. The cooperation of the local partner with Arabesc finally also enabled CUAS to get access and to be invited to the summer festival. During the summer festival, many members agreed to **further cooperate** with the MATILDE project. They felt quite honoured to be asked and to be seen as experts in the field of integration. The possibility to share their experiences about the integration support infrastructure in Villach and Carinthia, their life conditions, challenges and chances enabled the women to reflect about their goals in life, their wishes, their existing networks and social as well as labour market inclusion, but also about next steps which could be taken to change (improve) their living in Carinthia. In the sense of intervention research, which can be attributed to the strand of participatory action research, an interview, for example, already causes an intervention in existing structures and thus enables reflection and increases self-awareness (Köppen/Schmidt/Tiefenthaler 2020; Mangold/Tusack/Thomas 2017). Hence, the MATILDE action research helped to **empower the women participating in the case study**. CUAS participation in the Arabesc summer festival led to **further cooperation with Arabesc, such as the International Migrants Day**. The Arabesc Women Association supported the packing action and accompanied the MATILDE researchers to one refugee shelter. This was an absolute win, because the Arabesc women were able to translate and they acted as ice-breakers in conversations. According to the talks with the asylum seekers and their needs, the Arabesc association organised winter clothing and baby diapers in the next days and delivered them to the shelter. Besides the further cooperation and actions, one **main impact of the cooperation between CUAS and the Arabesc Women Association was the empowerment of the women**. The access to the association and the women would not have been possible, if the researchers had been men, because men were not allowed to join the Arabesc summer festival.

Finally, it can be summarized that the **long-standing contacts** to relevant stakeholders, which existed long before MATILDE, were **necessary to get access to the research participants**. On the other hand, the contacts built up during the action research also helped to **expand the**

**network of the research participants** (either with organisations or individuals), which in turn is very important for their social integration process.

# Main results and outcomes

## Main results of the participatory research

The case study of Villach intended to focus mainly on the **differences of the integration process** of old and new refugees and how the integration support infrastructure developed since the 1990s, with special consideration of women. Differences between the arrival of the old refugees in the 1990s and the new refugees since 2015 and between high-qualified migrants and refugees clearly exist.

The participatory action research process had shown, that the refugees in the 1990s (mainly from Ex-Yugoslavia) experienced **support** from the local population, which led to contacts lasting until today: "they have taken care of us" (WP5ATK023). In addition, they had the **chance to work** and found a job, which is "appreciated" by them (WP5ATK023). Via the work permit, they received the residence permit. In consequence, work was more important than language learning. Also, the integration support infrastructures had not been elaborated yet. Language courses for adults were not offered, while children learned the German language in school and in kindergarten. Later, many kindergartens offered language courses for the adults.

This situation is quite different to the situation refugees face today. While different organisations offer language courses for adults (due to the integration agreement), there are not enough **kindergarten places**. Just those adults get a place for their children, who work, while language courses or other trainings are not recognized as work. On the other hand, the parents can rarely bring their children with them to language courses. Some PIVA courses and the IDA meetings are an exception. In addition, the opening hours of kindergartens often do not meet the working hours of the parents. Hence, even if the integration support infrastructure has been developed since the 1990s and has become more institutionalized, other problems had arisen.

Especially, the **long asylum procedures** and the **timely-limited residence permits** put pressure on the refugees. They live in refugee shelters after their arrival in Austria. As the field trip to the asylum shelters on the occasion of the International Migrant Day revealed, the shelters in the area of Villach are located next to busy roads, where walking is too dangerous, or/and remotely, so that public transport partly only runs twice a day. The next village centres with grocery shops or medical care and specialized doctors are hard to reach by public transport. Around 300 refugees live in the container village Villach, while four social workers are employed and take care for all of the 300 asylum seekers. The fluctuation of the social workers is high and they do not need to show an adequate social education or study. Besides of the staff working in the asylum shelters, no one is allowed to enter the asylum shelters. The support and social inclusion which the refugees in the 1990s experienced in Carinthia, is not possible any more.

Despite a traumatic past, many refugees live **lightness, positivity and joie de vivre**, which they radiate and increases their resilience. Above all, they act hilarious in their female community and enjoy informal get-togethers, whether at the summer festival or at the IDA workshops. They **support each other** in daily life challenges, e.g. child care or cooking. Besides that, they accept each other and give each other freedom, i.a. with or without headscarf. Partly, fathers encourage their daughters to put off the headscarf in Austria. Nevertheless, many women incorporated that foreign men are not allowed to see them without headscarf. In consequence, they experience serenity and poise, when they are in a male-free environment, as experienced at the Arabesc summer festival. The women put off their headscarves, opened their hair and wore tight-fitting clothing and heavy gold jewellery. The result was a diverse mix of women with long and short dresses, with and without headscarf, traditional to modern dressed. Many acted conscious about their body. They encouraged each other, e.g. to dance, and laughed together. Even though the short interviews at the Arabesc summer festival or at the IDA meeting were a (linguistic) challenge for many of the women, they took the challenge courageously. It was also obvious, that the action research and the presence of researchers initiated an **empowerment** of the women. They were recognized as experts of their lives, of their integration process, the challenges they face, and the experienced discrimination. The researchers did not talk about that, but listened to them. The action research gave the women a **voice**, that should be listened to.

The women also feel empowered due to their **families and children**. They are, above all, proud of the achievements of their children. Many young Arabesc women attend schools in Austria

(partly in secondary schools) and wish to study in Austria (e.g., some mentioned civil engineering as aimed study program). Some older sons already study and work in Austria, successfully. So, the mothers focus on their families, because women have an **important and respected position in the family** and for the husbands. Nevertheless, they positively recognize, when young women are unmarried and independent.

Besides the above described vicious circle of labour market integration, integration agreement and child care, the **recognition of foreign qualifications** is problematic. This applies for all participating women in the action research – independent of the concrete type of residence permit and qualification level. Also CIC members, which are mainly high-qualified migrants, experience that their qualifications even from European countries are not recognized. In consequence, they are forced to take jobs below their qualification level and sometimes it takes years, to get their own qualifications approved. Others do not even get the chance for a recognition. Besides the time-consuming process, it is also linked to high costs. In addition, in the labour market integration support system, mainly the Public Employment Service (AMS) is not experienced as supportive by many refugees and migrants. Instead, information is passed on informally in the community. In particular, at the beginning, the information e.g. of public administration or integration services are hard to understand or are not accessible. Hence, the **informal exchange in the community** is an important channel, also because the helpfulness of the local population in Carinthia is experienced differently. WP5ATK022 explains that it is easy for the women to recognize each other and to get in contact with each other. The headscarf is the identification feature. It is a relief for them, that "of us there are a few, not only I am like that" (WP5ATK022).

For some migrants, **self-employment** is the way out of the recognition process. Many migrant-led enterprises exist in the inner city of Villach. They are run by migrants from Syria and Turkey mainly. Afghan migrants cannot afford to become self-employed, because they came to Austria impecunious and are often affected by long asylum procedures and time-limited residence permits with limitations in the labour market integration. Many of them work and are trained in the gastronomy.

In addition, they do not only work in the inner city of Villach, they also live there. It is the **main residential area**, where the whole social life – working, living, shopping, learning, child care, etc. – takes place. In addition, they wish to live central, because they do not own a car and the public

transport is limited in Villach, e.g., with regard to the offer in the evening. WP5ATK003 can even map, which nationalities live in which streets. Unfortunately, **public housing** in Villach is restricted and the private sector is estimated as expensive or often linked to high priced security deposits, bad conditions and small room (WP5ATK003). Due to the central living of migrants in Villach, the children attend the same kindergarten and schools. Hence, the percentage of children with migrant background is higher than in the kindergartens and schools on the edge of the city (WP5ATK003).

# Additional information on TCN inclusion

## City of Villach

The City of Villach is very active in the social sector and has its own **integration office** that takes care of the needs of immigrants (Stadt Villach 2021a).

An **integration model** was developed with scientific support and released by all parties of the city council in April 2013 (Kohlmayer 2013). It was a participatory process with experts, civil society, NGOs and other stakeholders. They worked together on different fields of action, i.a. labour and economy, social and welfare issues, kindergarten and school, living and neighbourhood, culture.

The integration model includes the topics living together in diversity, respect and acceptance, respecting the same values and norms and speaking German as common language with value on multilingualism. All people in Villach shall have the same opportunities and access to services, to be successfully integrated in the society. Reduced barriers and chances of participation shall help immigrants to act self-initiative. Discrimination and racism shall be fought. Diversity shall be seen as opportunity for a common development (Güngör & Jäger n.y.).

In consequence, different measures were released, such us promotion of German language for primary school pupils, for refugees and for women, awareness building with different events or integration workshops for asylum seekers (Stadt Villach 2021b).

The Plattform Migration is an **association of civil society institutions**, aiming at raising awareness of migration as a natural phenomenon in a globalized world. Based on information, events, and projects, a positive climate for an intercultural coexistence should be created, prejudices and xenophobia should be removed (Plattform Migration Villach, 2021).

# Examples of good practice

The following good practices show a selection of projects and offers, which are available in the city of Villach. They are selected because of its aims and approaches which in particular support migrant women, the main target group of the Carinthian case study, and its sustainable offers that have existed already for years and has proven helpful for the target groups.

## Arabesc Frauenverein

- Established in 2012
- Initial idea: increase the knowledge about the rights and duties and to provide a better future especially for **migrant women**.
- Aim: **improve and support integration processes** and exchange between members, the Arabic community and the local population to become a respectful and international society.
- Main objective: increase the language proficiency in German of their members and in Arabic of their children, informal exchange (Rinesch 2015), different workshops, excursions and events (in cooperation with other associations)
- Website: https://m.facebook.com/Arabesc-Frauenverein-in-Villach-851061695011417/

## PIVA - Projektgruppe Integration von Ausländerinnen und Ausländern

- Was formed in 1991; registered as association since 1996.

www.matilde-migration.eu

- Target group: **migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.**
- Aim: **social and cultural integration** into Austrian society; to reduce fear of contact and possible prejudices through encounters between locals and foreigners; make public aware of specific problems of foreigners.
- Main objective: certified as adult education institution; support of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; supports NGOs, authorities and public institutions dealing with migration and integration
- Website: https://www.piva.or.at/

## CIC – Carinthian International Center

- Found in 2009;
- Background: efforts of Carinthian industry and science companies that rely on international employees;
- Aim: **integrate qualified foreign employees of industry and educational institutions/universities** and **supports their relatives**
- Main objectives: offers i.a. information and counselling on everyday life issues, networking, supports the establishment of contacts, organises various get-together
- Website: https://www.cic-network.at/en/home/

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## HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters) Carinthia

- Since 2011 implemented by the Katholisches Bildungsnetzwerk in Carinthia.
- Target group: families **with a weak socio-economic and educational background and their preschool children** of 3- to 8-year-old children;
- Aim: parent education and language acquisition
- Website: https://www.kath-kirche-kaernten.at/dioezese/detail/C2738/hippy1

- Implemented by the Diakonie de La Tour from July 2021 until April 2022,
- in Carinthia and Styria.
- Target group: **mothers and mothers-to-be at the risk of poverty and exclusion and their children** up to 6-years, independent of their residence permits.
- Main objective: **group meetings, workshops and information** about care, education, everyday life, age-based assistance and support of children, (multilingual) consulting.
- Website: https://www.diakonie-delatour.at/projekt-ida

Verein „Willkommen Nachbar"

- Target group: **migrants**
- Main objective: German **language courses** at various levels, theatre workshops, courses to cycling, children's swimming courses, playing football, joint trips, intercultural cooking and eating
- Website:  http://willkommen-nachbarn.org/index.php/home/

# Conclusion

In cooperation with partners like the City of Villach, Arabesc Women Association, PIVA, Diakonie de La Tour and CIC, it was possible to successfully conduct the participatory action research in the case study region of Villach and its rural surrounding. Special focus was on TCN women of the different target groups – old and new refugees, refugees and high-skilled TCNs.

In conclusion, the participatory action research in the case study region Villach shows that the integration processes had changed concerning integration support services and labour market integration since the 1990s. The integration support services have become more institutionalized and more formal, while the informal contacts to local people decreased. Especially in refugee shelters, external visitors are forbidden. In addition, the refugees and migrants with different residence permits are obliged to fulfil the integration agreement, where language learning is an

essential part of it. Even if the language courses are offered institutional, the participation is problematic – especially, for women with young children without child care. The integration agreement is also linked to the residence permit, while in the 1990s the refugees received the residence permit via the working permit. Today, some residence permits restrict the labour market integration.

In addition, the experience of the integration process differs between high-qualified migrants and refugees. High-qualified migrants are supported by the CIC, which is funded by the international enterprises in Carinthia. The recognition of foreign qualifications is problematic even with the help of CIC experts. However, refugees do not have this support network. They depend on short-time funded projects like IDA or the initiatives from e.g. PIVA and the Arabesc Women Association. Hence, these women rely on their informal community network and the exchange with other women. They support and encourage each other. The action research was a step towards their empowerment that needs to be strengthened sustainably. For example, role models like the female boss of a Syrian coffee shop in the inner city of Villach or the participating women in the focus groups, who are successful – professionally and privately, are important. Women and their future dreams and wishes need to be taken seriously and to be supported, like the Arabesc women, who wish to become the first truck driver with headscarf in Austria, because she wants to see the world. The findings show, the integration process is much more than fulfilling an integration agreement.

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# Bulgaria: Haskovo and Harmanli

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With the great support of Prof. Anna Krasteva who led the Action Research as a leader of the Bulgarian team

## Summary

This report provides an overview of the action research conducted within WP5 by the Bulgarian research team in the region of Haskovo and Harmanli. The action research in question had purpose of applying the innovative tools and approaches from the MATILDE Toolbox in order to identify a broader range of findings on how local development is impacted by the presence and actions of TCNs in the region as well as of conducting intercultural participatory activities which aim at impacting on community-space interactions through TCNs integration. At first, the report gives an insight on the preparation of the action research which was a key stage for the successful conduction of the fieldwork. It presents the diverse types of actors involved during the action research as well. Moreover, the implementation of the thematic participatory activities planned in WP5 - the initiative 'Intercultural Gardens as Green Bridges' conducted in Harmnali and the region and the thematic week 'Diversity and Migration' at NBU is presented in detail in the text. This report also provides an overview about the implementation in practice of several tools and approaches chosen from the MATILDE Toolbox during the action research. Finally, an evaluation of the impact of the activities planned within WP5 based on their results can be found in the conclusion of the report.

## Introduction

The inclusion of action research in the MATILDE project is paramount in identifying the key findings on how local development is impacted by the presence and actions of TCNs. MATILDE does not seek to examine and analyse the issue as a historically completed process with a beginning and an end, but as a continuous and rapidly changing process whose characteristics are newly emerging and have therefore not been defined and categorised yet. Fieldwork offers the researcher a valuable opportunity to communicate more quickly and effectively with the research subjects, thereby broadening his or her perceptions and improving his or her understanding of the substance and issues of the case study. This applies even more to the interactive and innovative research methods conceived within WP5, such as participatory activities. On the other hand, action research on the social and economic realities in the case study region poses a challenge but also an opportunity to plan social action that brings about positive change. The results of and reactions to this intervention are of interest for analysis.

The active fieldwork within WP5 provided an opportunity to collect current information that is not available in previous studies. This general rule is particularly valid for the Bulgarian case study, as in the course of the previous work packages the team had difficulties in finding adequate and accurate information relevant to the topic of MATILDE. The region turned out to be poorly analysed, especially in terms of TCNs and lack of statistics. The data collected by the Bulgarian team in the course of the fieldwork are key to understanding the overall picture in its multilayered complexity. On the other hand, the social relevance of the project topic presupposes in-depth communication with people who are involved in and familiar with the social and economic life of the region and can provide relevant information. The fieldwork employed human communication as a way to go beyond the confines of strict data collection and generalisation of their statically significant results from a distance.

The topic of MATILDE necessitates, above all, conducting fieldwork focusing on insider observations. This gives a more representative, multifaceted and flexible view of the current social and economic situation. The fieldwork took the researchers to the 'heart' of the case study region by enabling them to get to know its representatives. As the term 'action research' itself suggests, theory and practice are two elements of one process. They are interconnected and mutually necessary in researching a given reality. In the words of Kurt Lewin (1944), who introduced the term, there is 'no action without research; no research without action'.

# Case study objectives, specific thematic, preparation (sampling and access)

The preparation of the fieldwork included an in-depth review of previous interviews with TCNs and local stakeholders from the region of Harmanli and Haskovo. Through interviews conducted within WP3 and WP4 with identified stakeholders and TCNs in the case study region, the Bulgarian team contacted other actors in public life whose observations and insights on the topic of MATILDE are valuable for understanding and making sense of TCNs' impact on local development, as well as of the specificities and conditions of the region. The first contact made with key stakeholders and TCNs was key to the organisation of interviews and focus groups in WP5. **The team managed, albeit remotely, to gain the trust of citizens and migrants in Harmanli and the region,** introducing locals to the project's objectives and ideas so that they would assist us in contacting other people who are potentially valuable for the project topic. **The first conversations undoubtedly provided a strong impetus for the team's subsequent research activities**.

**In building a trust relationship** with the interviewees in the course of the preparation and the fieldwork itself, and especially upon the researcher's first acquaintance with the local realities, it is important to keep in mind the Bulgarian context, where the level of general social trust is the lowest in Europe and even one of the lowest in the world (Paunov, 2020). This indicator measures trust from an interpersonal perspective. In addition to broader consequences such as the deterioration of the quality and productivity of labour at the individual level, and hence, at the level of the national economy, it also has interpersonal implications. However, an important regional specificity is that foreigners are not new to the region, as international roads run through it. In the words of a local Bulgarian, 'people here have been more or less cosmopolitan for years.'

**Building trust between the researcher and the Bulgarians in the case study region, which is of paramount importance when collecting their observations, impressions and experiences, requires not only applying communication rules but also having a certain intuitive approach** that is developed through solid practice. Hence, conducting action research without the presence

of a researcher with years-long rich experience is virtually impossible. It would also be an extremely risky exercise, because the mode of communication between research participants and researchers largely determines the success of the research, its effectiveness and sustainability. **The purpose of communication with the community is to build mutual trust and create a friendly atmosphere that predisposes TCNs and stakeholders to share their perceptions.** Getting to know them is key to identifying the exact findings that will make the study as objective and useful as possible at the regional but also at the national level. Building a solid foundation of trust with the locals was one of the priorities of the Bulgarian team in the preparatory and substantive phases of the project. In order to ensure a good understanding of the research topic, **the Bulgarian team conceptualised and developed the clearest possible wording for the presentation of the research when contacting potential participants, taking into account the cultural and social context of the case study region**. The team clearly told potential participants what the research involved and whether and how they would benefit from it, so as to avoid forming unrealistic expectations. Before each interview, the Bulgarian team contacted participants by phone and emailed them the published MATILDE reports as well as a press release. In this way, they were given ample time to familiarise themselves with the project objectives and to give informed consent to participate. This assured them of the transparency and authenticity of the research and laid the foundation for a relationship of trust.

**In order to understand the community well and to conduct the study effectively, the research team was joined by a highly qualified local representative.** Being knowledgeable about the region and known to the local residents, he was invited to participate in this phase of the project as he is trusted by the locals due to his proven communication and professional skills. His profession, that of a psychologist, presupposes having developed skills in communicating with people, creating a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere of conversation and predisposition in which the interviewee feels predisposed to express their personal perspective. The local representative's presence acted as a bridge of sorts in contacting key stakeholders, and then again, in building a relationship of trust in an area where everyone knows one another and where the anonymity of the individual, typical of big cities, does not exist. In this sense, one's social role, profession, and even marital status build a stable image in the eyes of community members, an image that impacts the level of trust.

**Another key communication channel of bilateral importance was achieved by establishing a relationship with the local media outlet.** On the one hand, the sharing of information about the work and arrival of the team prepared part of the local residents for the research – by reading the articles published online and in print by the local media outlet, they indirectly got to know the team. After taking part in an interview and being introduced to the idea and objectives of the research, the representative of the local media outlet offered to report the team's trips by dedicating an article to the MATILDE project. In this way, our team was officially introduced in the local media space, which is one of the specific channels for disseminating news concerning the region. On the other hand, some of the findings of the research as well as portraits of some refugees from Harmanli were also published in it. This helped the local community to better understand the TCNs living in the region and to build a credible and objective-positive picture of them, which could result in strengthening of social cohesion.

**The sustained engagement with the local media outlet in turn had a further strong effect, resonating and promoting the actions and messages of the MATILDE project among the local community.**

In a similar way, **the targeted use of social media to establish contacts with the local community, particularly with TCNs**, the majority of whom live in the countryside and are hard to find, was useful in the preparation and planning of the fieldwork. For example, the team encountered the paradox that everyone had heard of the British in the region but could hardly provide information about where they lived and how long they had been there. In this respect, our team's work was facilitated by the willingness of a British young man living in one of the villages in the region, who had already been interviewed within WP4, to put us in touch with other TCNs. He posted information about the Bulgarian team's upcoming visit to the Harmanli region in a Facebook group of foreigners in the region, inviting them to contact our team if they were interested in the MATILDE project. **This announcement on social media produced a positive effect and prompted TCNs to contact the team themselves.**

The preparation of the action research involved **familiarisation with and adaptation to the geographical and logistical specificities of the region**. This was crucially important for ensuring the team's safety and mobility, and smooth and quick travel to small and large towns and villages. The study was focused primarily on the area around Harmanli municipality, which is located in the central part of Haskovo region in Southeastern Bulgaria. The municipality includes 25 settlements

– one town and 24 villages: the town of Harmanli, and the villages of Biser, Bogomil, Bolyarski Izvor, Branitsa, Balgarin, Varbovo, Dositeevo, Dripchevo, Ivanovo, Izvorovo, Kolarovo, Leshnikovo, Nadezhden, Ovcharovo, Oreshets, Ostar Kamak, Polyanovo, Preslavets, Rogozinovo, Slavyanovo, Smirnentsi, Cherepovo, Cherna Mogila, and Shishmanovo. While some of the villages visited by the Bulgarian team to interview TCNs and stakeholders living there are located only a few kilometres from Harmanli, others are about 64 km or 69 km away, in close proximity to Turkey. In the course of the fieldwork, the team visited 12 villages in the Haskovo region: Leshnikovo, Srem, Studena, Radovets, Dositeevo, Rogozinovo, Oryahovo, Cherepovo, Alexandrovo, Yerusalimovo, Levka, and Balgarin.
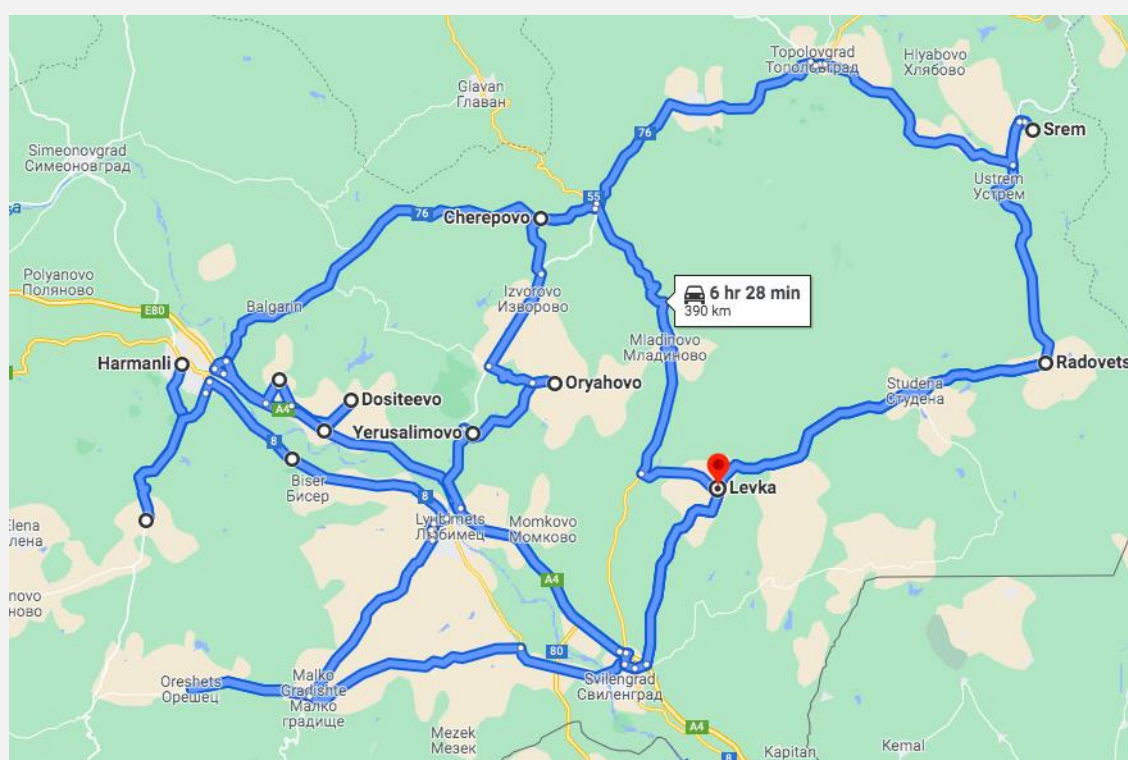


**Figure 14. Map of the Harmanli region**

The team also visited five towns: Harmanli, Haskovo, Svilengrad, Lyubimets, and Dimitrovgrad.
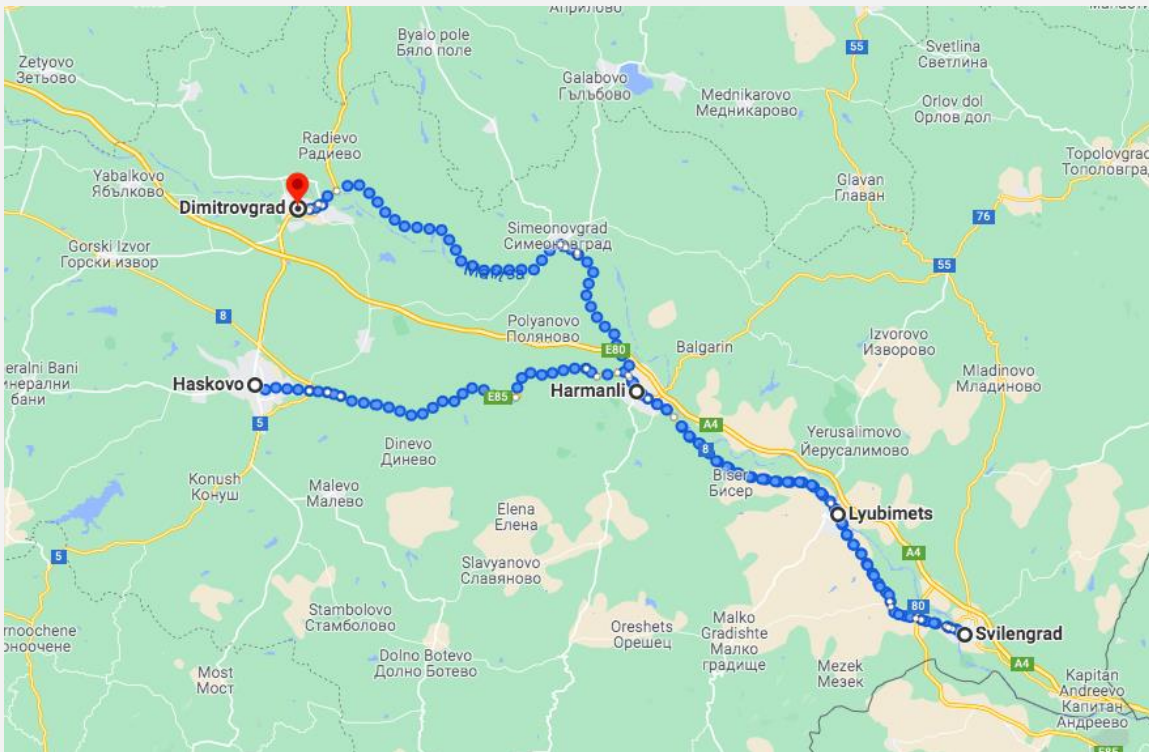
**Figure 2.15 Map of the Haskovo region**

The region does not have a well-developed transport network and there are no regular bus lines between the villages and the regional centre, Haskovo. This circumstance had to be taken into account when planning the action research and fieldwork because it necessitated arranging own transport.

Thanks to the pre-arranged transport and the availability of a car, it was possible to conduct such a large number of meetings and interviews in locations outside Harmanli in a short period of time. The organised transport was also important for the flexibility of the team during the fieldwork. **It is important to stress that the driver was a volunteer on the team and provided his own car as well. He was also actively involved in a number of other logistical and organisational activities. This volunteer established himself as a key factor for well-organised fieldwork.**

# Actors involved during the action research

Action research gave us the chance to truly immerse ourselves in the region, the diversity and heterogeneity of its population. Meetings and interviews were conducted with refugees living in Harmanli, migrants from the EU and third-country migrants who have settled in villages in the region of **Haskovo and Harmanli**. Between June and October 2021, the team conducted **56 narrative interviews** and four focus groups with a large number migrants and stakeholders within the framework of WP5.

Within the framework of the MATILDE focused on the effects of mobility in the region, the research team also interviewed Bulgarian returnees to the region – locally born people who have returned to their places of birth after living for years abroad or in bigger Bulgarian cities.

## Local partner

**The team's local partner, Caritas,** a non-profit organisation implementing social work to support vulnerable people in society, **played a significant role in this. Employees of the local centre of the well-developed charity were among the first 'levers' for reaching the community**. They actively assisted the team in making contacts for initial orientation in the local context, and in the subsequent fieldwork. Representatives of the local partner, Caritas – Harmanli, were among the main actors during the action research, and regular meetings were held with them to discuss the preparation and implementation of the chosen participatory activity. Hailing from the region, the organisation's employees are knowledgeable and were able to provide the necessary preliminary information about foreigners in the region, network structures, large companies that employ foreign labour, people in Harmanli who have contact with TCNs. **The local partner initiated one of the spirals of introductions and establishment of interpersonal contacts with the region's residents.**

# TCNs

The presence and distribution of TCN migrant groups, identified and described in detail in the previous studies, was confirmed by the fieldwork. The team also had the opportunity to survey the group of Bulgarian returnees to the region of Harmanli. The main groups and categories of migration identified in the region are :

**Amenity migration**: Mostly British. The team was able to speak with 14 Britons. Information from the field indicates that at least 100 Britons live in the region.

**Entrepreneurial migration**: This group is very small and consists mostly of Turkish nationals. An example in this respect is a Turkish businessman we spoke with who is running a successful and sustainable cooking oil production business.

**Family migration**: Traditional for the Bulgarian migration profile are Russian migrants – mainly women from Russia.. Russian women have been living in Harmanli for years and enjoy good careers as, for example, dentists or tailors.

**Refugees** are the fourth important category of TCNs. According to the fieldwork, 370 people were accommodated there at the beginning of the most dynamic months of migration, namely the summer months.

**Return migration**: Returnees to Harmanli and nearby villages are those mobile Bulgarians who, after spending years abroad or in other Bulgarian cities, have returned to their places of birth. The reasons for their return range from economic to subjective-emotional. Of the economic ones, emphasis was placed on the property issue – the elimination of the costs of paying rent and looking for accommodation. The increased due to Covid-19 trend of working from home also played a role.

# Stakeholders

**The team contacted many local stakeholders, including village mayors, school principals, teachers, lawyers and journalists, as well as social workers from NGOs and institutions in the field of migration.**

**Active communication was carried out with the mayors of ten villages around Harmanli that are home to migrants. Some of them expressed their readiness to be interviewed as well as to organise a meeting with the migrants.**

Three mayors were very responsive, arranging a wonderful welcome for the team, in some cases with a cultural programme, local delicacies and genuine interaction with local residents. Almost all of the interviewed migrants knew the village mayors and were in contact with them – a sign that TCNs have access to local government. On the other hand, it is important to note in this report that meetings with representatives of the municipal administration in Harmanli did not take place due to the fact that the team's invitations and requests went unanswered. Similarly, the originally planned meetings with representatives of political parties in the region did not take place, although the team managed to contact them by phone; however, subsequent interest and willingness for a brief conversation was demonstrated by only 2 representatives of the more than 20 political parties operating in the region. This is highly indicative of the level of importance and interest assigned to the topic of MATILDE by the political parties in Bulgaria. Of course, it is also necessary to take into account the tense political situation, the preparation of four elections (three parliamentary and one presidential) in the period and the changes in the government and leadership of the country.

Gaining an ever clearer picture of the social and economic realities in the MATILDE case study region and with a view to planning the chosen participatory activity, the team contacted **representatives of educational institutions.**

**The idea of involving schools in a participatory activity was based on the data collected in the fieldwork, which show interesting and positive trends regarding the regional integration of child refugees and migrants into the national education system. In Bulgaria, significant efforts to** facilitate the access of child refugees and migrants to the education system have been made by organisations such as the UNHCR, the Bulgarian Red Cross and Caritas, as well as by schools and the Ministry of Education and Science. The changes made concern the

establishment of procedures for determining the educational level of child refugees and migrants and their subsequent enrolment in school, and provision of additional Bulgarian language tuition. According to information collected in the fieldwork, since 2017 there has been a Bulgarian language teacher at the refugee centre in Harmanli and every child refugee in the centre has been enrolled in school. There are nine schools in the Harmanli municipality – five schools in Harmanli and four schools in villages. Currently, child refugees are enrolled in seven of the nine schools in the municipality. They are distributed as follows:

| Name of school | Location of school and number of child refugees enrolled |
| --- | --- |
| Elementary School 'Otets Paisiy' | Harmanli town – 2 |
| Secondary School 'Neofit Rilski' | Harmanli town – 2 |
| Primary School 'Ivan Vazov' | Harmanli town – 3 |
| Elementary School 'Aleko Konstantinov' | Harmanli town – 5 |
| Primary School 'Hristo Botev' | Biser village – 5 |
| Primary School 'Hristo Botev' | Balgarin village – 1 |
| Primary School 'St. St. Cyril and Methodius' | Ivanovo village – 4 |

Much of the efforts of social workers in organisations working with refugees and migrants, such as the Bulgarian Red Cross and Caritas, are focused on supporting child refugees and migrants in enrolling and attending schools, as well as helping them in their studies.

**Education is a point of intersection for TCNs in the region:** A British young woman has set up a PlaySchool at the refugee centre in Harmanli together with her mother (one of the first British women to migrate to the region, attracted by the low property prices and dreaming of having a

nice house, growing their own vegetables and living a peaceful life). Both mother and daughter are popular and appreciated by both the refugees at the centre and the local residents. At the school, the British women, without any external support and on a voluntary basis, have created a space where children and young people are helped in their studies and in overcoming post-traumatic symptoms through acceptance and care. The school is the only one of its kind. In addition, **many of the interviewed TCNs expressed a desire to carry out charitable activities targeting refugees and youth in the region. They said that they were looking for ways to interact with the refugee centre as well as with the local business and education communities in order to provide young people and refugees with more opportunities for development, such as teaching them English.**

**Enrolment of child refugees is perceived as a plus for schools since it is an additional experience for teachers. School principals and some teachers have received specialised training in working with child refugees.**

# Description of the activities performed during the action research

## The 'Intercultural Gardens as Green Bridges' Initiative

In order to implement the thematic participatory activity planned in WP5 and to apply participatory techniques among TCNs and local stakeholders, the teams of CERMES Bulgaria and Caritas – Harmanli organised and conducted an initiative called 'Intercultural Gardens as Green Bridges' in October 2021. **The Bulgarian team leader, Anna Krasteva, has defined it as 'green intersectionality' because it connects people, nature and culture, different generations, girls and boys.** 'Intercultural Gardens' are an activity designed to create a place where participants can experience deep attachment, including a sense of belonging. **Such activities, combining art and nature, help to minimise the risk of social exclusion of TCNs in the region, opening up space for rich interaction between them and local residents. The initiative has created,**

**metaphorically and actually, a new shared reality and a new meeting place through social inclusion and transformation of the common public space.** This activity has a second objective, which is to highlight the need to protect the environment and biodiversity in the region. The municipality is facing some serious environmental problems, such as climate change, droughts, floods, fires, surface and groundwater pollution, and loss of fertility. **The initiative to create intercultural gardens was not a one-off event, but one with a long-lasting effect into the future.** It will continue to resonate and create an impact because, by their very nature, these gardens will need ongoing care.

The directly targeted groups of the 'Intercultural Gardens as Green Bridges' Initiative were TCNs and local residents – principals, teachers and students from five schools in the town of Harmanli and one primary school in the village of Balgarin, Harmanli municipality, which have enrolled child migrants. Children from Bulgaria, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan took part in the initiative, planting flowers and saplings in their schools.

Prior to the day of the initiative, a press release and programme of the event was sent to local and national media. The Bulgarian News Agency presented the forthcoming event on its website. It was also shared by the print and online editions of the local newspaper. The preparation of the participatory activity itself included intensive communication with a representative of Caritas Bulgaria, with whom the logistics and necessary materials for the activity were discussed. Caritas Bulgaria provided the necessary materials and products for the organisation of the initiative.

On 11 October 2021, the CERMES and Caritas – Harmanli teams conducted the initiative in the six selected schools, with a total of about 130 participants. After the planting, there was a short intercultural programme in each school, prepared by the students and their teachers especially for the event.

The 'Intercultural Gardens as Green Bridges' participatory activity brought together talented and active students, creative teachers and principals, inspiring and emotional intercultural programmes in an intercultural and green cause that became a celebration for all participants and an occasion to recall the beautiful side of coexistence within one community. The implementation of the activity marked the high point of departure from theory – that is, from the theoretical work necessary in the preparatory phase of the actual fieldwork – and immersion and intervention in the reality of the concrete MATILDE case study. Theory obliges the researcher to view the subject

of research in the abstract because of their distanced position. The action research method, including participatory activity, is based on the principle that while researching reality, the researcher intervenes in it.

## Thematic Week 'Diversity and Migration'

In order to promote the ideas of the MATILDE project, as well as the inspiring examples and findings about the economic and social impacts of migration in the region of Harmanli and Haskovo on the local development of rural and mountain regions, Prof. Anna Krasteva, leader of the Bulgarian team of MATILDE, and CERMES organised a thematic week on 'Diversity and Migration' at New Bulgarian University in Sofia. It was also thematically linked to 18 December, International Migrants Day. By combining and merging science, teaching and art, diverse horizons were opened up for understanding the connections of migration with development and rights, for sharing innovative policies and practices from the world, Europe and Bulgaria, and for building an interdisciplinary community.

The events during the thematic week included:

1. **Call for papers for a collective publication on Migration and local development: re-territorialisation and revitalisation of remote regions. The example of Harmanli and the Haskovo region. The idea behind this intellectual initiative** was deeply inspired by the team's studies within the MATILDE project and insight into one of the defining characteristics of the region, namely its multifaceted and diverse migration profile. This specific characteristic has produced a number of social and economic impacts and issues that should be subjected to the most comprehensive critical analysis possible by those who know and are engaged with the region and the intercultural aspects of local development. **The MATILDE studies provide a creative impetus for further description, enriched by a diversity of perspectives, of a wide range of issues, including the portrayal of TCNs in the region, the impact and diversity of cultural aspects in the local context, economic challenges and opportunities resulting from the presence in and even just from the passage of TCNs through the region, as well as the new prospects of this border rural and mountain region.**

www.matilde-migration.eu

2. Arrangement and presentation of a **photo exhibition, 'Faces of Diversity', created by two authors** – Vanina Ninova, a young researcher and member of the Bulgarian team of MATILDE, and Ivan Atanasov, editor-in-chief of Sakarnews, the local media outlet in Harmanli. The exhibition, which was inspired by the fieldwork in the region, featured photographs of foreigners in Harmanli and the Haskovo region. The photographs were complemented by intriguing short descriptions of life stories. **At the opening of the exhibition, the guests were introduced to the objectives of the MATILDE project and the bilateral process of adaptation of TCNs in the region.** The exhibition was opened by the Bulgarian team of MATILDE in the person of Prof. Anna Krasteva, and Assoc. Prof. Evelina Staykova, Head of the Department of Political Sciences at New Bulgarian University. The event provoked strong interest. A special guest was the Palestinian poet, writer and translator Hairi Hamdan, who shared some of his poems.

**The powerful photographs provided an opportunity for public visualisation of the project and dissemination of MATILDE results through the tools of art. The exhibition remained on view at the NBU for one month.** The photo exhibition was appreciated by IOM Bulgaria, who said they wanted to present it at one of their events. Thus, it came to life for the second time during the opening event of a festival dedicated to films about migration.

The local media outlet, Sakarnews, covered the event, and more than 150 people watched a specially filmed video report posted on the media outlet's YouTube channel. People were also reached through numerous posts presenting all the events in the 'Diversity and Migration' week on the two social media accounts of the Bulgarian team – CERMES and Policy and Citizens Observatory: Migration, Digitalisation, Climate.

3. During the thematic week 'Diversity and Migration' the Bulgarian team also launched the series 'Faces of Diversity', featuring portraits of migrants and refugees from the region, on the only human rights website in Bulgaria, Marginalia, and the local media outlet Sakarnews. The authors of the portraits are Prof. Anna Krasteva and Vanina Ninova from the Bulgarian team, and Georgi Stankov, a highly qualified local representative who joined the fieldwork of the research team. Five portraits have been published so far and about five more are due to be published. Through the presentation of the colourful palette of portraits, unique stories and fascinating narratives of TCNs from Harmanli and the region, this series transcends the boundaries of the local community, the

academic community, and the community of those working in the field of migration, and reaches a wider audience of Bulgarian citizens who are curious to learn more about the region's migrant diversity and the integration of foreigners within it.

**The thematic week was a very attractive event, filled also with other activities such as a public lecture** titled 'Mobile Balkans: from migration crises to the migration-development nexus' by the Bulgarian team leader Prof. Anna Krasteva, and a field visit of students from New Bulgarian University and Sofia University 'St Kliment Ohridski' to the office of the **International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in Bulgaria**. The visit was accompanied by a meeting and discussion between the Head of the IOM Mission in Bulgaria, the IOM team and the Bulgarian students.

# Tools and approach

The following tools and approaches from the MATILDE Toolbox were applied in practice during the action research: qualitative interviews, focus groups, mobility mapping, social mapping, and photo-elicitation.

## Qualitative interviews

The tool 'Qualitative interviews' has been applied during the action research as described in the MATILDE Toolbox and has not gone through any modification. **The research team has conducted qualitative interviews with 60 participants** from the region of Haskovo and Harmanli. All of the interviewees were very responsive and most of them expressed interest in the MATILDE projects and appreciated being engaged in it through the interviews. The distribution of responsibilities within the team during the application of this tool was very important for its success.. The leader of the team was the moderator directing the interview process while the other members were more focused on documenting the interview by taking detailed notes, conducting audio-recordings, taking photos and debriefing after the interviews.

The research team had identified as target groups for the conduction of qualitative interviews of narrative and problem-centred expert form the following groups: **TCNs, local stakeholders and returnees** in the region. Representatives of all of the target groups have been reached and thanks to the serious number of conducted interviews, the researchers have received important and useful information for each of the groups achieving the purposes of the action research.

The locality and duration of the interviews were tailored to the preferences of the interviewees and ranged from 30 to 130 minutes. The interview languages were Bulgarian, English, and French. For some of the interviews (from Turkish or Pashto, for example), the presence of a volunteer interpreter was necessary.

## Focus groups

During the action research the team has applied the tool 'Focus group' following its description in the MATILDE Toolbox and relying on the rich previous experience of members of the team in this area. No modification to the tool has been made during its application.

The main target groups were social workers working with refugees, TCNs and stakeholders including school directors and teachers, mayors and journalists.
The groups were decided by taking into the fact that some groups like a team of social workers or a collective of high school teachers will be more active in group interaction driven by the group dynamics.

**Four focus groups with a total of 21 participants** were conducted during the action research.

- **The first focus group** included three refugee women from Harmanli, and three women social workers from Caritas – Harmanli who facilitated the organisation and conduct of the focus group. The main topic of the focus group was the everyday life of the refugee women – work, home, education of children, etc., the difficulties they face, as well as what they dream of and need.
- **The second focus group** was conducted in a high school in Harmanli that has taught child refugees. The focus group was organised with the assistance of the vice-principal of the

high school, who was among the interviewees in the previous phases of the project. The focus group included the school management and five women teachers. The topics discussed were the education of child migrants in Bulgarian schools, the experience and observations of the teachers at the high school.

- **The third focus group** was conducted in one of the villages that have TCN residents in the region of Harmanli and included three Britons, the village mayor and a journalist from the local media outlet. This focus group discussed the mechanisms of creating good communication between the mayors of the Bulgarian villages and the TCNs who settle there, the attitude of the local population towards the newcomers, and the mutual need and support between foreigners and locals.

- **The fourth focus group** was organised in connection with the planning of the chosen participatory activity. It was attended by the Bulgarian research team and the team of Caritas – Harmanli and Caritas Bulgaria. All aspects as well as logistical issues regarding the implementation of the activity were discussed and accompanied by a rich exchange of ideas.

## Mobility mapping and social mapping

The research team chose to apply the spatio-visual tools 'Mobility mapping' and 'Social mapping' because these innovative tools were defined by the team as ones of the most suitable to be implemented during the action research in the region of Haskovo and Harmanli. While applicating the tool the researchers encouraged the creation of hand-drawn maps and the use of different colored marker pens. The following small modification to the tool 'Mobility mapping' was made: the use of small cards of different shapes with pictograms and short explanations was not applied in order to leave the participants to focus on their own thoughts and draw mobility and social maps without being distracted.

For the application of the tools 'Mobility mapping' and 'Social mapping' as target groups were pointed out TCNs from the region including previously and new interviewees. In order to capture and cover different aspects of mobility and space patterns of the targeted group, it was divided into two subgroups - TCNs living in the towns in the region and TCNs living in the villages.

**The mobility mapping and social mapping tool was implemented with 14 foreigners living in towns and villages in the region, including migrants and refugees from Europe (the Netherlands, the UK), Asia (Afghanistan, the Philippines, Japan) and Africa (Chad and Zimbabwe).** The foreigners involved varied in age, with the youngest respondent being 14 years old and the oldest 60 years old. The research team presented the exercise in an accessible and engaging manner and made sure it was done correctly. Each of the foreigners asked to do mobility and social mapping agreed and understood what was required. The respondents were diligent in doing the exercise, showing creativity and presenting the information on their 'maps' in detail. In the case of ten of the participants, the activity was implemented immediately after narrative interviews were conducted in their homes, in a relaxed atmosphere. Thanks to the already established deeper communication during the interviews, the respondents readily shared details about the places they visit most often (mobility mapping) and the social contacts that are most important to them (social mapping). Second meetings (after the narrative interviews) were held with four respondents, the focus of which was on producing mobility and social maps and further clarifications related to them. The reason for arranging second meetings was lack of sufficient time during the first ones, which could have resulted in an incomplete understanding of the exercise.

## Photo-elicitation

Throughout the action research, the research team took photographs of the participants during and after the interviews. The application of the **Photo-elicitation tool** presented in the Participatory photo/video section of the MATILDE Toolbox was very successful as all respondents gave explicit consent to be photographed and participated in the process.

For the application of this tool a specific target group was not defined. The aim was to include all of the interviewees from the qualitative interviews and the focus groups as well as the participants from the participatory activities conducted in the framework of the action research.

The photographs produced while setting the activity were of two types: candid photographs taken during the meetings and interviews, and staged photographs in which the interviewees posed for the camera. In this way, participation was captured not only in written and audio formats but also visually, giving interviewees a sense of even fuller participation in the MATILDE project. The use not only of digital but also of analogue photography by the research team allows for

subsequent communication when sending the photograph to the interviewee. This likewise contributes to a closer relationship between researchers and interviewees.

In addition to deepening communication with migrants and local stakeholders, the photographs were used to actively communicate and disseminate the conducted action research. The virtual gallery on the MATILDE website features eight of the photographs taken during the action research. Vanina Ninova, from the Bulgarian research team, participated in the #HeartofEurope MATILDE Photo Contest with three photographs showing the impact of migrants on local development in the Harmanli region, and was among the six winners of the competition.

# Main outcomes of the action research

The activities carried out under WP5 collected information on the presence of TCNs in the region and their contribution to the local community and local development. In this sense, they produced results that were subsequently widely disseminated in newspapers, an online magazine, and social media.

- **Publicity and the provision of accurate information regarding the migrant presence in the region serve as a preventive measure against the dissemination of unsubstantiated information for populist purposes** (which is done by some nationalist parties) and the development of homophobic attitudes. The information collected refutes the claim that migrants 'come to breathe our air and to eat our food'. It also disproves the hypothesis circulating in Bulgarian society that the refugees were sent to the region to populate it and to subsequently take it over.  This pedagogical approach has had a positive effect on Bulgarian society as a whole. As the integration of TCNs is a two-way collective process, it necessitates the circulation of more reliable information about the life of TCNs in Bulgaria, as well as about that of Bulgarians living with TCNs.
- At the micro-level, another important outcome of the conducted action research is that it has contributed to **the acquisition of a comprehensive understanding and self-knowledge by the local Bulgarians in the region with regard to their birthplace.**

- On the one hand, they have become **aware of the actual relative number of migrants in the region and, beyond statistics, of their attitudes, skills and demonstrated desire to stay**. In a region where depopulation is one of the leading trends, this has provoked locals to reassess and rethink their hometown or village as a good place to live in.
- On the other hand, **the awareness of the presence of migrants in the area has prompted some organisations to identify their needs and seek opportunities for cooperation and support.** An example in this respect are the newly launched activities of an association of Bulgarian business entrepreneurs who have initiated the organisation of Bulgarian language courses for native English speakers.

# Additional information on TCNs' inclusion at local level

The three fieldworks conducted in the region allowed the collection of information that has broadened the picture regarding TCNs' inclusion at the local level, the ways and paths TCNs choose to integrate, and the factors that influence their acceptance by the local community.

## TCNs' sense of belonging, social commitment, and desire to participate in local life

Our conversations with British migrants allow us to conclude that they are very well-received by the local population, one of the factors for this being their ability to create a carefree optimistic atmosphere. In search of (in their words) a more relaxed, happy and free life, the British representatives of amenity migration in the area also seek contact with the local residents: 'They have the habit of sitting in front of the shop in almost every village, the British gather there every morning.' Some of them deliberately choose to settle in villages where there are no other British

people in order to fully immerse themselves in the Bulgarian way of life and environment. Of particular importance is the team's observation that all of the newcomers are learning or want to start learning Bulgarian, which attests to their desire for full integration and plans for long-term residence in the region. There is a two-way exchange of cultures – the British are known among their fellow villagers for their energy and festive spirit. They organise gatherings and festivals, host barbecues and play guitars. Similar is the attitude of migrants from Finland, whose integration seems easy. The main reason for this is their interest in getting to know Bulgaria and the region and their strong desire not only to communicate with the Bulgarians in the village but also to organise or take part in joint initiatives with them. Their willingness to actively participate in local life is demonstrated not only when it comes to having fun but also when it comes to dealing with problems. That is why the local population is inclined to accept them unconditionally and help them, in its turn, to learn Bulgarian.

In addition to the above-mentioned openness and willingness to integrate into the life and problems of the local community, many of the interviewed TCNs are themselves initiators of activities with a pronounced social orientation or perform many socially significant functions. A refugee from Ivory Coast with a humanitarian status works in the local church as a cleric and at the mayor's office as an assistant. A young migrant from Finland has undertaken to paint and renovate the dome of the church in the village, and at Christmas he plays Santa Claus, joining in the village celebration. The local community appreciates his efforts and desire to be part of them, and when 20 of his Finnish friends arrived for his birthday, they were given free accommodation in the houses of the young migrant's fellow villagers. Another Finnish migrant in the region has organised the sending of animal food from Finland, which is given to Bulgarian animals. British migrants said that they have organised clean-up campaigns in the villages and are involved in such campaigns. One of them has even taught local children how to collect and separate waste. Another migrant is a volunteer at an animal shelter in the area. There are many strong indicators that the TCNs who have chosen the region as their migration destination start to perceive it as a common space shortly after their arrival: 'Bulgaria feels like home' – 'there's so much that can be done.' They go through a process of observing and identifying the needs of the local population and the problems of the area and feel satisfied to support their new neighbours in their own way. This process has a two-way effect. On the one hand, it motivates the locals to rethink the common space through the new perspective of the TCNs. It also generates the emotional effect of the care

and attention that TCNs provide to the locals. These gestures of care prompt the Bulgarians in the villages to welcome the newcomers with joy and interest, making integration a truly two-way process in which TCNs demonstrate their desire to interact and to be helpful in whatever way they can, while the local community creates a friendly atmosphere of acceptance.

## TCNs' presence in the region as a motor of local residents' sense of belonging to the region

One of the newly confirmed understandings of the impact of TCNs on local development is related to local residents' reassessment of the region. TCNs' manifest interest in settling in the region of Harmanli and Haskovo and buying property has given its indigenous inhabitants a new perception of this region. Once perceived mostly as an industrially depressed area, it is increasingly being viewed as a desirable destination to live in, which has positively influenced the individual's attitude towards it on the one hand; on the other, it has also propelled various economic processes and may have a positive impact with regard to the depopulation of the region. For example, an interviewed lawyer from the region told the research team that with the arrival of migrants, locally born people had started to return more frequently to their native places and to show interest in their properties, that is, to repair and maintain their houses. 'And those who don't live permanently in the region are having second thoughts about selling their houses.' Thus, the new perspective of the newcomers adds value to the place, providing a new perspective on living in the region and strengthening the sense of connection.

Most of the TCNs shared and demonstrated a positive view and feeling about Bulgaria: '*Bulgaria is the place of the sun*'; '*Bulgaria is freedom because you don't have to ask for permission to do everything*'; '*Life in Bulgaria is very quiet*'; '*Everything is slow 'cos it's Bulgaria but everything is possible 'cos it's Bulgaria*'; '*Bulgaria is not monetized*'; '*'Bulgaria is good, there is no violence.*' One of the migrants even has a tattoo of the Bulgarian flag and describes herself as a patriot. Other TCNs have immersed themselves fully in the Bulgarian traditions, participating in folk groups where they sing and dance. Still others work hard to promote Bulgaria as a tourist destination.

This attitude towards the country strengthens the locals' sense of pride and belonging and nourishes their feeling that the Bulgarian climate, living conditions and culture are on the one hand sought after and on the other highly appreciated.

## TCNs' digital activism for local development

A large number of the TCNs living in the region are tech-savvy. It is common for migrants to use the digital space to keep in touch with their friends and relatives in their home country or elsewhere. In the case study region, many of the TCNs have a strong digital presence that does not isolate them – on the contrary, it connects them to the local community and to the migrant community in Bulgaria. An example of this is a closed Facebook group called 'South East Alt Immigrants', where migrants share experiences and knowledge on various topics related to life in Bulgaria. There they discuss all sorts of daily-life and household issues. The internet is used as a way to integrate into the local community, on the one hand, and on the other to positively impact local development by promoting the region abroad. Inspired by the natural features of the region, an interviewed migrant has devoted himself to his favourite hobby, photography. His photos, which reach his fellow citizens and friends around the world, have been awarded in local competitions. Besides satisfaction from the creative process, he has made it his goal to promote the bio and animal diversity of the region.

Another example is a British family that has been living in the region for years, which has launched a successful website in an effort to attract more foreigners and to develop a real estate business, highlighting all advantages of the region as well as its cultural and tourist potential, but especially the idea of an alternative lifestyle. The website itself is called 'Alternative Living Bulgaria'. The internet has proved to be a popular and much-visited space, attractive for offering the opportunity to share personal experience that shows that relocation is possible. Finnish migrants maintain a website that promotes Leshnikovo as a destination and provides a guide to migrating to the village. It is stressed that this place offers all conditions for working remotely and having a wonderful life: 'Just like an adult's dream? Working remotely from Leshnikovo, Bulgaria. Step by step towards it.' In fact, this mode is widespread among TCNs. They work remotely for companies in their native or other countries, having chosen a more natural way of life.

In the process of integration, TCNs use the internet to learn Bulgarian. Many of them said that they were building their Bulgarian vocabulary via language learning apps.

The interviews conducted have shown that there is a trend towards the creation of a micro-community of young alternative-lifestyle foreigners aspiring to live sustainably in villages in the region. This trend has the potential to grow. The use of the internet, including websites, YouTube and social media such as Instagram, is a very good way of promoting alternative lifestyles in Bulgaria among other interested foreigners who are inclined to take such a step.

Harmanli and Haskovo are perceived by TCNs as places that offer conditions for achieving goals and dreams that would be impossible in their home country: 'Bulgaria gives us a standard of living. Don't get me wrong – we have enough to live there, but here there are different opportunities'. One should also bear in mind the accessible economic conditions in which more entrepreneurial-minded migrants feel able to take risks by setting up their own businesses. The region and Bulgaria in general is often described as an *affordable destination*. Even the administrative procedure for acquiring residency was highlighted in some of the interviews, in which TCNs pointed out that obtaining residency in Bulgaria is easier than in any other country in the EU, noting that 'it takes 30 minutes and costs 30 leva.'

## Direct positive impact on local development as the result of TCNs' presence in the region

The previous MATILDE reports have addressed and analysed aspects of TCNs' direct impact on local development in the region. The additional information collected during the fieldwork confirms the claim that the region is viewed by some TCNs as suitable for developing social entrepreneurship that supports local development and tourism. Britons have purchased properties in several villages with a plan to convert some of them into holiday homes and others into retreats offering open yoga classes as a prerequisite for tranquillity and quality recreation. Such solutions have beneficial economic effects for the local community as they require numerous services – from legal advice provided by local individuals to the purchase of building materials. This applies to TCNs who have some capital to invest. But in the case of refugees, it should be noted that their presence in the area opens up many job positions in a region where unemployment rates are high.

An example in this respect is the State Agency for Refugees and its structure Registration and Reception Centre – Harmanli, which employs some 130 people (80 employees and 50 security guards). Among the 80 employees there are people commuting from Haskovo, Lyubimets, Simeonovgrad, Svilengrad, and Yambol.

# Examples of good practices or innovative solutions

**Foreigners are developing and managing innovative businesses which increase the attractiveness of the region and are an opportunity to start businesses in depopulated villages.** Examples include a **campervan campsite in the village of Alexandrovo**, set up in 2017 by a British man, which welcomes people from all over Europe and the world, and an **equestrian centre in the village of Srem**, owned by a couple from Scotland and South America and managed by a British woman. The equestrian centre offers a range of youth-oriented activities and creates a more attractive image of the village, attracting many people to the region.

Part of the young British and other foreigners living in rural areas **organise regular village clean-up campaigns involving local people and their migrant friends from other villages.** This is a local example of the drive to unite environmental actions. The idea of the need for joint and collective action for Nature is deeply grounded in human beings. **In this sense, nature conservation is unthinkable without the pooling of efforts and a common mission**. Existing examples in this direction served as inspiration for the team in clarifying the concept of a green participatory activity.

**The 'Intercultural Gardens as Green Bridges' participatory activity itself is an example of a successful practice of building bridges between people and of interpersonal acceptance. It is a demonstration and symbol of the idea that just as every plant with its root has a place within the confines of the garden, so too every person has a place within the common space.**

In many of the conducted interviews, **local festivals and events were described as a platform for social inclusion and an opportunity for TCNs to participate in the local cultural**

**life of the town/village.** TCNs are usually invited to contribute to the events by preparing national dishes**. National cuisine allows 'narrating' personalities and different cultures**. An interviewed woman from Afghanistan said that there is a unifying effect when people cook together. When she cooks, it smells delicious and her neighbours ask, 'What are you cooking, girl?' The senses pique the interest of locals and shorten social distance. **Integration through food is also seen in the cases of TCNs opening restaurants offering their national cuisines**. As a result of the settlement of TCNs, there are now a variety of restaurants in the region serving foreign cuisine. There is an Asian food eatery established by a Japanese woman, a Filipino food eatery, and an Arabic food restaurant.

Local gatherings in a festive atmosphere undoubtedly have the potential to connect people. **The information poster for one such event summed it up: 'People of ten nationalities gathered in the village of Leshnikovo, Harmanli district, to demonstrate friendship and understanding.'**

# Conclusion

The activities planned within WP5 were implemented smoothly. The field studies, the many contacts made and the additional information collected provided the clearest picture of the local context and its needs. This research phase set the direction and laid the foundations for the implementation of the identified tools for analysing TCNs in the region and the development of the chosen participatory activity. Its design and implementation was and is oriented towards the inclusion of all community representatives. The intercultural gardens became a symbol of the 'fruitful' results of joint efforts and solidarity. The initiative sent strong messages of social commitment, nature conservation and valuing cultural diversity as a key to amity and local development. One of the main objectives of action research is to encourage continuous and constant reflection on the research topic, both individually and collectively. This is precisely the concept of sustainable improvement that the Bulgarian team invested in the chosen participatory activity. The subsequent activities and concentration of efforts within the thematic week 'Diversity and Migration', including the photo exhibition 'Faces of Diversity', contributed incredibly to the dissemination of the research results and the visibility of the MATILDE project at national level among different social circles.

# Finland: Ostrobothnia

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## Summary

This participatory action research discusses strategies to make the TCNs staying permanently in four rural Swedish-speaking municipalities in Ostrobothnia, Finland. These municipalities suffer from a labour shortage, and the locals are friendly and welcoming. The TCNs usually come for seasonal work and many refugees leave the area as soon as they can.

The housing situation is good, and there are vacant jobs. Many seasonal TCN workers leave for other seasonal jobs in other places to avoid being unemployed. For refugees with higher ambitions in life than to work in low-paid, low-productive, labour-intense, and temporal jobs the case study region can offer little. The ambitions and plans of the individual refugee determine the willingness to stay in the area. Those refugees picking up Swedish as an integration language in the studied municipalities are more willing to stay than those picking up Finnish, and they are also more willing to undertake vocational training to get a local job. The educational attainment level among the TCNs in the studied area is generally very low.

Few place branding activities are made by the case study municipalities; although they have jobs and housing to offer, friendly and welcoming locals, nobody has heard of them. Place branding activities could improve the situation. To work actively with the place brand signals that you exist and what you can offer for national as well as international in-movers. If the image of a place is good, people will come, and they will stay.

# Introduction

Ostrobothnia suffers from labour shortage and already today immigrant labour play an important role in the production, not only in Ostrobothnia a s a whole, but also in the case study area. The case study area consists of the four municipalities **Kronoby, Larsmo, Nykarleby and Pedersöre** hosting between roughly 5,500 and 11,200 inhabitants. The region Ostrobothnia has a long industrial tradition. Today, the region is classified as an innovative growth area with a focus on the creation of a knowledge-based and environmentally friendly economy. From its strong innovation environment many SMEs as well as numerous international companies benefit. The most important sector in Ostrobothnia is the renewable energy branch that includes bio energy and wind power. Another major branch is the sea cluster. Further sectors of significance are metal industry, plastic industry, and environmental technology. In addition, more service-oriented branches have been developed, including, especially, industry related services such as ICT, media, industrial design, maintenance of energy production systems, and welfare services (CEC, 2019).
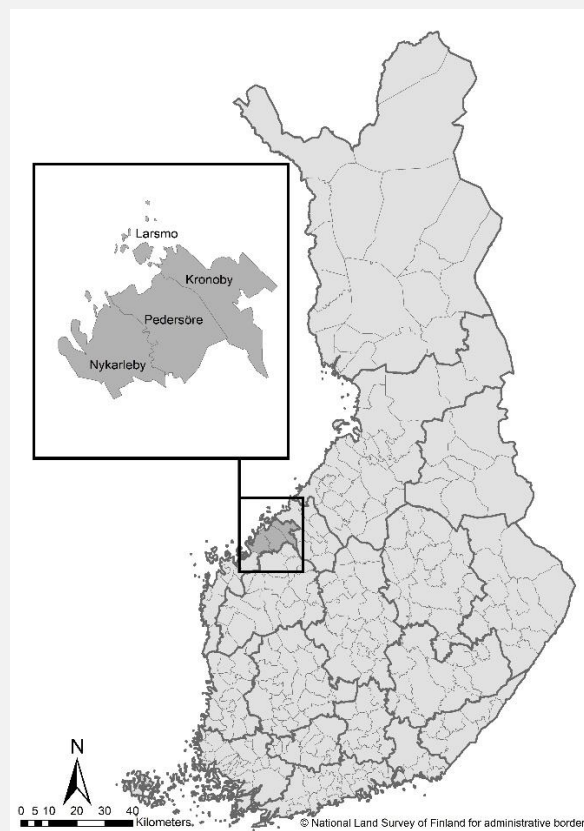


**Figure 1. Map over the case study area in Ostrobothnia, Finland**

The business life and economic structure are diverse and sub-regionally differentiated in Ostrobothnia. The **Vaasa region** is the number one centre in the entire province, and its nationally significant position is strengthened by diverse large companies operating in the global market. The Vaasa region is one of the most competitive regions in Finland, and one of the few economic regions where industrial workplaces have increased during the 2000s. This sub-region has a very diversified and specialised economic structure. About half of the working-age population of the entire province live and work in Vaasa. In the northern part of the region, entrepreneurship and family businesses are among the special features of the **Jakobstad region**. The strength of this sub-region is a diverse and highly specialised industry, comprehensive services and good transport connections. In the **inland region**, basic industries have been the dominant sector. The **southern coastal region** relies on basic industries and has displayed the weakest development. The regional gross domestic product has grown quite slowly during the 2000s in this part of Ostrobothnia. Although job opportunities have declined, the industrial structure in the southern parts of the region still has its main focus on primary production and industry. The proportion of jobs in the service industries, on the other hand, is relative smaller than in Finland on average because the region is more rural (Österbottens förbund, 2017).

The municipalities of **Kronoby, Larsmo, Nykarleby and Pedersöre** have a significantly differing economic structure compared to the rest of Ostrobothnia and Finland. The primary sector is significantly higher in the four studied municipalities than in Ostrobothnia and Finland. The primary sector is dominated by agriculture and fur-farming. Moreover, the manufacturing sector is bigger than in Ostrobothnia and Finland; the manufacturing sector is dominated by SMEs. Lastly, the service sector in the case study area is significantly lower than in Ostrobothnia and Finland (Rauhut, 2021).

Several sectors experience labour shortage and rely entirely on immigrant labour. In the sector for agriculture and fur-farming the shortage refers to unqualified and seasonal jobs, while in other sectors (e.g., ICT, engineering, or industrial design) the demand is for highly skilled labour (Rauhut et al., 2021). In the case study region, the labour demand for unqualified and seasonal labour appears to be met by a matching supply of TCN labour (Rauhut, 2021), but the labour shortage is not mitigated when it comes to highly skilled labour (Rauhut et al., 2021). Generally, the educational attainment level of TCNs in Ostrobothnia is very low (Rautiainen et al., 2021). In the

case study area, representatives from the municipalities report that about half of the TCN women living there have primary education as the highest educational attainment (Rauhut, 2021).

While the locals would like the in-movers – TCNs and natives – to stay, the seasonal workers leave when the fixed-term contracts are up, and many refugees leave for bigger cities after about two years of stay in the case study region. This is to great regret of local stakeholders, who would like them to stay in the area. There is an awareness among the stakeholders that the services that can be enjoyed in the case study area (both for TCNs and natives) is relatively poor compared to bigger cities, that many of the TCNs with a refugee background come from urban areas and hence have difficulties to feel at home in such a rural setting, and that many of the refugees miss their fellow compatriots. Although there is available housing in the case study region, there are not so many jobs available. Moreover, TCNs and natives live to large extent in parallel communities (Pöllänen et al., 2021; Rauhut et al., 2021; Rauhut, 2021). It is positive that there is an awareness of many of the problems and this may contribute to achieving the aim of a higher share of TCNs staying in the case study area. However, the stakeholders have not (yet) identified how to make staying in the area the first choice for the TCNs.

This report discusses why the TCNs are unwilling to stay in the case study region. The report starts with a methodological discussion on how and why the material has been collected, followed by a presentation of a potential theoretical explanation with hypotheses. Then the report will present the findings, and the findings will be both theorised and problematised. The report will end with some final remarks where the findings will be summarised, conclusions will be made as well as potential solutions on how to make the TCNs stay in the case study region will be presented.

# Method and data

This report is an action research report of four studied municipalities in Ostrobothnia, and as such, the findings may not be representative for other municipalities neither in Ostrobothnia, nor in Finland. These four municipalities are not chosen to be representative, but to explicate relevant analytical themes (Yin, 2018). The analytical themes in question for this case study relates to how the labour market functions in Ostrobothnia for TCNs. Behind the wide term 'labour market',

aspects such as the demand and supply of labour, employment and unemployment, and educational attainment levels are included. Since it is possible to live in one place and work in another place, the housing situation, accessibility of services and education as well as communications and commuting patterns are also included.

This participatory action research report has been preceded by several reports. One statistical brief on the social impact of TCNs in Ostrobothnia (Rautiainen et al., 2021) and one statistical brief on the economic impact of the TCNs in Ostrobothnia (Aigner-Walder et al., 2021) have been produced. Moreover, one qualitative assessment on the social impact of the TCNs has been made (Pöllänen et al., 2021) as well as one on the economic impact of TCNs (Rauhut et al., 2021). Besides this, a brief on the selected case study area, based on both interviews/focus groups and statistical data, has been conducted (Rauhut, 2021). The facts and figures for both Ostrobothnia and the selected four municipalities are known, but the underlying processes which make the immigrants leave the case study area as soon as they can, needs to be analysed in detail.

This chapter will describe and discuss the used methodologies, the methodological considerations made and key definitions as well as how the participatory action research has been implemented and how the results are evaluated.

## Key definitions

**Who is an immigrant and who is native**? In the European Union, EU citizens are given the same civic rights as natives, there is a mutual recognition of educational levels and social security benefits are transferred between the Member States. Moreover, one of the basic pillars in the Treaty of Rome 1957 is the free mobility of labour within the EU, which aims at mitigating bottlenecks in the production. By the Maastricht Treaty 1992, EU citizens are supposed to be considered and treated as natives when residing in other Member States. In this study, natives and EU citizens constitute the labour defined as 'native' in this report. Consequently, the TCNs, i.e., citizens who are neither Finnish nationals nor EU citizens, constitute the labour defined as 'immigrant'.

A **labour shortage** occurs when demand for labour exceeds labour supply at a specific wage level, and labour shortages can occur in both the upper and lower labour market segment. The shortage is said to be *relative* if the imbalance can be fixed by a change in wages. Otherwise, the

shortage is said to be *absolute* (Eðvarðsson et al., 2007; OECD, 2003). However, absolute labour shortages are very rare as they imply that there are not human beings enough (Rauhut, 2002). In a short-term perspective, the opportunity cost of replacing labour with capital, i.e., investing in new technology, will be too high. If the labour shortage continues, or even aggravates, over time, the opportunity cost of not replacing labour with capital will be too high. In a long-term perspective, labour shortage is not about being short of labour, but about lacking the capacity to adjust to the structural changes in the economy (Begg et al., 1987; Wonnacott & Wonnacott, 1986; Elliott 1991; Fallon & Verry, 1988).

## Participatory action research

When doing participatory action research (PAR), the researcher serves as a resource to those being studied as an opportunity to them to act effectively in their interest. By doing so, those being studied define the problem and will hence define the research design (Rubin & Babbie, 2014). Participatory action research tries to uncover the relationship between the individual and the social context and the aim is to bring changes to improve some aspects of social conditions (Hall, 2020). Just as for every methodology, participatory action research has its strengths and weaknesses. The most mentioned strengths are:

- To give a voice to disadvantaged groups (Rubin & Babbie, 2014).
- PAR engage the participants to examine and critically appraise their knowledge and how it constrains their action (Hall, 2020).
- It is a useful approach to uncover the relationship between the individual and the social context and to create changes to (Hall, 2020). It can be used to empower disadvantaged groups such as e.g., women and immigrants (Robson, 2010).
- As the researcher actively works with both the identification of a problem as well as finding a solution, the chances of bringing about a change increase (Holme & Solvang, 2010).

Among the weaknesses, the following are the most commonly mentioned in the literature:

- It is easily done to mix up science, on the one hand side, and politics and ideology, on the other hand side, especially if the researcher picks up the role of an activist. The results will then be biased (Bryman, 2003).

- All relevant situations needed to analyse a process are seldom observed. Instead, in PAR, the researcher has to fill in the gaps for the non-observed situations to understand the process (Bryman, 2003). The risk of observational biases is high, e.g., interviewer effect, selective attention, or selective coding, just to mention a few examples (Robson, 2010).

- Just because one actor perceives e.g., being discriminated does not automatically mean that s/he is discriminated. This is not to neglect a self-perceived felling of being discriminated, but rather to the danger of being too involved in the action and hence being biased in the analysis (Robson, 2010).

- The chances to influence politics and policy directly through a single case study, whose replicability and ability to generalise the findings from is limited, are small (Bryman, 2003; Yin, 2018).

By being aware of the weaknesses, it is possible to minimise them. Moreover, it is also important to emphasise that the advantages of the chosen method exceed the disadvantages.

## Observations, participation and participatory observations

Both informal and formal observations have been conducted in this work (Robson, 2010). The **informal observations** have been made through 'hanging around', making notes and talking to people. In some cases, we have not identified us researchers, so people have not been aware that they have been observed. When talking to people, the interviews have been **unstructured**, and so has the note taking from some of the things we observed. However, the 'hanging around' has not been by random and a protocol for **structured observations** was constructed. This was to ensure that we were looking for the same thing and the same situations in the four studied municipalities. Places in the four municipalities were visited to get a scent of the atmosphere, talk to locals and get an impression of how immigrants and natives interacted. To collect comparable observations, places such as e.g., bus stations, shopping malls, libraries and main squares were visited. Also, cafés and restaurants were visited.

In other cases, we have identified us as researchers and described the MATILDE project. Our role in these activities have been active and can be classified as **formal observation**. Magnus Enlund has been hanging around the language and integration schools talking to students.

Although few students wanted to participate in workshops, interviews or focus groups, they were very talkative and willing to describe e.g., what plans they had for the future or what they thought of Finland. A significant number of employers who are well-known for hiring immigrants were contacted. Again, these employers were very friendly, talkative and provided us with lots of information. However, they declined participation in any workshops, interviews or focus groups. The information obtained has been used as field notes from participatory research.

## Emancipatory participation

The empirical material is also collected by interacting with key groups in the communities the action research focuses on. Without the emancipatory participation by e.g., local stakeholders, migrants, community leaders, experts, employers, and NGOs – just to mention a few – the information obtained would have been less rich. While local politicians and persons working in the municipality administration have enthusiastically participated in the focus group interviews in Kronoby, Nykarleby and Pedersöre, similar representatives from Larsmo have declined participation. It has been indicated that this lack of interest is related to the extremely low number of TCNs in Larsmo; immigration/integration is an issue with low (or even no) priority in this municipality.

During this work, 25 persons have been interviewed individually. The interviewees were TCNs, regional and local stakeholders representing the public, private and third sector. An additional six focus groups have been arranged, engaging three-five persons each time; one focus group had a national perspective on the situation in Ostrobothnia, two focus groups had a regional focus, while three had a local focus. The participants represented policy making, public and private sectors as well as NGOs. Besides this, three focus groups have been held with TCNs in the case study region. In total, 52 persons have actively contributed to this report, either via individual interviews or focus group discussions.

The individual interviews followed a semi-structured interview guide, and different guides were used depending on what sector the interviewee represented or was an individual TCN. The common denominator for the interview guides was how to make the TCNs stay in the case study region. The focus groups followed a similar approach. Depending on what organisation and sectors

the participants represented, different variations of the same theme (how to make the TCNs stay in the case study area) was used.

The selection of participants has not been made by random. In the public sector, we have involved people who work at public authorities with issues related to adult education, labour market, regional development and welfare in a wider sense; at the local level we have involved people who work with integration, adult education, housing, planning and leisure. When it comes to the private sector, we have involved single employers as well as employers' organisations and organisations helping people to start companies. At an individual level, we have involved immigrant activists who help immigrants with all kinds of things. We have also involved politicians at national, regional and local level with a connection to the case study area. Regardless their party affiliation, they have enthusiastically assisted us with information. Furthermore, we have interviewed TCNs who have been very helpful in providing us with information. The interviewed TCNs are labour migrants, refugees and marriage migrants, and the interviews have been conducted in Swedish, English, or, in one single case, Finnish.

## Implementation and evaluation

How well a piece of research measures what it sets out to, and how well it reflects the reality it claims to represent is usually referred to as **validity.** If the validity is low, conclusions cannot be made (Robson, 2010). This action research aims at identifying what could make TCNs stay in the case study region, which means that the collected information should come up with suggestions on how to make TCNs stay. Moreover, since reality is subjectively perceived, it is important to analyse the perceived reality of the different key actors to obtain a satisfying validity. Hence, we have collected information from TCNs, from employers and employers' organisations, NGOs, the private and public sector, as well as from politicians. To little surprise, these key actors sometimes have completely divergent perceptions of the problem and potential solutions. However, there are occasions where a similar opinion about both problems and solutions. Conclusions based on such situation will hold a high validity.

To obtain a high validity in our conclusions, we have used several different sources of material – interviews, focus groups, observations and field notes – and we have targeted the key actors (TCNs, employers and employers' organisations, NGOs, the private and public sector, as well

as politicians). By comparing and contrasting the information we obtained, areas where the key actors had similar and overlapping opinions were identified. Conclusions based on similar and overlapping opinions hold a higher validity than when each key actor express different opinions. Lastly, to ensure a high validity, we have compared our findings with findings from previous and ongoing research.

As is the case with all qualitative research, **reliability** is low (Rubin & Babbie, 2014; Robson, 2010; Hall, 2020; Holme & Solvang, 2010). It is not possible to generalise and replicate the findings in this participatory action research report.

## The impact of covid-19

Covid-19 did pose a significant impact on the work with this report. The planned workshops and most participatory activities could not take place. People have been hesitant to meet in person. Luckily, most of the participants were willing to participate in interviews and focus groups **online**. The collected data is rich, but it could catch more nuances if we could have conducted all activities as planned.

Moreover, one of the researchers who worked with this report does not live in Finland and experienced several challenges to conduct the practical field work. Although most challenges were solved, the conclusion is that the field work data would have been richer without Covid-19.

# Potential theoretical explanations and hypotheses

As mentioned in the methodological chapter above, a potential theoretical explanation, with some testable hypotheses, should be formulated early on to explain the analysed phenomenon. If the theoretical explanation and hypotheses cannot explain the empirical evidence, either the used theory and hypotheses must be revised, or the empirical evidence must be reformulated (Hall,

2020). In this report, the potential theoretical explanation and hypotheses are found in the **dual labour market theory**.

In a dual labour market, the labour market consists of two segments. The upper segment is characterised by higher wages, job security, and prospects for advancement. The jobs offered in this segment requires education and high-skilled in character; the productivity is high in the upper segment. In terms of occupations, it consists of e.g., medical doctors, engineers, scientists, managers and specialists. The lower segment, on the other hand, is characterised by short-term employment relationships, little or no prospect of internal promotion, and low wages. In terms of occupations, it consists primarily of low or unskilled jobs, whether they are blue-collar (manual labour), white-collar (e.g., filing clerks), or service industry (e.g., waiters). These jobs are linked by the fact that they are characterised by low skill levels, low earnings, easy entry, job impermanence, and low returns to education or experience. Natives and actively recruited immigrants fill the vacancies in the primary labour market segment, while immigrants and poorly educated natives fill the vacancies in the secondary labour market segment (Piore, 1979; Morokvasic, 1984; Castles and Miller, 2009; Doeringer & Piore, 1980; Massey et al., 1993).

According to this theory, the migration flows are not spatially random. People in the upper segment who migrates usually leave big cities in their country of origin. They head for job jobs in the upper segment in big cities in the country of destination. Since this is such specialised labour, the jobs they look for generally just exist in big cities. The migrants for the lower segment originate from marginalised areas, may it be in cities or countryside, in their country of origin. This labour picks up lower segment jobs where available (Piore, 1979).

From these two potential theoretical explanations, two hypotheses can be generated:

**HYPOTHESIS 1:** The TCNs in the case study area are needed to fill the vacancies in the lower labour market segment, i.e., the jobs offered are generally at low skill levels, low earnings, easy entry, temporary, and have low returns to education or experience.

**HYPOTHESIS 2:** It is difficult to fill the vacancies in the upper segment by highly skilled foreign labour as this labour is not attracted by a life in a rural community. Moreover, the vacancies in the primary sector usually require proficiency in the local language. There is no room for misunderstandings when e.g., a medical doctor conducts his/her profession.

**HYPOTHESIS 3:** Finland has a very knowledge intensive economic structure. Jobs that may be considered lower labour market segment in the country of origin requires some vocational training and experience in Finland (e.g., welders or shop assistants). Many of these jobs also require language proficiency to understand e.g., security regulations, and an ability of interact with other people. This makes the de facto entry level for these jobs higher, and more difficult to fill with unskilled labour with a low educational attainment level in the case study area.

# Results and discussion

We will start discussing the empirical findings in the light of the hypothesis. We will also reflect on to what extent these findings are new. When this has been done, we will theorise the findings and then we will problematise the findings.

## What are the findings?

The share of TCNs in the case study area is low (Fraktman et al., 2021). In e.g., Larsmo and Pedersöre, only 1.6% of the population comes from outside the EU in 2020, and in Nykarleby, with most TCNs, the corresponding share is 5% and in Kronoby 1.8%.[8] However, it must be emphasised that although these shares are low, not all the foreign population belongs to a visible minority. Based on the observations made during the field work it is difficult to observe any major visibility of TCNs and visible minorities in the case study area. When visible minorities can be observed, it is in relation to e.g., shopping centres and public transport nodes. The case study municipalities have made efforts do distribute the TCNs evenly geographically to counteract housing segregation (FOI30; FIO34; FIO39), which reduces the visibility of TCNs in the community.
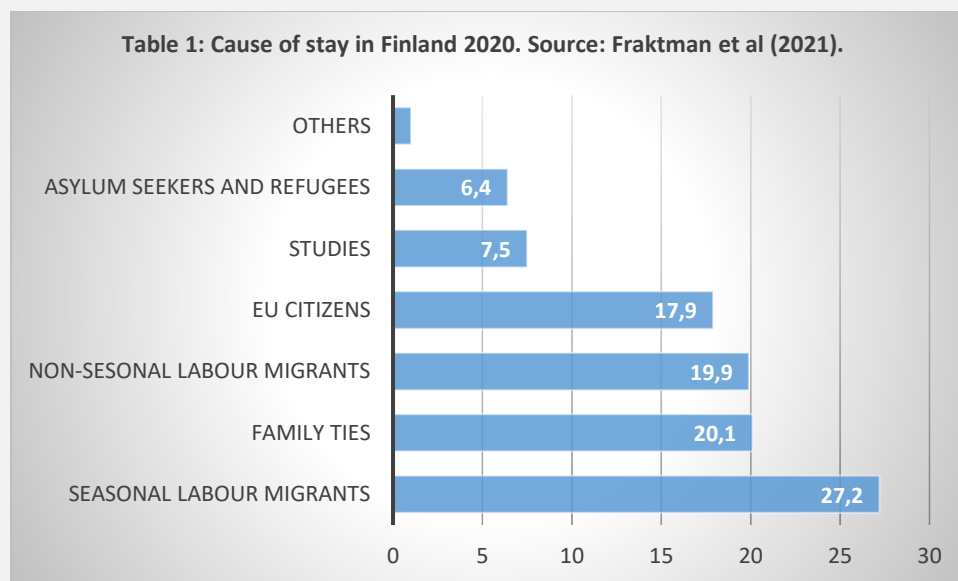
While most of the refugees who pick up Finnish as primary language in the case study area leave as soon as they can, many of those who pick up Swedish as a primary language stay in the

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[8] This calculation is based on the number of TCNs per municipality (Table 3) and the total number of inhabitants per municipality (Table 2) in Rauhut (2021).

area (FIO47). The Swedish speakers are also more likely to enter a vocational training in the area or in the nearby city Jakobstad, even if they have a higher academic degree from the country of origin. Notably, women from Russia and Ukraine have far higher educational attainment levels than the men from the same countries (FIO56). Generally, TCN women are more willing to get an education in Finland than TCN men (FIO31).

**Table 1: Cause of stay in Finland 2020. Source: Fraktman et al (2021).**

| Category | Value |
|---|---|
| OTHERS | |
| ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES | 6,4 |
| STUDIES | 7,5 |
| EU CITIZENS | 17,9 |
| NON-SESONAL LABOUR MIGRANTS | 19,9 |
| FAMILY TIES | 20,1 |
| SEASONAL LABOUR MIGRANTS | 27,2 |

**Table 1. Cause of stay in Finland 2020. Source: Fraktman et al (2021)**

The most common cause of stay in Finland 2020 was seasonal work (27.2%) followed by family ties (20.1%). Only 6.4% of all foreigners had a cause of stay related to being an asylum seeker or refugee (6.4%), see table 1. In Ostrobothnia, the share of seasonal labour migrants is bigger than the national average (Österbottens handelskammare, 2022).

The seasonal labour appears content with staying in the case study area during the season and then leave for other jobs to avoid being unemployed (FIO23). However, in some cases the seasonal workers manage to get 6-8 months consecutive employment by picking up seasonal jobs in different sectors: gardening sector/agriculture during the summer, berry picking in the autumn and fur-farming during the winter. After doing this for a number of years, a few of them manage to get a permanent job in the manufacturing sector (FIO50).

Based on the observations made during the participatory observation, the TCNs in the case study area who plan to leave, Swedish or Finnish speaking, do so because they have other ambitions and plans for their life; working with relatively unqualified jobs or staying in a rural region are not included in these plans. Generally, temporal employment offers no planning

perspective for the seasonal workers. However, Ukrainians tend to remain in the area using the temporal jobs as entry jobs into the regular labour market. Their diaspora networks are strong in the case study area. The fur-farming sector depends totally on the temporal labour especially from Ukraine.

Moreover, refugees who originate from bigger cities and an urban lifestyle find it difficult to adjust to a life in a rural area and hence aim to reallocate to bigger cities. Others feel lonely because the number of TCNs in general and the number of fellow compatriots specifically is low in the case study region. All interviewed TCNs report that they are treated well, and that the population is very friendly and hospitable. Especially TCNs with educations that cannot be recognised in Finland feel that if they stay, they cannot fulfil their own personal ambitions. Those who feel that they are about to meet their own personal ambitions have no plans of leaving. This very positive perception of how the TCNs is received and what perceived welfare they enjoy have been identified in other studies (Malin, 2021).

Parallel to this, the employers and regional development agencies in the case study region report the existence of a disturbing labour shortage (FIO20; FIO21; FIO22; FIO23). This labour shortage is related to the fact that the employers fail to attract labour at the current wages and work conditions, not to a situation where labour does not exist. The competition is so hard that employers would price themselves out of the market if they increased the wages or costs related to work conditions. On the contrary, the costs must be kept down to remain competitive (FIO22). On the one hand side, highly skilled labour with specialised competence is needed for key positions. However, the number of unfilled vacancies is not many for this category, but nonetheless creating costly bottlenecks in the production. On the other hand, there are many relatively unqualified positions, requiring some sort of vocational training, to be filled in several sectors and branches; the number of vacancies for completely unqualified jobs are few (FIO23; FIO29; FIO22).

When the employers try to find applicants to fill the vacancies, the most common way is to advertise in Swedish in the local/regional papers or through the search portal of the Public Employment Service. Hence, also potential Finnish speaking applicants are excluded from the recruitment process (e.g., FOI29; FIO20). However, when approaching SME employers with a reputation of employing foreigners fewer that than expected employed TCNs; they mostly employed EU citizens (FIO48; FIO49; FIO50; FIO55). The employers who employ TCNs are generally very satisfied (FIO20; FIO23; Österbottens handelskammare, 2022), but they emphasise that the

work morale varies significantly between different TCN groups and the TCN groups with highest work morale are attractive and praised for their work (FIO48; FIO49; FIO50; FIO55). Without language proficiency in Swedish, or in Finnish, it is generally very difficult to get a job for the TCNs; it is also very difficult to get a job without any knowledge on how the Finnish society works (FIO48; FIO49; FIO50; FIO55). When talking to employers on an informal basis in line with the participatory observations' methodology, these two aspects – language proficiency and knowledge about the Finnish society – are emphasised. As an example, in supermarkets or in retail, many employers welcome TCNs as employees, but they need to master the language; if they cannot answer questions from costumers, they cannot take the job. In e.g., the forestry sector, TCNs are just as welcome, but only if they master the language good enough to understand security instructions.[9]

Iraqis and Afghans usually manage to find a job while waiting for residency, while Syrians and Congolese struggle with unemployment even after they obtained residency. The jobs these TCNs usually pick up are in cleaning services, fur farming and un/low-qualified jobs in the industrial sector (FIO23). Ukrainians usually work in agriculture and in the seasonal jobs in the agricultural sector (FIO29). Persons from Philippines and Thailand work in the cleaning sector (Rauhut 2021). When it comes to the highly skilled jobs, requiring specialist competence, none of the interviewees or persons we interacted informally with could specify where this TCN labour came from and for what companies it works.[10]

The low educational level and low human capital by some TCN nationalities is seen as an obstacle to employment by the employers. For example, about half of the refugee women in the case study area have only primary education as the highest educational attainment (FIO30). Besides this, some TCN nationalities have perpetual problems with low language proficiency (FIO19; FIO31).

Moreover, the employers generally perceive it difficult to attract TCN labour migrants to the case study region. One reason for this is the exhaustive paperwork which is needed when recruiting labour from outside the EU (FIO21; FIO22; FIO23). There are also other explanations. Many

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[9] The employer has an absolute responsibility to ensure a safe work environment. In case of a work injury due to a neglect of working security instructions and the employer has not ensured that the foreign labour follows the instructions, the employer will be penalised. By rejecting job applicants who do not speak Swedish or Finnish, the risk for the employers is reduced.

[10] Usually, if any respondent specified the nationality of this non-Finnish labour, it was labour from other EU countries.

TCNs have a good knowledge about Finland in general but know nothing about Finland outside Helsinki. Consequently, the interest to move to places outside the greater Helsinki area is low (Laine & Rauhut 2018). However, the municipalities do not work actively with place branding and the image of the case study area (FIO30; FIO34; FIO39; FIO42). Such activity attracts both labour immigrants who immigrate directly from abroad and refugees who resettle within a country (Rauhut Kompaniets & Rauhut 2021). What is done for time being is that some employers show that they exist and that they need labour at international recruitment fairs (FOI29), which is a passive form of marketing the case study area.[11]

The difficulties to attract TCNs to stay in the case study display a complex character. Based on the participatory observations made, the cause of stay in the case study area appears important for the decision on whether to remain in the area or move somewhere else. The TCNs who have come to the case study area to form a family with a native are very willing to stay, learn the language (either Swedish or Finnish) and even studying to become more attractive at the labour market. Labour migrants are willing to stay if they can get a better job and a higher salary. Seasonal contracts do not enable these migrants to settle down in the case study region. For the refugees the situation is somewhat different to start with as they have not chosen to leave their native country voluntarily. This is the group struggling the most with having their education and competence recognised and validated. Refugees with a high human capital appear more likely to see the limited career possibilities as a constraint for staying in the region than refugees with low human capital. For highly skilled refugees, the case study region is "too rural", meaning that the jobs they want to work in do not exist there or the demand for these jobs is very limited. Several of the refugees with a low human capital appears content with life in the case study area. The reasons for leaving go beyond problems in adjusting to a rural lifestyle or missing fellow compatriots. In several of the interviews with persons who work with immigrant integration, with employers and employers' organisations and single TCNs report similar opinions (FIO07; FIO08; FIO42; FIO21; FIO23; FIO52; FIO61).

None of the focus group discussions nor any of the single interviews reported any serious integration problems, social conflicts or even racism against the TCNs. This finding is confirmed by other studies (Malin, 2021) This can partly be explained by the fact that the share of visible

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[11] While plce marketing has to do with the marketing of a certain place, place branding is about changing the perceived image, i.e., the brand, of a place in the minds of a certain target group (Boisen et al., 2018).

minorities among the TCNs is so small that the native population does not feel threatened (in a wider sense). Furthermore, in one focus group discussions, the more open minds towards foreigners by the Swedish speaking minority was mentioned: "the Swedish speaking people are more open, more willing to receive immigrants and help them, than the Finnish speakers" (FIO13). The Swedish-speaking Finns have a welcoming attitude, which is also confirmed by the interviewed TCNs (FIO54; FIO57; FIO58; FIO59; FIO61). All the TCNs we have interviewed or interacted with consider it easy to get a job and housing in the case study area. Aspects such as health status, standard of living and quality of life are higher among refugees in the Swedish speaking parts of Ostrobothnia relative other parts of Finland. The answer lays in language proficiency and inclusion; a refugee who picks up Swedish is likely to be socially included in the local community (Malin, 2021).

## Theorising the findings

The labour demand in the case study area follows the demand described in the dual labour market theory. The upper labour market sector contains highly skilled jobs and specialist competence. These jobs display a high productivity rate, and they are characterised by higher wages, job security, and prospects for advancement. From the interviews and focus group discussions, it is obvious that there are not many such jobs available in the case study region, but the ones existing where the vacancies are not filled create serious bottlenecks in the production. The vacancies in the upper labour market segment in the case study area are usually filled by native labour, i.e., by Finns and EU citizens.

The jobs in the lower labour market segment offered to TCNs in the case study region require low skill levels, low earnings, easy entry, job impermanence (seasonal or fixed-term contracts) and have low returns to education or experience. There is no or little prospect of internal promotion. The reported labour shortage in the case study region emerges when the natives do not want to work under such conditions and the TCNs have higher ambitions than staying in the area to pick up jobs in the lower labour market segment.

According to the dual labour market theory, no integration problems are expected as long as foreigners take the jobs the natives do not want to have, especially in the lower labour market sector. However, when the foreigners and their children demand higher education and try to climb

in the socio-economic hierarchy, the integration problems will emerge (Piore 1979). The welcoming and hospital attitude by the natives towards the TCNs in the case study area indicate that the TCNs do not disturb the established current socio-economic hierarchy. This may change if the TCNs try to advance upwards. Leaving the case study area for cities in southern Finland can be interpreted as an easier way to move upwards in the socio-economic hierarchy. Such interpretation is in line with the literature on the dual labour market theory (Morokvasic 1984; Piore 1979).

When linking these findings to the three hypotheses generated from the dual labour market theory, the findings confirm these hypotheses:

- Yes, the TCNs in the case study area are needed to fill the vacancies in the lower labour market segment.
- Yes, it is difficult to fill the vacancies in the upper segment by highly skilled foreign labour; these vacancies are filled by natives or EU citizens.
- Yes, most vacancies in the case study region require some vocational training and experience as well as language proficiency, which makes the entry level for these jobs higher, and more difficult to fill with TCN labour with generally low human capital and educational attainment levels.

In other words, immigrant labour is needed to take the low-paid, labour intensive jobs with little job security and career possibilities. These are the jobs the natives do not want to work in. Without the immigrant labour, it would be difficult to keep up the production.

## Problematising the findings

If a local or regional economy does not have sufficient savings to invest in capital or infrastructure, or if its market is too small, then its productivity level will remain low and will fuel a vicious circle of underdevelopment. Limited market expansion, low savings, and consumption reduced stock of capital in the economy and low income are all influential factors, and both supply and demand will be too low to trigger any expansion of the local or regional economy (Figure 2). The result is a vicious circle of underdevelopment (Capello 2016).
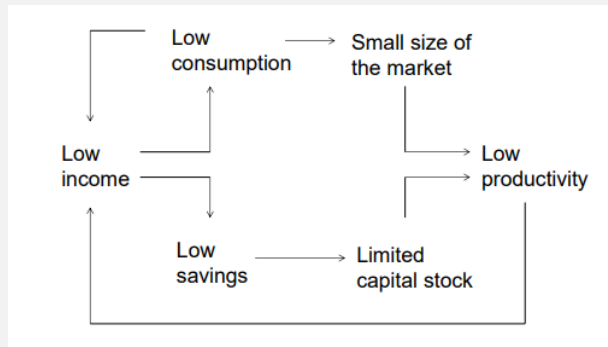
**Figure 2. The vicious circle of regional underdevelopment. Source: Modified after Capello (2016).**

Wealthy and economically prosperous regions attract human capital from other parts of the country as well as from other countries. This will increase the pressure for rationalisation in the regions losing human capital. Although these regions cannot keep the labour with the highest human capital, it is not a disaster. According to Roberta Capello (2016, p. 155), "backward regions offer locational advantages due to their relatively lower wages and unit labour costs, and therefor attract capital /…/ which increases the competitiveness of local industry. Traditional labour-intensive manufactures may therefore be advantageous to backward or relatively newly industrialized areas." A relatively small number of labour immigrants in low-productive and labour-intensive branches can keep the production going, and hence save the jobs for a multiple number of natives in the same region. If the production keeps going, the government will still receive tax revenue from employees and companies, and consumption will be upheld. If labour is replaced with capital, people will be unemployed and there will be a cut in tax revenues and consumption. This will cause a net cost for the government. Seen from this perspective, immigrant labour in the lower segment of the labour market, i.e., in low-productive and labour-intensive branches, are valuable for these rural and peripheral host regions. **While the TCNs contribute to make the case study area stuck in the vicious circle of underdevelopment, they also contribute to increase the relative competitive advantages for the region towards other regions hosting traditional labour-intensive production**. A structural change to increase e.g., productivity, savings, consumption and incomes would also reduce the relative competitive advantage. To make TCNs stay in the case study region must be built on this premise.

However, innovation and entrepreneurship play a key role for regional development, and immigrant entrepreneurship as well as innovations by immigrants can break a negative development. This is the case both when it comes to goods, but also for some services. In cases

where the produced services are highly productive and capital intensive, then they can stimulate regional economic growth and development (Nijkamp & Poot 2012). The level of immigrant entrepreneurship is low in the case study region and none of the respondents have heard about innovations by immigrants. If immigrants start companies, it is usually in the labour-intensive and low productive service sector. Most immigrants are employed, with little interest in starting their own business (FIO30; FIO34; FIO35; FIO38; FIO41; FIO42).

# Conclusion

This report discusses why the TCNs are unwilling to stay in the case study region in Ostrobothnia, Finland. The interviewed TCNs and when we have conducted participatory observations indicate that the local population is perceived as friendly and welcoming. The area offers housing, education and good health care. The interviewed TCNs emphasise that there are available jobs in the area. However, the available jobs are in the lower segment of the dual labour market, and this may explain why some of the TCNs want to leave the case study area. Those TCNs who have other ambitions in life than working in low-paid, low-productive and labour-intense low-status jobs will search for alternative places to re-allocate to, places perceived to offer them the opportunities they look for. Seasonal workers cannot stay when their fixed-term contracts are up. This explanation appears more creditable than the sweeping and generalised explanations based on missing fellow compatriots or missing an urban lifestyle. No doubt, for some TCNs this is definitely true, but the personal ambitions of the single migrant appear a more significant cause for leaving the case study region (or staying).

These findings cannot be considered new, nor revolutionising. Previous research has pointed out that immigrants usually start their working life in Finland via 'entry occupations', i.e., jobs in the lower labour market segment (Forsander 2002; Sjöblom-Immala 2016). Initially, the immigrants on the Finnish labour market perform worse than the natives, but over time some of the income and employment gaps are narrowed (Sarvimäki, 2010; D'Amuri & Peri, 2010). When these findings are compared to existing knowledge on immigrants on the labour market no surprises are offered

(Kondoh 2017; Borjas & Chiswick 2019; Bodvarsson & Van der Berg 2013; Stark 1991).[12] Also the perceived welcoming of the locals and what perceived welfare the TCNs enjoy in these Swedish-speaking parts of Finland have been surveyed (Malin, 2021).

That refugees try to avoid rural Finland is not a new finding, nor that many try to move to the major cities in southern Finland, or even abroad, as soon as they can after obtaining residency (Laine & Rauhut 2018). In this case study research, we have also been able to identify that some refugees want to stay. The project 'STRATEGI' (Stannare på landsbygden i svenska Österbotten) points at similar findings when it comes to motives of TCNs with regards to the decision whether to stay or leave Ostrobothnia.[13] Historically, similar findings as identified in this report can be found.[14]

What can be done to alleviate, or, even, counteract the trend of outmigration from the case study area in Ostrobothnia? During the work with this PAR, we have identified three crucial points of which two can be addressed by the municipalities and the private sector actors at the local level. The first deals with **place branding and public diplomacy**. Place branding is about local actors working with the image of the area. By systematically presenting this area as an area for the future, an area where the dreams of the in-movers can come true, a prosperous and welcoming area, the image of this place will change and make it more attractive – regardless for natives, EU citizens and TCNs. Public diplomacy is about public actors in one country communicating with residents in other countries. The aim is to make these residents to get a more positive perception of the place which the sender is residing in. Both labour migrants and refugees are receptive to information disseminated by place branding and public diplomacy activities, and they will change their mind of a place (see Rauhut Kompaniets & Rauhut, 2021). None of the municipalities in the case study area work actively with place branding and public diplomacy today. Such work requires long-term strategies.

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[12] A huge labour shortage existed in the **lower labour market segment** in Sweden during the 1950s and 1960s, which was mitigated by a huge labour immigration. The structural transformation of the Swedish economy was slowed down as stagnating sectors were kept alive by cheap foreign labour, something which made the structural crisis in the 1970s longer and more painful than it could have been (Lundh & Ohlsson 1994).

[13] Based on information by the project coordinator Kenneth Norberg, 17 January 2022.

[14] Many highly skilled refugees to Sweden in the 1950s and 1960s left the country after only a few months stay simply because they realised that only jobs in the lower labour market segment were available for them. Those who remained never received any return to their human capital (Rauhut 2014).

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Second, today there is an over-belief in so called 'place-based' strategies. Solutions to problems different places encounter should be addressed by mobilising the endogenous resources of the place. What happens if there are too few resources to mobilise, i.e., no critical mass can be achieved, is never discussed. However, in the case study area, it is very clear to us that the TCNs would like to stay in the area if life there is in line with their own ambitions and plans in life. To us, **a more successful strategy to make the TCNs remain in the area should be centred on the individual** and not the place. If the individual TCN does not perceive that the studied municipalities can make their individual dreams come true and provide a bright future for them, no place-based strategy can make them stay in the area. It is good if the place welcomes the in-movers because they are needed, but if the in-movers do not see an added value in staying, they will leave as soon as they can.

Third, there is one systemic error which easily can be adjusted, and it would make life easier for both the municipalities in the case study area as well as the refugees allocated there. **The integration language should follow the geographical area to which the refugees are settled in**. That the Finnish immigration authorities inform the refugees that in Finland Finnish is the language they should study, and then the refugees are allocated to an area which is Swedish speaking cause more harm than good. If the refugees pick up Finnish in a Swedish speaking area, they will exclude themselves from social life, the labour market and make their inclusion into the local society more difficult than is needed.

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# Finland: North Karelia

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## Summary

The main objective of the Matilde North Karelia case study was to examine the meaning of languages in the lives of TCNs and how the knowledge of different languages affects the impact of TCNs in rural areas. The research team has been conducting ethnographic fieldwork, which consists of interviews, focus group interviews, photographs, ethnographic observations and social mapping. The research was conducted in two rural municipalities: Lieksa and Kitee. Data was collected from NGOs, church employees and immigrants themselves. The UEF team implemented research visits using co-research methods, which means that the group of researchers and the local partner representative from JoMoni (the multicultural association of the Joensuu region) has been working together in all stages of the case study research.

During the MATILDE-project, we have had the opportunity to work with two different multicultural associations in the region and few other stakeholders. The first association operating is Aljans in the Kitee region, which promotes Russian language and culture, but also better integration of the Russian speaking community. The second association is the Lieksa Somali Family Association and the Metka community house which they operate. Metka offers a platform for different kinds of activities for a diverse multicultural population in Lieksa. We also worked with the Lutheran Church of Lieksa and folk high schools in both Kitee and Lieksa.

The outcomes of the case study research indicates that, in North Karelia, the multicultural associations are a good and often innovative practice to foster the impact and

recognition of migrants as well as development of their language skills. Both NGOs we worked with also provided working opportunities and provided practical assistance for migrants. While in Kitee it was somewhat possible to integrate into the local life with Russian, it was still clear that in order to fully operate in the society and in work life especially, the knowledge of Finnish was necessary. The area that Aljans could still improve upon could be the association's co-operation with the local community in general. Aljans is concentrating on Russian language and culture, but to have more impact in the local community in general, more co-operation with locals would be needed. In the Metka house, the environment works quite well as an umbrella for different kinds of activities. The biggest challenge in Lieksa was that the Lutheran church and Metka do not seem to be co-operating well in terms of multicultural work. More co-operation between these two active actors could be useful.

# Description of activities

## Case study objectives

**The main objective of the North Karelia case study was to examine the meaning of languages in the lives of TCNs in rural North Karelia.** The aim was to figure out how the knowledge of different languages affects the impact of TCNs in rural areas. This theme was selected for the case study because of the visible polarisation of migrant groups in North Karelia. While there is a large Russian speaking minority in North Karelia, there is also a significant number of other migrant groups such as asylum seekers, refugees and students in the region. The reason for migration has also had an impact on language skills in the new home country as well as the ability to adopt new languages. Language is one of the most important parts of the integration process for migrants in their new home regions. In rural areas it also seems that the commonly used English language is not the most valuable tool

for communication and interaction with locals. Therefore, language and communication are selected as the analytical objective of this case study. The importance of language is studied from the perspective of the migrants' integration and impact in local rural places in North Karelia, Finland.

The objectives of the North Karelia case study have been ethnographically observed in the local surroundings from the perspective of social interaction, language and integration. The research questions for action research have been:

1. How is the language learnt and used in everyday situations? What are the meanings of different languages?
2. What kind of language communities are there in the local places? Which languages are dominating and why?
3. What is the importance of Finnish and how is it affecting social interaction and population relations?
4. Are there any forms of language-based communities in local places?

## Actors involved

The two case study municipalities in North Karelia are Lieksa and Kitee. Both municipalities have about 10 000 inhabitants. Lieksa and Kitee were selected due to their representativeness of rural municipalities in North Karelia with a significant migrant population. Both chosen places are representative of a small rural town. Lieksa and Kitee have been struggling during the past decades due to the rapidly changing demographic structure. Another connecting dimension for these two municipalities is their relatively short history with immigration. Before the late 1990s and early 2000s, immigration was a marginal phenomenon in Lieksa and Kitee. In more recent times, however, it has become much more

relevant. The case study municipalities were selected because they represent different migration profiles: in Lieksa the immigrant population is diverse with a lot of quota refugees being settled there; while in Kitee, Russian speakers form most of the migrant population. Both municipalities have also taken in a lot of student migrants in the last few years.

Data was collected from NGOs, church employees and immigrants themselves. The UEF team implemented research visits using co-research methods, which means that the group of researchers and the local partner representative from JoMoni have been working together in all stages of the case study research. The field trips were planned together, the data was mostly collected together, and the analysis and report have been done collectively. This is important as it ensures that the reliability of the analysis is tested among several people.

The MATILDE case study stakeholders were the Lutheran church in Lieksa, the Lieksa Somali Family Association (Metka house), the Evangelical Folk High School of Kitee, the immigrant association of Central Karelia, Aljans, in Kitee, and the Lieksa Christian Institute (a folk high school). The multicultural associations, especially Metka and Aljans, had several ongoing projects of their own with the overall funding of these NGOs being based on them. The action research was also offering a platform for exchanging information and creating new innovative practices amongst these actors.

The people interviewed, individually or as participants of focus group interviews, are those who are taking part in the activities organised by local stakeholders: different multicultural associations, local education institutions and the Lutheran church. The informants were collected by using a snowball method with the help of key informants. The data collection process was kept as open and free as possible and informants were not asked details concerning their age, nationality, ethnicity or, for example, the position in Finnish labour markets. Some of these details did come up during the data collection spontaneously, however. The actors involved in were from nine different countries of origin and from multiple ethnicities. Within the Russian speaking communities there were at least four minority ethnicities present. In Kitee most of the informants were women with only few men participating. The gender division between participants involved in the case study was more

balanced in Lieksa, with nine of the participants being men and eight were women. Almost all the participants were still working-aged, excluding the two underaged participants. Among the participants was almost an equal split between labourers, students and the unemployed with most being under somewhat precarious circumstances regardless of the work life situation. Almost all the informants had been taking part or were currently taking part in official language courses.

In the multicultural activities that we familiarized ourselves in, most of the organizers were women and native Finns. Among the 14 employees of the stakeholders that we met during our research only three were men and six were immigrants (four of them in Metka). Not all of these employees took an active part in our data collection but were present in the sites when we visited them. Five of the employees took part in our focus groups and five (partly the same people) were interviewed unrecorded.

## Activities performed

The field trips in North Karelia have utilised the wondering and wandering around -method, which follows the derive method introduced by Precarias a la Deriva (2009). The data collection includes observations and qualitative interviews. In addition, four focus group interviews have also been conducted during the field trips. The data collection has been successful, and the research group has gathered a lot of new and interesting material, some of which is considered a little surprising, because the UEF team has already been quite familiar with the context of rural North Karelia before the case study.

In North Karelia, there were series of parallel research visits to the two case study municipalities: Lieksa and Kitee. Six research visits have been implemented in rural municipalities (four in Lieksa and two in Kitee). The last visit to Lieksa was already concentrating on the dissemination of the research results. The data collection for the case study was conducted between November 2021 and February 2022, with a five-member research team.

The action research took place in two steps. First, the MATILDE team, which consisted of researchers from the Karelian Institute and a representative from the local partner, JoMoni, visited the two case study municipalities. The aim of these visits to local case study locations was to collect ethnographic information and data and to agree on and design the focus groups. During the first visit, the research team met many local actors and TCNs in different pre-agreed unofficial meetings.

In Lieksa, the first fieldwork trip took place in the Metka house, which is run by the Lieksa Somali Family Association. During the same day, the MATILDE team visited the Lutheran parish in Lieksa and met with two parish workers. The aim of these visits was to discuss the relevant themes of the North Karelia case study research and to discuss and decide upon future actions. This visit was the first step of the case study research. The first ethnographic, non-recorded interviews were conducted during this visit.

During the first fieldwork trip to Lieksa, the researchers and workers from the Lutheran church decided to set up a series of collaborations for the Spring of 2022, where local migrants, Finnish speakers, church authorities and researchers will unofficially gather to talk about relevant societal issues such as living in rural Finland, dying and post mortality in a transnational context, leisure time in rural Lieksa and other relevant topics.

In Kitee, the first field trip focused on the same themes as the field trip to Lieksa. The MATILDE team visited a local multicultural association, Aljans, whose work is mostly focused on Russian culture, language and integration. The MATILDE team and a local Aljans activist were present at this meeting. The meeting was very productive. The JoMoni representative and Aljans activists agreed that it would be beneficial to organise a support network for multicultural associations in North Karelia. This network would include a series of workshops where JoMoni, Lieksa Somali Family Association, Aljans and North Karelian Society for Social Security (a regional NGO) can come together to exchange information regarding funding, integration, activities and other good practices. It is hoped that this network of associations will be a long-term outcome of the MATILDE project and that it helps to bring multicultural associations in North Karelia together for future cooperation opportunities.

The other meeting in Kitee was organised together with the Evangelical Folk High School of Kitee. At the meeting, there were migrants, their teachers and the MATILDE team. During the first trip to Kitee, both the ethnographic interview and focus group interview were conducted at the same time. Due to the nature of the meetings, these interviews are not recorded, but the research team took fieldwork notes.

In the second phase of the case study the focus groups were organised in Kitee and Lieksa. In these groups the focus was on migrants' opinions and views about their everyday life, social contacts and the meaning of different languages in their everyday lives. The participants were mostly TCNs with a few exceptions being workers from the organising institute who were also present at these focus group discussions.

## Tools and methodological approach

The North Karelia case study research lies methodologically in an ethnographic tradition (Vila (ed.) 2003; Passerini et al. (eds.) 2007). The research team has been conducting ethnographic fieldwork, which consists of interviews, focus group interviews, photographs, ethnographic observations and social mapping.

When gathering the data for this report we used multiple tools from the MATILDE toolbox. The main tools were observations and the focus groups. We also had informal meetings both with groups of migrants and the local actors (NGOs, the Lutheran church and the Folk High School) that we had been in contact with. Some of these meetings happened unintentionally on our part and this is the reason why they were not recorded. For example, when we went to meet the employees of the Kitee Evangelical Folk High School, we were welcomed by a class full of Finnish language course students. It was originally expected that we would be meeting only with the Finnish language teachers. We also had irregularities in the focus groups we organised because all of them had some changes both in attendees (which we had previous knowledge of) and the final number of participants when we arrived to hold the groups. While this caused some confusion at the beginning of the focus groups, they ended up going quite smoothly. During our first observational field trips to Lieksa and

Kitee, we also had three unrecorded interviews with the representatives of the local actors we were meeting. Later, an extra unrecorded interview was held virtually with a representative of the Lieksa Christian Institute which organizes language courses in the municipality. All the data collection activities were done between the 1st of November 2021 and the 17th of February 2022.

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(Direct) Observation

The foundation of the North Karelian action research relies upon ethnography since direct observations are an important part of the data collection process of this case study. Direct observations and ethnographic observations have been conducted in parallel to all other data collecting methods during the period of action research in North Karelia. The direct observations can be described via the drifting methodology. The drifting method has been used in all stages of the action research.

      The ethnographic data collection is inspired by the concept of drifting (Precarias a la Deriva 2009, Lehtola & Tedre 2012). This method has previously been used in the studies of precarious groups, such as migrants or part-time workers. The concept has its roots in the Marxist problematisation of the nationalised framework of social life. This methodological approach forms a loose framework for combining different methods of collecting and analysing data, while acknowledging the co-presence of the researchers and respondents in physical and social spaces. The research is conceptualised as a journey and a drift that can be led by the researched and researchers, not as digging up pre-existing information. The research team has been implementing the wandering and wondering idea and it has been important that the team has been drifting as a group. Beyond the drifting, wandering and wondering, the constant discussion between team members has been part of the data collection and analysis of the data. The observations are done collectively during the action research process and the data collection (observations) and analysis of data have been done simultaneously. As is often the case in ethnographies, in this research, the data collection and data analysis are parallel processes conducted collectively.

By using the drifting methodology, we aim for the most sensitive and grounded method of data formation possible. As team members are walking together in physical spaces and places it can reveal, firstly, how one's "own" way of seeing and experiencing is culturally and socially conditioned, but it can also make new, sensory and affective knowledge possible. The direct observations are based on wandering and wondering and are also parallel to a social mapping method.

We started the planning of data collection by contacting and organising meetings with local actors (e.g., NGOs, churches and educational institutions). The aim of the first visits to the locations was to initiate contact and plan for future action such as the focus groups and to also establish future contact with the researchers and setting up social contacts.

In early November in Lieksa, we met both with the staff of Metka house and the Lutheran church. Both meetings were held at the actors' own sites. We did not do a lot of observations outside of these locations. In both places we talked about the main activities of the actors and set up a date for one focus group with each actor. We also set up extra meetings and appearances at each actor's future events. Later, part of our research team attended a holiday event (mid-December) organised by Metka house and other local actors and some members of the research team are also attending events organised by the church in the Spring of 2022.

The meeting in Metka house was very informal, laid back and the number of people attending fluctuated during the course of the meeting. There were also visitors from the local vocational school (Riveria) present who were partly listening and participating in the meeting. The number of people fluctuated between two and eight. Many of the migrants present were those who are also working in Metka house, but some were also regular visitors who attend its activities on a regular basis. At the parish community centre, we met with two employees who are responsible for organising activities for immigrants in the local church. This event was much more formal and direct. Later, we also spoke to people from the Lieksa Folk High School in an online meeting. Through these meetings, we managed to attract a few attendees for the focus group we were organising with the church.

When visiting Kitee in late November, we first met with members of the multicultural association, Aljans, which mostly offers services and activities for the Russian speaking immigrant population in Kitee and the neighbouring municipalities. We mainly talked to the chairperson of the association about their activities and other prevailing issues. We agreed upon a preliminary date for a focus group and contacts between Aljans and other multicultural NGOs in the region. The meeting was conducted almost fully in Russian. In the Folk High School, we were expecting to meet the principal of the school and possibly some of the language teachers but when we arrived, we were greeted by a room full of students together with the teachers. After the early confusion, we held an unrecorded focus group session where we discussed language and issues surrounding it in the local context of Kitee. There were three staff members and between 12 and 15 students who were all adults. A large majority of the students were from Russia but at least one of them was part of an ethnic minority. There were also a few attendees originally from Western Asia and North Africa. While we did not arrange any other meetings with the Folk High School, we did ask them later for help in finding attendees for our other focus group in Kitee.

The observations also took place in a Christmas celebration named the "Lieksan Valon Juhla" ("Lieksa feast of light") which was organised in co-operation by local public schools and the Lieksa Somali Family Association. The event took place mid-December. The interaction between different language groups was observed by researchers in the celebration had an estimated attendance of 60. The atmosphere at the event was relaxed and joyful. People were talking with each other freely and were celebrating the upcoming Christmas holiday season together. In addition, one researcher of the MATILDE team visited Metka house at the beginning of 2022 to attend a meeting which was organised to introduce the NGO's activities for the on-going year. The other reason for this occasion was to introduce the new project worker of Metka house. In this meeting, researcher Pirjo Pöllänen was conducting ethnographic observations, but in addition to this there was an opportunity to tell the small group of local actors the results of action research conducted in North Karelia and to introduce some practical suggestions of how to improve TCN's impact in local

surroundings. At this meeting there were roughly 30 people from the local vocational school, local Lutheran and Orthodox church and other activists from Lieksa and Joensuu.

At all these events, the research team members have been observing the interaction between migrants, local dwellers and the meanings of different languages. The observations have given a lot of useful and unique data for the research team. The observation notes are written in individual field notes, which each member of the research team has been writing individually. The analysis of the fieldnotes written in this report was produced collectively by the research team after discussing each event.

The direct observations were carried out in the way it has been planned according to the MATILDE guidelines. The direct observations, together with interviews and focus group interviews, ended up being the most fruitful tools for collecting data for the North Karelia case study. The target groups of the direct observational tool are the two rural communities, Lieksa and Kitee, in North Karelia. We were observing multicultural interactions from the language perspective.

## Focus groups

The primary data collection tool was a focus group interview method. Four focus groups were organised in two municipalities, two in Lieksa and two in Kitee. All focus groups were following the same loose interview structure as was used in the qualitative interviews. The interview structure followed a list of themes that would be covered during the focus group interviews. The content included questions concerning language teaching, use of different languages and more general questions about migrants' everyday lives in local places and, most of all, the activities of the stakeholders. The target groups for focus groups were TCNs from different backgrounds but we also had few stakeholder employees present in them.

The first focus group took place in Kitee on the 24th of November at the Evangelical Folk High School. There were between 12 and 15 participants present in the group during the duration of the meeting. The participants were students at the Evangelical High School and their teachers.  They were all working aged, most being approximately between 20 and 40

years with three migrant participants and the three Folk School employees being older. The researchers were using a co-research methodology and there were four team members participating in this focus group interview. The preliminary aim of this meeting was to familiarise the research group with the local conditions, but organisers from the local stakeholder had already arranged for a large group of their students to be present without our previous knowledge. Therefore, we decided that to be able to gain authentic material and information, it would be necessary to organise an ad-hoc focus group interview during this first meeting. Due to this unpreparedness, this focus group was not recorded. The research team also decided that because so many researchers were present, it would be easy to make notes and gain the necessary information even if the meeting was not recorded.  Most of the participants were Russian speakers or they spoke fluent Russian, so the research team decided that Professor Olga Davydova-Minguet would act as an interpreter if the participant felt more comfortable speaking Russian instead of Finnish. Russian speakers were participating both in Finnish and in Russian, and the atmosphere in the focus group was relaxed and friendly. The teachers of the migrant students informed the MATILDE team after the focus group meeting that it was very empowering for many students to be able to participate in this meeting. The students had the impression that their everyday issues were valued and that the researchers were interested in their integration and social interaction processes.

The second focus group took place in Lieksa at the Metka house on the 1st of December. There were seven participants who were from five different countries of origin. Only two out of seven were women after two had to cancel due to illness. While we did not ask their age, all the participants except for one were clearly under 40 years old.  Four of the participants were quota refugees or asylum seekers, two were student migrants and one had migrated because of family. The language used in the focus group meeting was Finnish and there were only two researchers present. This focus group interview was recorded. The level of Finnish language for most informants was fluent or satisfactory. However, there were a few participants whose Finnish was at a poor level. Overall, the communication and interaction between the researchers and the migrant participants was smooth and fluent and it seemed

that many migrants were happy to know that the researchers were interested in their everyday matters. Some of the participants were much more actively involved in the discussion while some mostly answered when asked directly. Those who were more active were also those who were more fluent in Finnish.

The third focus group interview took place in Lieksa at the Lutheran church on the 1st of December. In total, there were 10 participants in the group including one church employee. The presence of some participants was a complete surprise to us, and one participant left after the beginning of the meeting without saying a word. Two participants that we had previous knowledge of did not show up to the meeting. The immigrant participants were from a variety of different backgrounds, originating from four countries. Six of the participants were women and all the immigrant participants were working-aged except for one underaged participant attending with her mother. All immigrant participants, except for one family migrant, were either quota refugees or asylum seekers. Two researchers were hosting the focus group interview, which was recorded. The level of Finnish language for most of the participants was poor as some had not been in the country for long. The meeting took place in the evening, and it appeared that the researchers and many of the migrant participants were tired due to the timing of the focus group. This focus group was, however, crucial for the data collection because, in this group, the researchers had an opportunity to meet with new informants from certain minority groups who have previously been difficult to reach for research purposes, such as a marriage migrant from South-East Asia and Russian speaking ethnoreligious minorities. This meeting was successful because researchers could concretely deliver information to migrants. There were some young migrants present who felt empowered by this meeting because their opinions were heard, and they also gained new information about possible pastime activities in the Lieksa region.

The fourth focus group was held in Kitee on the 17th of February 2022 at Aljans' office building. The meeting was originally planned for the 10th of January but because of local Covid-19 restrictions it had to be postponed. There were seven participants in the meeting including the chairperson of Aljans. Two of the participants were men, with one male participant also being underaged. All the participants were from Russia with four being from

ethnic minority backgrounds from within Russia. Five of the participants were middle-aged or older. While all had migrated from Russia, they had done it for multitude of reasons. Four had arrived either as family migrants or through the exceptions given to Finnish minorities within Russia. The three of the most recent arrivals were student migrants but one of them stated that he also had political motivation to leave Russia. We had interviewed one of the participants in a previous part of the MATILDE-project in early 2021. While we encouraged the use of Finnish, only one of the participants was fluent in it and thus much of the conversation was held through an interpreter. Some of the participants could clearly understand Finnish quite well, while at least one had only the knowledge of the most rudimentary language. Three of the seven took a more active role in the conversation than the rest, but we made sure that everyone had an opportunity to participate. There were four researchers present in the meeting with one acting as the interpreter (Professor Olga Davydova-Minguet). Before we started, there were not many expectations for the event as we did not know what the final attendance would be. We knew from earlier conversations that the local partner had had difficulties in getting people to join the group. As this was the case, we ended up being pleasantly surprised by both the attendance and the discussion we had. The topics that were raised by participants were mainly focused on the practical side of language and potential issues around it, which were, primarily, the effect on employment and social life. While we did try to keep the discussion on topic, we could not escape the current reality of Russian state politics, the views Russian immigrants have on it and the effect on the lives of the attendees.

The data collected in the focus groups are abundant and useful for our analyses. As stated earlier, due to the misunderstanding between the local stakeholder and the research team, one focus group was not recorded. Due to Covid restrictions in North Karelia, we had to postpone the last focus group to mid-February. We feel, however, that these issues had very little impact to the outcomes of the case study.

During the observational phase of our research activities, we conducted four unrecorded qualitative interviews. The interviews were not recorded to keep discussions and the atmosphere more relaxed than if the interviews had been recorded. The qualitative interview tool was altered regarding the recording the interviews. It was hoped that this would allow the interview situations to be as relaxed as possible and also because qualitative interviews were only a supplementary part of data collection, which was concentrating mostly on the usage of focus group interviews and direct observation tools. The target group for qualitative interviews were workers of different organisations in the multicultural sector.

The interview structure followed a loose list of themes that would be covered during the interviews. The interview content included questions concerning languages used by migrants, questions about how language teaching is organised, general questions about migrants' everyday lives in local places and, most of all, the activities of the stakeholders. Three of the interviews were conducted during the first visits to the locations and the last one was held virtually at a later date.

The research group had an advanced overview of the local situations according to previous interviews conducted in the MATILDE project. These interviews are acting as a foundation for the actual case study in the two municipalities. The aim of the qualitative interviews conducted in the WP5 case study is to provide a deeper understanding of local situations. Therefore, the researchers were keen to make these interview situations as relaxed and open as possible.

In Lieksa, the first interview was with the main operator of the Metka-house and later in the same day we interviewed two church employees while visiting their premises. Both were conducted during the first fieldtrip to Lieksa. The virtual interview was with a teacher from the Lieksa Christian Institute. In Kitee, we interviewed the chairperson of the multicultural association, Aljans. Three teachers from the Evangelical Folk High School of Kitee were also briefly spoken to during the first fieldtrip to Kitee after we had held our surprise focus group.

## Social mapping

The social mapping tool was used in loose way. As the interest of this case study lies more on cultural and linguistic issues, social mapping was not viewed as fundamental to the data gathering. Moreover, it was only a side remark used as a tool of the data collection process. The target groups for social mapping were different languages used in local communities. Discovering how and where Finnish, English and TCN's own languages were used was the overall aim of social mapping.

While we did not make a drawn social map of the locations we visited, the different social relationships and issues in them will be discussed in written form. The two case study municipalities are socially divided and conducting some form of social mapping was helpful for the research team members to recognise the hierarchies, sentiments and actual lived everyday realities from the point of view of different migrant groups.

## Visual participatory techniques

While we did not use any participatory visual techniques when conducting our research, we did take photographs. One of our team members, Karl Hancock, took photographs during the observational visits to Lieksa and Kitee as well as the focus group held in Kitee in February. The pictures were taken mostly of the local surroundings of the stakeholders' sites. This was done to provide visual imagery of the sites where the activities of the actors were organised. At the focus group in Kitee, the local stakeholder also wanted to take a group picture of the meeting for their own usage.

# Main outcomes

## Action research in Kitee

While it is clear that Russian speaking immigrants form the dominant migrant group in the municipality of Kitee, it is, however, important to take note that Russian speakers are a heterogeneous group of migrants. The circumstances of Russian speakers are diverse both in terms of the reason for migrating and ethnic origin within Russia. Consequently, the position in the local community and everyday life as well as the way of using different languages depends on many factors.

The reason for migration influences the stage of integration, while the level of Finnish language is dependent on the migration channel the migrant has used. Those who have moved to Finland as spouse migrants usually have more contacts among Finnish speakers than other Russian migrants. Those who have moved to the region to study do not necessarily have a good knowledge of the Finnish language, even though they officially should have a certain understanding of it (between level A2.2 and C1.1 depending on the program in RIVERIA vocational school. RIVERIA website). The Russian speakers who have moved to Finland already during 1990's or early 2000's have mostly come to Finland as re-migrants on the grounds of their Finnish descent, to study, work or as spouse migrants. For them, the reasons for migration are different than for those who have moved to Finland during recent years. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many Russian speakers' reason for migration was more economical than during recent years, when people have been moving, in many cases, because of political reasons.

To put it very straight forward, many Russian speakers who are presently migrating to Finland are, in some form, political asylum seekers. For practical reasons they often use student residence permits as they are often the only possibility for the people to come here. For these adults, quick acquisition of basic Finnish is extremely important. Since they pay for

their education, they need to find an opportunity to earn money in Finland. The student residence permit allows students to work 100 hours per month, but to get a job they often need some proficiency in Finnish. In focus groups discussions, participants emphasised the importance of a teacher who can speak Russian in addition to Finnish. If the teaching is organised in solely in Finnish, they feel they are denied the possibility to ask questions and clarifications in their native language. Furthermore, this group of people are highly motivated to get a permanent job, to integrate and to stay in Finland. Thus, the organisation of Finnish language teaching to this group of immigrants becomes a gateway to a life in Finland.

During our fieldwork conducted in Kitee we mainly met with Russian speakers who had a poor knowledge of Finnish. This is partly due to our data collecting method, where we organised the focus groups through the folk high school and a Russian speaking multicultural association. It became evident that if an immigrant's level of Finnish language was poor, then it is difficult to fully become a member of the local community. Therefore, socialising networks that are built are with other Russian speakers. According to our data, the age of migrants is also influencing the level of Finnish language. The elderly migrants, especially pensioners or closer to that age, are left out of official integration language courses. The younger generation has, in many cases, had possibilities to learn Finnish already in Russia before emigrating to Finland. Many have been learning Finnish in on-line courses as it is often the only way to participate.

According to our data, in many cases, Russian speakers themselves are disappointed that they do not have many everyday contacts with Finnish speakers. Russian speakers are often integrated in the area in their own language, and they have their own Russian speaking community in Kitee. The exception is those who have migrated to Finland as a spouse migrant or as a worker. If a migrant has a Finnish speaking spouse, there is a higher chance that the Finnish language is used more frequently in everyday life. The migrants themselves were stressing the importance of the Finnish language. For many, it seems to be the key issue affecting their ability to gain a proper position in local labour markets and to be able to fully integrate in the local community.

*"When we are talking about immigration in general it is language, language and once more language. If you have the language everything else comes along with it. Many, many who come from Russia and Ukraine are a group of immigrants who leave everything behind. Most of us were not prepared for emigration and in this we lose to those who have consciously prepared for immigration. For the most parts this situation I just told you about affects those who are over 40 years old or over 30 years old. You can be a good professional, but without language... [interrupted]"* (FIK56, through a translator).

In Kitee, the Russian speaking community is active, and many have their networks among other Russian speakers. As with other migrant groups, in our case study municipalities, there are some in the community who are fluent in Finnish and who operate as "keys" for other Russian speakers in their everyday matters such as administrative issues. This and the proportionally large Russian speaking population make it possible for them to integrate in their own language, at least to an extent. It is possible to maintain everyday life with social contacts and hobbies in their mother tongue. There are also some labour market sectors in the Kitee region which need a Russian speaking labour force, and this provides opportunities for Russian speakers. These are mostly related to cross-border commerce, travel and some services.

Even though integration in the Kitee region is somewhat possible with only the Russian language, we can still ponder how deep the integration is if a TCN is unable to communicate and understand Finnish. According to our data, from the point of view of a societal impact, it seems almost necessary to learn Finnish. TCNs are becoming increasingly involved in political processes in Finland, and in many municipal, regional and national level political institutions, there are migrants involved in policy making. But this agency in policy making processes requires a strong knowledge of the Finnish language. The question if it is possible to have a full membership and impact in society without Finnish is crucial.

When comparing Lieksa and Kitee it becomes clear that in Kitee the dominance of the Russian language is evident. Most migrants have a common language, and it makes the lives

of migrant's smoother in some ways. In Lieksa, where there is more diversity among migrants and languages used, it is more likely that migrants are communicating in Finnish with each other and with the locals. The main language used in public places is Finnish and this encourages migrants to use and to learn Finnish. During our fieldwork trips we met many migrants who spoke broken Finnish. In Lieksa, migrants told us they were not afraid of using Finnish, on the contrary, many seemed proud that they could cope with the language skill they had and said that they try to communicate in Finnish in their everyday lives and with other migrants in social occasions. In Kitee, however, some Russian speakers were telling us that they feel uncomfortable speaking in Finnish because they are afraid of grammatical mistakes. A few said this even though they had already used Finnish in their childhood before immigrating. When researchers asked that why this is, there was no clear single answer, but many Russian speakers are often aware of the proper use of the Finnish language

> *"I understand more than I can talk and all the time there is fear that I cannot spell correctly, and I think all the time if the suffixes are correct, are the vowels and consonants long enough."* (FIK55, through a translator)

In both case study municipalities, the official language teaching is produced and offered by local third sector actors and folk high schools. In Kitee, the students in the unrecorded focus group were mostly Russian speakers and Russian was used as tool to teach Finnish in the group. Especially at an elementary language level, it appears that it helps to teach a new language if there is another language which can be used while explaining, for example, complicated grammatical issues (e.g., verbs and how to use past tenses). In Kitee it is easy to use Russian as a tool in elementary Finnish courses because there are also teachers who speak Russian as their native language or otherwise speak fluent Russian. At the Evangelical Folk High School of Kitee, the teachers have many years of experience of teaching Finnish to foreigners. In addition, the migrants in Kitee are quite homogenous in terms of native language. In Kitee, the migrants seem to be eager to participate to language teaching and teachers are especially seen as an important part of their everyday lives.

The local multicultural association in Kitee, Aljans, creates a platform for Russian speakers to engage with Russian culture and language. Aljans has a lot of activities which are directed at Russian speakers and the "common living room" of the Aljans site, situated in the centre of Kitee, is an active meeting point for Russian speakers. While in Lieksa the local multicultural association, Lieksa Somali Family Association, owns the Metka house; in Kitee the municipality provides the premises for Aljans free of charge. From the outside, it seems that the co-operation between Aljans and public administration in Kitee is smooth and local authorities see the impact of Aljans as a value for the municipality.

The concept of Aljans is important because it brings together people of different age groups. The association offers activities for children, working aged people and elderly people. The activities offered for elderly people are important as there are not many activities offered by other organisations. The workers of Aljans are proud of the work they are doing to maintain the level of the Russian language among children. They told us how they teach handwriting in Russian for children of Russian origin. For elderly people there is, for example, a digital help desk where people can get help to fill out forms in on-line applications. Workout classes are also offered for elderly people by Aljans. During the fieldwork we got the impression that the importance of this place is substantial for the Russian speakers in the Kitee region.

## Action research in Lieksa

In Lieksa, the migrant population is more diverse than it is in Kitee. When migrants are interacting with each other or with local people in Lieksa the common language used is mostly Finnish. In Lieksa there are multiple different immigrant and language groups such as Arabic, Somali, Tigrinya (Eritrea) and Russian. It is a good context to conduct intensive multicultural work in. The Lieksa Somali Family Association creates the multicultural context, where different migrant groups are gathering. In addition to the Lieksa Somali Family Association and their concrete place of Metka house, the Lutheran church also offers a platform for migrants to be active in the local community. The Lutheran church organises

activities which are aimed at both locals and migrants. In many cases, the migrants that attend the Lutheran church activities are asylum seekers and refugees who have come to Lieksa after 2015. Many of them have Arabic backgrounds, but there are also refugees from African countries and Russia.

In addition to these two places where multicultural activities are done intensively, there are other actors in Lieksa who participate in and are an important part of multicultural circles in Lieksa. The Lieksa Christian Institute is responsible for organising the Finnish language courses for migrants and offers them a multicultural environment for language learning. According to desktop research conducted in the MATILDE-project, it is also obvious that certain sports clubs are involving TCNs in their sports activities. Unfortunately, we did not receive a reply from any local sports clubs to be able to ask for detailed information about their activities and how migrants are involved in them. In addition, some smaller NGOs are also doing multicultural work in Lieksa, often in co-operation with Metka or the Lutheran parish.

The biggest challenge in Lieksa, according to our case study work, seems to be the fact that those people who are taking part in the activities organised by the Lutheran church are not participating in Metka house activities and vice versa. It was especially apparent that there is and has historically been friction between the Somali and Arabic communities in the municipality, with Arabic speakers often preferring the activities of the church rather than the Metka house. From the point of view of good population relations, it would be important that in small rural communities, like Lieksa, for all the actors to be working together to create a positive atmosphere where everyone could be members of the same "we-group".

As state before, in Lieksa, the migrant population is diverse. In the public space there are three main migrant groups who are taking part in public life in different ways. Somalis have been one of the biggest migrant groups in Lieksa for most of the last fifteen years. However, it can be noted both from statistics and from an everyday reality that in the past seven years or so, most Somali migrants have moved away from Lieksa to larger cities, especially to the capital region. Still, the presence and activism of Somalis in Lieksa is an undeniable fact, as it is seen in the activities of the Lieksa Somali Family Association. This

association owns the "platform" for the main multicultural activities in Lieksa. The Metka house is a place where migrants of different origin are gathering and organising a variety of occasions and regular activities for local migrants and locals. The Metka house is a kind of get together place for those who are interested in multicultural activities and together with Finnish speakers and other migrants, Somalis are helping in the running of this place. The Metka house is an umbrella organisation running projects and offering work and trainee opportunities for both migrants and Finnish speakers, but also offers a lot of voluntary work and unofficial activities. Metka house also has vivid contacts with other NGOs (both locally and broader) and the local vocational school. The relationship between Metka house and the public sector, the municipality of Lieksa, seems to be somewhat ambivalent and during our fieldwork the research group was unable to figure out a straightforward reason for this. As a concrete recommendation, the public sector could be more open towards Metka house and also give more support to them. The house is, in a way, a very exceptional concept in Finland. It has significant meaning in building up good population relations in Lieksa.

The second group of migrants in Lieksa are refugees and asylum seekers of different backgrounds. These people have emigrated from Arabic and African countries. While the reception centre in Lieksa was closed in 2020, quota refugees are still accepted in the municipality in large numbers. During the past decade, Lieksa has taken in most (on average 54 per year between 2011 and 2019) of the quota refugees in the region of North Karelia (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, 2022). The societal activities of refugees and asylum seekers seem to be more concentrated on Lutheran church activities, even though there are also refugees who are regular visitors to Metka house.

The third large group of migrants in Lieksa are Russian speakers, a group whose number has been growing the most in the past few years. They have migrated to Lieksa for several reasons: family migration, work migration, asylum seekers or as students. At the moment, the most common reason for Russian speakers to migrate to Lieksa is to study at the local vocational school, Riveria. In Riveria there are a lot of Russian speaking students who study, for example, business or care work. As stated before, for Russian speaking migrants the most reliable channel to migrate to Finland is to apply for a student-based

residence. As it was the case in Kitee, many student migrants have started to learn Finnish already in Russia to be able to study in Finnish in Lieksa. In Russia, there are several on-line based opportunities to learn Finnish and this possibility is used by those Russian speakers who can afford it.

> *"I have studied Finnish before I left for Finland in Russia for a year with a private tutor, with a computer remotely."* (FIK37)

Among Russian speakers the tendency to settle down in Lieksa is ambivalent. It seems that young women are willing to move to bigger cities and to the capital area, but young men would be happy to stay in rural Lieksa if they have working opportunities there.

At the moment, in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic, there are sectors in the labour market that are suffering from a labour deficit and many migrants among the above-mentioned groups are working and actively taking part in them. The migrants in Lieksa and neighbouring municipalities are needed as labour force in industries and the care sector, but also in other services. According to the data collected, it seems that for migrants, the main advantage when searching for a job in Lieksa is good relations with Finnish speakers who can help them get a job and build bridges between local employers and TCNs. The Finnish language is seen as an important factor which helps TCNs gain job opportunities in the Lieksa region. However, the fieldwork has proven to us that in the industrial sector and construction work, the Finnish language is not a necessary skill to be able to gain job and to become part of the local community in that way.

The people we met were suggesting to us that one effective way of learning Finnish would be to integrate language courses into the workplace. In many cases, migrants are learning the Finnish language from each other if they are working in multicultural teams, as they are in many cases. To make Finnish language learning more effective, co-operation between the local vocational school, the Lieksa Christian Institute and employers should be smoother, and some language lessons should be integrated into migrant's working hours.

*"It would be nice if employers could organise Finnish language courses in the workplace and they could help an employee who is not fluent in Finnish … Yep, so that the person could get work easier and when he is employed, he could study Finnish while working."* (FIK37).

In conclusion, one can say that the concept of Metka house is an example of good practice and an innovative solution that fosters socio-economic inclusion of migrants, social recognition of migrants and good population relations in a rural community. It is obvious that migrants need Finnish language skills to be able to integrate into the labour markets in rural North Karelia. However, the contemporary situation has created the deficit of employers in certain sectors of labour markets. It seems that it is possible to have work (e.g., in factories) even if the knowledge of Finnish language is at an elementary level.

# Conclusion

Overall, the action research in North Karelia was productive both in academic and practical terms. The fieldtrips, focus groups and networking done for the project have created fresh courses of action, with a possibility to develop them into more permanent and functional models of action. After the case study ends, the cooperation between researchers and the Lutheran church in Lieksa will continue in the form of monthly organised discussion evenings. This project and action research conducted during the case study created new contacts and networks between multicultural associations operating in the region. The three multicultural associations (Aljans, Metka and JoMoni) are going to continue their co-operation and potentially develop common activities after the MATILDE-project has come to an end.

The importance of the MATILDE action research interactions lies on the result that the NGOs, the church, local authorities and individuals within them have become familiarised with the good practices conducted by other organisations, and that the MATILDE-research has created the platform for continuing interactions and co-operation between different

actors. This is likely to be fruitful in improving migrants' integration and impact in these local rural places. In addition, the improved awareness of multicultural issues in local societies can also be considered a result of the action research.

Action research conducted in North Karelia has made it visible that migrants are in a way connected to their language-based groups, but at the same time there is huge diversity between people who belong to the same language group. The position in local labour markets is in many cases connected to the ability to use the Finnish language. This is important especially in rural context where the main working opportunities are in service, agriculture and industry sectors. Still, as we have seen in the case of Lieksa, the language skill does not always have be that great. Learning Finnish is important in social life as well, but like with the Russian speakers in Kitee, it is not always necessary.

Effective language teaching and learning is important for migrants, and it seems that there are different possibilities to learn the language outside of the official programs. This is necessary as according to our informants the sentiments towards the official language courses are mixed at best. This seems to depend at least partly on the age of the migrant, country of origin, reason for migration, the already acquired language and learning skills, and the provider of the language course. More practical and work-related language teaching was sought-after.

In the MATILDE action research and in our further actions in disseminating the outcomes of research, the UEF team is engaged to provide and exchange information between local actors and beyond. The role of local partner JoMoni is significant. JoMoni is circulating information and exchanging good practices in terms of Finnish language learning around North Karelia.

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# Germany: Bavaria

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## Summary

This report presents the main outcomes of the action research activities conducted in the MATILDE region Bavaria, Germany. Given the potential of Third-Country Nationals (TCNs) to overcome the existing shortage of workers in economic key sectors, the activities targeted challenges and (possible) solutions with regard to TCNs' sustainable employment and addressed their recruitment, the on-boarding of employees and apprentices, and the staying/retention in a company, a sector or a rural/mountain locality. Research partner FAU applied a multi-perspective approach that took into account the perspectives of companies, the regional actors and the TCN newcomers as well as a place-based approach. Regarding the latter, locally relevant key sectors were focused, i.e. (health)care in the rural district of Neustadt a.d.Aisch-Bad Windsheim (NEA), hospitality industry in the rural district of Berchtesgadener Land (BGL) and handicraft in the rural district of Oberallgäu (OA). The participatory-oriented activities conducted in the districts under study comprised 19 problem-centred qualitative interviews with 22 local stakeholders and TCNs, 26 narrative conversations (including mobility mapping) with 27 TCNs and three focus group discussions with nine TCNs.

For the recruitment, results show that recruiting agencies, personal social networks and self-applications were of utmost importance to provide access to the rural labour market for TCNs. For those, who already lived on-site, trial work, internships and auxiliary jobs were also

found to be established practices of entering the companies. Challenges arose from legal issues such as the issuance of visa and working permits as well as the provision of housing.

With regard to on-boarding, we found that some companies initiated a welcoming culture and provided mentors to get to know the company and the working processes. Some employers and colleagues also assisted with bureaucracy and getting to know the region and the people. Difficulties, however, revolved around the recognition of foreign credentials, language barriers (also due to local dialects) as well as the acquisition of German language in general and work-specific language in particular. In addition, personal problems were highlighted by TCNs, e.g. the difficulty to make friends of their own age, homesickness, waiting for family reunification, the necessity to send money to the family in the country of origin or the double burden of work and vocational school in the case of apprentices.

The intention of TCNs to stay in the company, the sector and the region depended on various interrelated aspects: the treatment of TCNs in the company and beyond (e.g. good colleagues, support, friendly people), the (infra)structures on-site (e.g. everyday mobility, leisure opportunities) and the TCNs' future aspirations (e.g. family foundation, self-employment, desire/need to live close to family members). The activities of companies to foster the retention of TCNs, however, differed widely among the interviewed enterprises.

# Introduction and Description of activities

The action research activities started from the assumption that employment of Third Country Nationals (TCNs) in rural and mountain areas is crucial (1) for the companies to pursue one's business despite of a shortage of workers, (2) for the regions to maintain a diversified regional economy, and (3) for the migrants to fulfil themselves and build up a future in the

countryside. Accordingly, the participatory-oriented research[15] centred around a multi-perspective approach that took into account the companies, the regional actors and the newcomers themselves. Furthermore, a place-based approach was chosen and locally relevant key economic sectors were identified, i.e.

- (health)care in the rural district of Neustadt a. d. Aisch-Bad Windsheim (NEA),
- the hospitality industry in the rural district of Berchtesgadener Land (BGL),
- industrial production in the rural district of Regen (REG), and
- handicraft in the rural district of Oberallgäu (OA).

Previous research in the course of WP3, WP4 and WP5 and the case study briefing (D5.2) in particular revealed the relevance of the above-mentioned sectors for the local economy and their contribution to provide basic goods and services, while current challenges such as labour shortages were identified. The assumption that TCNs play a key role in reducing these shortages was expressed with varying intensity, often following an utilitarian approach. We found that the perspective of migrants themselves, e.g. in terms of experiences in the past and present regarding living and working in rural and mountain areas, seemed underrepresented and a long-term and sustainable interaction between newcomers and local / regional employment was not addressed regularly. Accordingly, our activities followed a three-phase approach:

(1) TCNs' access to employment and recruitment of TCNs,

(2) on-boarding of TCN employees and apprentices, and

(3) staying/retention of TCNs in a company, a sector or a rural/mountain locality.

In addition to the continuous exchange with MATILDE local partner TAT (Tür an Tür – Integrationsprojekte gGmbH) in the course of the Case Study Working Group (CSWG), the participation in events related to the labour market and migration/integration in the rural

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[15] Due to the project architecture, the time constraints resulting from it and restrictions in the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were not able to reach the highest level of participation during the activities, i.e. a joint creation of research question, implementation and analysis and interpretation of data. Accordingly, we aimed at following at least a participatory-oriented approach (see chapter 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3).

districts under study as well as background discussions with local stakeholders allowed us to identify and better understand locally specific challenges at the very beginning of the action research phase. Through co-creation by local stakeholders, thus, aims and questions became more concrete.

For the sectors under study[16], the challenges were

- in the case of (health)care (NEA): different level of preparedness, e.g. language or work-related skills, of TCNs based on the recruitment, development of bonds to the sector and impact of TCNs on the regional supply of health infrastructures;

- in the case of the hospitality industry (BGL): high volatility of TCNs in some companies, high rates of bonding in others, and establishing cooperation between tourism/hospitality and integration activities in the rural district;

- in the case of handicraft (OA): invisibility of TCNs in handicrafts, and challenges of inclusion of TCNs in small-sized companies.

In light of the acuteness, the specificities of the sectors under study and the knowledge about (non)existing established formats of exchange concerning the topic, the participatory-oriented activities were either set up in novel events or were incorporated into existing ones. Apart from the CSWG, further stakeholders on a very local level (rural district or municipal level) had to be identified to facilitate access to TCNs in particular. The research team, however, faced a relatively high degree of rejection of participation, mostly due to heavy workload of (TCN) entrepreneurs and human resources (HR) departments, e.g. due to changing legislation in the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, a presumably low level of problem pressure, or an unspecified unwillingness to talk to us.

In sum, 57 participants were directly involved in the activities, thereof a variety of 21 local stakeholders, ranging from representatives of the companies of the sectors under

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[16] In interaction with local stakeholders, no specific challenges and interventions could be identified for TCNs in industrial production (rural district of Regen). This may be related to the fact that stakeholders' current focus of activities was on handicraft, (health)care and hospitality industry, where the lack of workers was more long-running, and the comparatively low number of TCNs in industrial production. Thus, the participatory-oriented activity was not conducted there.

study, the vocational schools, the rural district administration to those of regional organisations of the German Hotel and Catering Association (DEHOGA) or the chamber of handicraft. This was partly true also for TCNs, where 36 individuals (thereof 21 male and 15 female) could be recruited, especially from the (health)care sector (see Table 4). The TCNs who participated held 19 different nationalities, including seven individuals from Vietnam, five from Syria and three from Ukraine.

| Sector | Employers | Local stakeholders | TCNs |
|---|---|---|---|
| Health care | 2 | 1 | 26 |
| Hospitality industry | 7 (thereof 2 TCNs) | 5 | 7 |
| Handicraft | 1 | 5 | 3 |
| Total | 10 | 11 | 36 |

Table 4: Overview of participants in the action research activities

The action research activities encompassed problem-centred qualitative interviews, narrative conversations (including mobility mapping) and focus group discussions (see Table 5). The activities are presented in more detail in the subchapters below.

| Name of method/tool | Number of activities | Number of participants | Group of participants | Timing | Duration in mins. (by average) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Problem-centred qualitative interviews | 19 | 22 | Local stakeholders (and TCNs) | 08/2021 – 01/2022 | 866 (46) |
| Narrative conversations (including mobility mapping) | 26 | 27 | TCNs | 09/2021 – 01/2022 | 1072 (42) |
| Focus group discussions | 3 | 9 | TCNs | 11/2021 – 01/2022 | 235 (78) |

Table 5: Description of the activities performed during the action research

Apart from that, off-the-record conversations with local stakeholders were carried out and national, regional and local online events dealing with the topic under study were attended in order to class information gathered into a wider picture. The events attended encompass two network meetings of actors involved in the integration of migrants in the rural district of BGL (28.09.2021, 11.01.2022), a public discussion on integration in the rural district of BGL (28.10.2021), a discussion about the education of TCNs in the rural district of OA (30.09.2021), and an interdisciplinary conference on immigration and labour market integration (07.-08.10.2021). In addition to that, the FAU team co-organised a session of the so-called MigraLAND Monday webinar on labour market integration of rural newcomers (26.10.2021) and hold an online presentation about the diversity of rural labour markets and the role of TCNs at the conference of the Institute of Geography at FAU (01.12.2021).

## Problem-Centred Qualitative interviews

In order to reflect jointly on the multifarious interactions between TCNs' employment and local labour markets, problem-centred qualitative interviews were conducted among local stakeholders. The aim was to unravel interpretational and orientation knowledge from experts (Bogner et al. 2009). Such an expert knowledge is based on an institutionalized competence (Hitzler et al. 1994) and professional experience. The knowledge or actors' experiences can contribute to a deeper understanding of how people construct their realities in the local setting. During the implementation of problem-centred qualitative interviews, we followed an exploratory and more open format since we did not want to impose assumptions or interpretations beforehand, while the three phases sketched above, i.e. recruitment, on-boarding, staying/retention, structured the interview.

Since previous data collection in the course of WP3, WP4 and WP5 showed a certain competitive atmosphere among entrepreneurs and a reluctance towards making strategies public, e.g. in terms of recruiting personnel, individual interviews were conducted instead of group discussions. In case participants wished to consult colleagues to widen their expertise,

we agreed, given that they were on a similar hierarchical level. For reasons of COVID-19-related travel restrictions, a considerable number of interviews were conducted online as audio-visual interviews (20 out of 46). This technique allowed 'social presence', supported a confidential atmosphere to a certain degree (Misoch 2015) and facilitated the accessibility, especially with regard to scarce time availability of participants. Technical problems and cancellation did not occur. Interviews in presence were conducted at localities of the participants' choice, which was mostly the workplace, the place of education or the private home. Various disturbances, e.g. phone calls, colleagues entering the room or noisy atmosphere, could not be fully avoided.

The problem-centred qualitative interviews were documented by notes taken by the research team as well as audio recordings, given the fact that consent was granted. At the end of the interviews, the next steps of the project and potential further involvement were made transparent to participants and further opportunities for participation were shown. Following the interviews, debriefings among the team included a critical reflection on the contents as well as the interview situation.

## Narrative Conversations (including mobility mapping)

TCNs' experiences in rural areas, both at the workplace and in everyday life were discussed during narrative conversations. The open and less structured interviews aimed to depict self-experienced events and situations to understand views and practices of people in their respective social context and local setting (Atteslander 2000). The conversations focused on a specific period of time (Mattissek et al. 2013), encompassing the reflections to take a job in the sectors under study, the recruiting or application process, the on-boarding phase, the current situation at the workplace and site of living, and finally a reflection about the future. During the implementation of the conversations, a chronological order was applied, while an oral narration predominated during the recapitulation of the past. Since narrative interviews usually include one or more long-lasting narration phases, which should not be interrupted

by interventions of the interviewer (Mattissek et al. 2013), the length of such phases highly depended on both the participants' language competencies and their experiences to respond to open questions (Kieslinger et al. 2020). Especially during that phase, reception signals ('hummmm', nodding, smiling) were helpful to maintain the (short) narration. In order to become familiar with TCNs' everyday lives at the rural place of living, individually meaningful places were identified. Afterwards, a reflection on their accessibility was initiated. Inspired by the spatio-visual tool of mobility mapping (Weidinger et al. 2019), participants were invited to draw maps with individually important places that are frequented (or not) as well as means of transport used to get there. The combination with narrative interviews offers the opportunity to grasp information about meanings attached to places and challenges related to everyday mobility. When participants were encouraged to think about their life-worlds, a reflection process was initiated. Due to its visual character, the tool was less dependent on language and literacy of participants, and, thus, fosters their power to recall and to structure. It also stimulated the interaction and discussion between the participant and the researcher and even allows for a joint analysis during the interview (Weidinger et al. 2019).

Narrative conversations were conducted among TCN employees in hospitality industry, (health)care and handicraft. The location of the activities, however, varied among the three sectors. While in hospitality industry, private apartments or the workplace were chosen, employees and apprentices in (health)care were recruited at the vocational school. Each student was invited to leave the classroom to a separate room where the conversations took place. Since classes continued during that time, participants faced a limited time availability. Due to hygiene regulations, physicians from third countries as well as employees in handicraft were interviewed online, which led to the fact that mappings could not be realized in these cases. In order to build up trust and show gratitude, small gifts were handed over to TCNs who participated in presence. Mobility maps were left for the participants in some cases, too.

For documentation purpose, minutes were taken and conversations were recorded if consent was given. In order to validate the minutes, a crosscheck by a second interviewer

was processed afterwards to add relevant aspects. Photos of mobility maps were taken and edited digitally before the analysis.

## Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions were conducted to initiate exchange about experiences, challenges, and possible solutions among TCN employees and apprentices, and had a validating purpose. Data were collected through group interactions on a topic determined by the researcher (Morgan 1996), which was centred around the three phases of employment integration sketched above. The discussions were able to "uncover the 'world-views' (especially regarding attitudes, perceptions and experiences) of different groups of people" (Skop 2006: 121). Besides grasping controversies and group dynamics (Bedford & Burgess 2001, cit. after Skop 2006), the focus groups also had the chance to display spontaneous expressions and interactions and thus stimulated new ideas and questions (Pelz et al. 2004). For the focus groups, a standardised process was chosen and similar questions and procedures were used to achieve comparability (Morgan 1996; Skop 2006).

Focus groups were conducted with employees and apprentices, who pursue vocational training in (health)care or hospitality industry. In both cases, recruitment took place at vocational schools. While for employees in health(care), the discussion took place physically beside regular classes, for employees in the hospitality industry, it was conducted online beside regular classes. Teachers and heads of schools assisted with the selection of participants based on the criteria TCN, various modes of entering the country (e.g. by visa or as refugee), age and family status. For the digital focus groups, a short introduction about the research project and how researchers work was given, while small talk facilitated an open atmosphere in the focus group that was conducted physically. At first, participants were invited to present themselves and provide some basic socio-demographic information and details about their place of living and the company, where they are hired. Second, the recruitment including difficulties and solutions, was focused, while third, experiences about

the on-boarding were identified. The discussion concluded with reflections about staying, both in the company and the region.

During the discussion, notes were taken to support the flow of the discussion itself and facilitate the comprehensibility afterwards. Besides, important issues of the discussion were put on a notice board so that they were visible to all participants (on PowerPoint slides in the digital mode). Moreover, discussions were audio-recorded in case consent was given. A debriefing after the discussion included a critical reflection on the contents, the level of involvement of participants, as well as the overall situation of the discussion. In order to build up trust and show gratitude, small gifts were handed over to those individuals who participated in presence.

# Main outcomes of the action research

## Main outputs of the action research process

- Providing support by the research institution FAU to address the topic under study as desired by local stakeholders;
- Fostering reflection on part of entrepreneurs and responsible persons in HR about recruitment, on-boarding and staying/retention of TCNs as well as their role for the company and the sectors under study in rural and mountain areas;
- Fostering reflection on part of TCNs about the everyday lives in rural and mountain areas (supported in particular by mobility mapping);
- Identifying challenges and problems in terms of recruitment, on-boarding and staying/retention of TCNs as well as development of strategies to overcome these.

# Results with regard to recruitment, on-boarding and staying/retention of TCNs in (health)care, hospitality industry and handicraft

In the following subsections, an overview about the most important results with regard to recruitment, on-boarding and staying/retention of TCNs in (health)care, hospitality industry and handicraft is presented. Thereby, the different perspectives of local stakeholders, including entrepreneurs, and TCNs are acknowledged.

## (Health)care in the region of Neustadt a.d. Aisch-Bad Windsheim and the role of TCNs

During the local activities, personnel shortage in the (health)care sector was expressed as the most urgent issue by various stakeholders. The companies, i.e. public and private hospitals as well as facilities for elderly care and ambulant services, mostly perceive a competitive situation (WP5DE005), while the problem pressure would exist even longer in elderly care (since 2000s, WP5DE004) than in hospitals (since 3-4 years, WP5DE016). The COVID-19 pandemic aggravated the situation in both urban and rural areas. While the working conditions were not explicitly addressed as a reason for the shortage, preconditions for hiring staff were mentioned from the company's perspective: the provision of an accommodation is considered as crucial (WP5DE004, WP5DE016), while language training was identified as a realm of intervention as well as social integration measures.

**Recruitment**

The recruitment practices vary between those who were recruited from abroad and people, who already resided in Germany. From the perspective of hired nurses, for instance, the **decision to relocate to Germany** was made for better salaries (WP5DE038) and working conditions (WP5DE032). Moreover, the (health)care sector is addressed as a good

opportunity to entering Germany (WP5DE025), but is also seen as an alternative to studies (WP5DE029) or as an interim solution until credentials have been recognized (WP5DE032). Among doctors, the decision-making to relocate to Germany was more self-determined. Among nurses, **private agencies** in the country of origin, e.g. Vietnam, played a major role. Based on a fee, they provided preparatory language courses that enabled candidates to fulfil the precondition to enter Germany (language level B1, WP5DE023, 025, 027, 030, 032) and negotiated contracts with companies. The fees that had to be spent were commonly seen as expensive, while family members provided support. Others were **recruited in final classes**, e.g. in Serbia, and were also given access to language courses prior to entering Germany (level B2, WP5DE039, 040). Workplaces mediated by private agencies were often chosen by chance and potential workers did not have an influence on where they will work (WP5DE025, 027, 028). Besides, another person also used a creative **self-application**, including a personal video statement (WP5DE029).

Those who already lived in Germany searched their workplace via **networks** (WP5DE027, 038) or gained information about localities via the **internet** (WP5DE024, 034, 037, 040). Among nursing trainees, **internships** (WP5DE032) **or previous trainings** as (social) care assistants (WP5DE035, 036) were another important entry point to vocational training. One interviewee also reported a re-entry to Germany after an unsuccessful asylum application, while the person took advantage of established contacts to potential employers in the (health)care sector (WP5DE037). A proper preparation by means of language courses (WP5DE021, 022) as well as a **visit and** a **hospitation** in the hospital in order to get to know the working atmosphere was reported. Moreover, small-structured facilities and a familial atmosphere were experienced, while the potential worker was also given the opportunity to implement new methods and practices in the regional hospital (WP5DE046). Most challenging themes in the recruitment phases were linked to legal aspects, e.g. the **difficult and lengthy recognition process**, especially for doctors (WP5DE005, 021, 022) **and** the **different practices in the different Federal States**. Thus, **hiring below one's qualification** is widespread. From the employers' perspectives, a lack of information about who gives advice was pointed out, while also a lack of interaction to potential workforce of people who

already reside in the district, e.g. refugees, was reported. Finally, **qualification measures in rural areas** were **scarce** (WP5DE005).

**On-boarding**

The most important challenges expressed during the on-boarding of nurses and doctors were related to the knowledge of **language**, while especially work-related vocabulary (WP5DE023, 037, 039, 040), local dialects (WP5DE025, 026, 029) or the volume the elderly are talking (WP5DE043) were mentioned. Students at nursing schools were prepared in different ways when arriving in Germany: while some only received poor language training, others were offered additional classes on the initiative of the employers prior to the beginning of the employment (WP5DE031) or accompanying everyday work (WP5DE036, 043). Moreover, students faced challenges in terms of too much teaching subjects and a frequent change of teaching personnel.

At workplaces, distress due to staff shortages were expressed, while the obligation to take **part shifts** or to work nearly every weekend was perceived as challenging. Thus, people were exhausted or could not make leisure commitments (WP5DE043). **Inflexible working hours** that do not meet the schedules of public transport were also reported as in need of improvement. Concrete **tasks**, nurses had to conduct, **differed from those in the country of origin** (WP5DE031, 032), while participants were often not familiar to working with IT (WP5DE023) or expressed a general insecurity in the phase of arrival. In a private hospital, a spokesperson in the company, who received funding, took care of everyday problems of migrant workers, e.g. cared about lacking TV or bicycle, integrated into associations and clubs, provided laptops and rooms in the company to call families to avoid homesickness or organized get together/social events (e.g. visiting museums, joint cooking event).

Beyond the workplace, **conflicts with roommates**, e.g. in terms of hygiene (WP5DE034), **or general conditions**, such as the cold weather (WP5DE024) were mentioned, while for families, an orientation in the education system or the organization of childcare was considered challenging (WP5DE022).

In all the above mentioned realms, nurses and doctors reported **established structures of support**. First and foremost, nice colleagues assisted (WP5DE024, 028, 030, 032, 034, 037) and showed around (WP5DE025, 026, 030), while one certain boss also organized a **welcome party** for international workers (WP5DE032). Moreover, **assistance** was provided by the rural district, e.g. **in terms of accommodation** (WP5026, 028, 036), or the companies in the same realm, who either organized housing close to the workplace or acted as testimonials towards private landlords (WP5DE038). Family members on site (WP5DE024, 027) or landlords (WP5DE029), however, played a minor role in the on-boarding phase. Very rarely, participants acted proactively, e.g. organized soccer games (WP5DE046) or visited local sport clubs (WP5DE029).

**Everyday life**

Some of the measures mentioned above were continued, e.g. additional language courses (WP5DE031). Having become familiar with the health system, they evaluated this in relation to their countries of origin and appreciated the material equipment, salary and, to some extent, working conditions (WP5DE039). The rotation system, which allows students to getting to know different future workplaces was also evaluated positively (WP5DE36). The same was true for the **patient-care worker/patient-doctor relation**, e.g. in terms of an interest in cultures or customs among patients (WP5DE043) or organizational structures that allow for a long-term relation and a monitoring of the healing process (WP5DE046). A close relationship, however, also resulted in challenges, e.g. when students experienced advancing dementia or even death, especially in elderly care. The latter could also evoke remembrance towards events employees experienced in their countries of origin in the past (WP5DE043). **Transnational life-worlds** may cause further worries, e.g. about family members in war situations (WP5DE036), obligations, e.g. in terms of sending remittances (WPDE031) or a general pressure of passing exams, since family members paid for vocational training in Germany. **Introducing skills and competences to the new workplace** abroad was less relevant among nurses, but more among doctors. The former sometimes made use of language competences or acquired side jobs related to (health)care during weekends

(WP5DE029). While some doctors were hampered to incorporate ideas because of limited language skills, others made certain methods or equipment as condition to start a job.

In **everyday life beyond the workplace,** nurses preferred activities at home, e.g. cooking or spending time with their fellow flatmates (WP5DE032), visited neighbouring cities for leisure purposes (WP5DE027) or met family and friends (WP5DE023, 027, 029, 030 037, 038). Meeting with friends, however was often limited due to lack of free time (WP5DE030) or since it was not desired, because one could not practice German language (WP5DE036). Moreover, digital conversations with family or friends in countries of origin may cause fatigue due to time lag. Among doctors and people with family and kids, leisure activities were more diversified (WP5DE022). What participants perceived as supportive were friendly people greeting on the street and the opportunity to become known by ordinary people. The latter was facilitated when holding a PhD, since this is related to recognition in the society (WP5DE046).

In the course of the mobility mapping, participants reflected about individually important places. Besides functional places, such as supermarkets or shopping centres at the place of living and in bigger cities nearby, many **leisure places** were reported despite the above mentioned restrictions, e.g. cafés and restaurants, public parks and lakes, or semi-public places like gyms and clubs. Local gastronomy and private places (apartments) also served as places for social interactions. Countries of origin, holiday countries, specific leisure places and metropolitan areas in Germany and, to a lesser extent, places of social interactions, were reported as **non-accessible places**. While mobility mappings were not analysed systematically in quantitative terms, also due to methodological challenges, we could identify participants who indicated almost no important places in their everyday life. As a possible interpretation, we suggest lack of time sovereignty because of prioritizing education and ensuring employment over leisure and social interactions – either by oneself or by families back in the countries of origin.

**Staying/Retention**

In order to encourage the retention of employees in the (health)care sector, the development of attachments to both the companies or at least the (health)care sector in general, and the rural place of living or the region, is a precondition, but also contributes to a sustainable and future-oriented development of this key sector of employment.

For trainees in (health)care, a certain **staying orientation in the company** could be identified, since for the majority, the successful termination of vocational training had priority. The continuous support received from nice colleagues, teachers and the rural district administration are perceived positively. However, some face ongoing challenges, since the school of health(care) is located peripheral. Thus, students relied on public transport that was linked to teaching hours and often did not fit to additional offers such as language courses. When reflecting about a **continuation in** the company and **the (health)care sector**, work-related achievements were pointed out, which included job-related competences (WP5DE030), knowledge of German language and the local dialect (WP5DE031, 034), good testimonies and finally the recognition by colleagues (WP5DE036). Moreover, TCNs employees set aims for the future: beside the above-mentioned termination of the vocational training (WP5DE028, 029, 030, 031) that may require further improvement of the language (WP5DE023, 024), further training, e.g. as intensive care nurse or wound care manager (WP5DE039, 040), and less workload (WP5DE025) were reported. Among doctors, personal development and the provision of good treatments, proven by positive evaluations and reputation were expressed (WP5DE022, 046). Those who self-reported language deficits or were separated from family also aimed at solving these issues (WP5DE021). From employers' perspectives, a comfortable environment within the company ("positive company culture") and a proper cultural and social integration was highlighted as crucial, while they found that doctors stayed more likely than nurses (WP5DE005). Some participants who aimed to change work places wished to continue working in (health)care sector, but change to hospitals, where work was perceived as an opportunity for self-development and enhance one's medical professional knowledge (WP5DE026, 043) or a workplace as doctor (WP5DE032) or manager (WP5DE033).

A **staying orientation at the rural place of living** was negotiated based on previous and current everyday experiences and aspirations for the future. Nurses and doctors perceived certain opportunities and advantages of living in rural areas, while the positive evaluation of small towns was based on

- friendly people (WP5DE023, 024, 034, 035, 043) and the fact that everybody knows each other (WP5DE034, 040),

- small and calm atmosphere (WP5DE030, 039), which is good to relax and learning the language (WP5DE034, 039),

- good connection by public transport, in case the locality has a train station (WP5DE023), which offers the opportunity to visit friends, and

- safe atmosphere for children, either now (WP5DE022) or in the future (WP5DE040, 043).

In contrast, however, scarce public transport was perceived as a problem in everyday life, especially since it was restricted during weekends, if one aimed at pursuing leisure activities, for instance (WP5DE027, 034). In order to enhance everyday mobility, TCNs strived for individual mobility solutions and an own car, while for those working in ambulant care, having a driving license was a precondition for independent work in the future. Further challenges arose from the infrastructures in small towns and rural villages. While basic supply was given in terms of supermarkets, participants pointed out few leisure facilities (WP5DE021, 024, 032, 034, 039, 043), e.g. a gym or a volleyball club (WP5DE025). To overcome the place-related challenges, for various purposes, TCNs travelled to bigger cities, such as Nuremberg (WP5DE024, 034). In sum, rural places were perceived as boring for young adults (WP5DE026, 030). Regarding the rural living environments, future aspirations encompassed family-related issues (WP5DE024, 032), e.g. family reunification, solving mobility challenges (WP5DE024) or the desire to refurbish the apartment (WP5DE037). If relocation was desired, TCNs wanted to orient themselves towards small towns in the same rural district or bigger cities (WP5DE025, 032, 043). For TCNs who wished to continue to stay in the rural district, the mobility mapping could identify tendentially more places for leisure and social interactions. Since it was assumed that lack of time for leisure activities prevailed

among some students and employees, this can have a negative influence on attachments and finally staying.

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<span style="color:green">Hospitality industry in the region of Berchtesgadener Land and the role of TCNs</span>

Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying policy measures such as mandatory long-time closures of hotels and restaurants aggravated the already strained staffing situation in hospitality industry. Due to missing revenues and ongoing insecurities, employees had to be dismissed or be dispatched with short-time allowances only. As a consequence, many did not return after the end of the closures, but quit and changed to other sectors such as logistics, retail and (medical) services or to the hospitality industry in neighbouring Austria, which were allowed to open earlier than their German counterparts (WP5DE003, 006, 015). The COVID-19 pandemic also made the principle of not poaching workers from other companies fragile and fostered rivalry about staff (WP5DE006). Due to an ongoing high number of sick leaves and difficulties to find new workers, restaurants, in particular, have to close earlier or close more frequently, while entrepreneurs hesitate to open new restaurants in this anti-founder environment (WP5DE006, 015).

**Recruitment**

The motivation of TCNs to take up employment in the hospitality industry resulted from previous working experience in the same field or the appeal of working in an industry that is characterised by physical activity and regular contact with people (WP5DE019, 020). When it comes to recruitment, different groups of employees have to be mentioned: first, apprentices, e.g. cooks or restaurant professionals, second, unskilled workers in the service, as kitchen servants or dishwasher, and, third, qualified employees (WP5DE003, 006, 022, 041). Three-year apprenticeships in the hospitality industry are appreciated by TCNs due to the legal security they provide, i.e. the ability to enter Germany or stay in Germany (in case of asylum seekers with a low perspective of staying), their versatility, i.e. getting to know various fields of work within the industry, and their assumed positive impact on future employability

(WP5DE019, 020). Others, instead, are more interested in earning 'quick money' to send remittances to their families (WP5DE007).

The **practices of interviewed TCNs** regarding self-application and fostering of their own employability varies among those who lived abroad and those, who already resided in Germany. Regarding the former group, TCNs searched for companies on the internet, e.g. on a platform for apprenticeship positions, attended German languages courses or an online course about conventions and mentality in Germany, applied at potential companies and prepared their entry to Germany drawing on social networks, e.g. family members already living in Germany (WP5DE008, 014, 020, 041). The latter group, i.e. TCNs who already resided in Germany, made particular use of social networks such as colleagues, members of refugee relief groups or fellow students at the vocational school to identify and contact 'good' companies. They also did trial work before deciding to start an apprenticeship (WP5DE011, 019, 020).

When we contrast the perspectives of TCNs with the ones of the companies, we found that entrepreneurs and HR departments raised various requirements **potential employees** should fulfil. While some were open to everyone who can work – even without prior experiences in hospitality industry and knowledge in German language, others explicitly demanded job seekers to speak proper German (and English, especially in case of international guests) (WP5DE003, 006, 007, 014), wanted them to be 'ready to use' (WP5DE003) or to be available only upon seasonal request (WP5DE010). Some, in turn, were open to asylum seekers who already lived on-site, whereas other companies only recruited those with long-term residence permits in order to keep bureaucracy low (WP5DE003, 014, 041). Apart from that, we also identified different attitudes towards certain groups of job prospects, revealing a hierarchisation. Eastern Europeans, for instance, are valued higher than Muslims or People of Colour (PoC) (WP5DE047). Muslim and Hindu religious traditions would not match the pork-, beef- and alcohol-based diets in the region, which would make work in the kitchen or the service difficult (WP5DE012, 019). Based on prejudices or previous experiences within the company, Muslim men, in particular, would sometimes not accept

women as bosses (WP5DE041). Muslim women wearing headscarves and PoC, in addition, would not meet the guests' expectations and therefore were not recruited to work in the service, where direct interactions with guests prevails[17]. Traced back to their insecure residence status, Afghans, Nigerians or Pakistanis are considered more hard working compared to Eritreans or Syrians (WP5DE013). Perceived cultural differences between different groups of TCNs, finally, would lead to a non-consideration of certain job seekers, e.g. of Kosovo-Albanians in case the company already employs Serbians – or vice versa (WP5DE003).

The **recruitment practices of interviewed companies** direct both at potential employees at the countries of origin as well as at those already living in Germany. Regarding the further group, employers asked employees to attract potential persons among their social networks in the country of origin as they would know best about job requirements (WP5DE007, 014). In case of migrant-led enterprises, entrepreneurs also recruited among relatives and acquaintances, fostering chain migration (WP5DE003, 006, 009, 010). Regarding the latter group, i.e. TCNs who already live in Germany, employers and responsible persons in HR promoted the company at job fairs, in schools or asylum accommodation. To foster self-application, some companies also relied on advertisements, press articles and image-campaigns (WP5DE003, 013, 014, 041). Others, in addition, drew on personal contacts, word of mouth and the jobseekers' list of the Federal Employment Agency (ibid.).

**Difficulties and solutions in terms of hiring** are related to legal issues, housing, language and cultural knowledge. Regarding **legal issues**, the interviewed companies as well as the interviewed TCNs reported burdensome bureaucratic procedures, e.g. the long duration to receive visa for TCNs (especially during the COVID-19 pandemic) (WP5DE003, 014, 020, 041; Traunsteiner Tagblatt 2021), or the difficulty to prove German language skills and the equivalency of German apprenticeship. This resulted in the delay of entry and start of the work and a dwindling trust of young people in the destination Germany (WP5DE003).

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[17] According to some interviewees, German (and international) guests would complain, if employees in the service do not wear leather trousers and dirndl, do not speak Bavarian dialect or are only composed of foreigners (WP5DE007, 047). Others, instead, are of the opinion that guests are already used to foreign employees (WP5DE014).

This feeling was overcome by regular support and contact between employer and prospective employee (WP5DE003, 010, 020) For those, who already lived in Germany, in particular asylum seekers, lacking working permits were witnessed, which were partly responded by (joint) protests of employers (WP5DE003, 007). **Housing** for TCN (and his or her family) is an important prerequisite for the recruiting (WP5DE006, 012). However, interviewed employers and employees reported high prices, non-availability of seasonal housing and negative attitudes of property owners as well as a lack of existing apartments and building ground to construct new company housing (WP4DE013, 041). Since rental contracts are a precondition for entering Germany, some companies also took care of the housing search and liaised private apartments (with sublease) (WP5DE020, 041). Bigger companies were also able to provide company housing or offered TCNs to stay in one of the hotel rooms on a short-time basis (WP5DE008). Related to **language and cultural knowledge**, employees referred to lacking German language competencies and resulting difficulties to understand the work contract. The lacking awareness for high costs of living in Germany and the low payment during the apprenticeship were a particular obstacle TCN employees faced (WP5DE003, 006, 041). In contrast to young locals who could spare money by co-habiting with their families, TCNs not only needed to live on their own but also considered it necessary to send money to support their families in the countries of origin (WP5DE008, 047). While some could make advantage of permanent and indeterminate contracts (WP5DE003, 019, WP5DE041), others saw themselves confronted to (illegally) do side jobs. This, however, translated into fatigue at the regular job (WP5DE041).

**On-boarding**

The most important challenges during the on-boarding expressed by interviewed companies and TCN employees are related to language and cultural knowledge, work-related processes, social as well as legal issues. Regarding **language and cultural knowledge**, both companies and TCNs reported language barriers resulting in difficulties to understand instructions of employers, colleagues or vocational school teachers as well as needs of guests (WP5DE008, 011, 019, 020). These barriers encompassed the lack of specific

vocabulary such as names for drinks and meals as well as the use of Bavarian dialect and figures of speech among employers, colleagues and teachers (WP5DE019, 020). To learn German by means of participating in regular language courses was also considered difficult to do beside the job, not least due to high costs (WP5DE011). Addressing the language barriers, TCNs learned the language on their own, e.g. by means of YouTube-videos (WP5DE019; Berchtesgadener Anzeiger 2022), in interactions with guests and colleagues (WP5DE008) or in interaction with older locals (WP5DE019). Some, however, also participated in public courses besides attending vocational school (ibid.). Therefore, TCNs found it helpful to be patient with themselves and accept that one makes mistakes (ibid.). Companies, in addition, supported the language acquisition drawing on in-house German language courses led by professionals or volunteers (WP5DE006, 014). The participation was facilitated by means of temporary release from work duties (WP5DE041). Beside language courses, companies also provided instructions for technical devices in different languages (ibid.) and nominated colleagues who spoke the same language or had the same cultural background to assist as interpreters (ibid., see also below). Vocational schools, in addition, offered block instruction weeks prior to and additional language courses beside regular classes and initiated intercultural projects, which provided the classes with the opportunity to get to know countries and dishes from the countries of origin of the students (WP5DE012, 047). In terms of **work-related processes**, TCNs reported differences between the working systems in their countries of origin and Germany (WP5DE020), lacking routines, e.g. serving with one hand or preparing cutlery (ibid.), exhausting partial shifts that only leave little leisure time (WP5DE011, 020), shift plans that did not meet the families' needs (WP5DE019) or last-minute shift plans that only left little room for planning (WP5DE020). Employers of small-sized companies, in particular, highlighted lacking time resources to assist themselves with on-boarding of TCNs (WP5DE003, 012). This was solved in many cases by means of colleague mentors, who had the same linguistic or cultural background as the new TCN employees, and assisted by showing (new) work routines, for instance (WP5DE003, 014, 019, 020, 041, 047, see also above). To safeguard the acquired knowledge, one company conducted intensive inductory training with final examinations for each section of the company

(WP5DE041). When it comes to **social issues**, TCNs without family and friends on-site faced a lack of support on-site, homesickness and, in case of (anticipated) negative news from their countries of origin, even sleeping disorders or burnouts (WP5DE047). This aggravated the integration process in the companies and could only partly be overcome by the above-mentioned mentors (WP5DE003, 006). In terms of **legal issues**, enterprises, in contrast, faced bureaucracy, e.g. needed to renew work or residence permits on a regular basis. Interviewed entrepreneurs and managers, however, mostly assisted with residency registration, registration at health insurance companies, the opening of bank accounts, the explanation of bus or train systems and even grocery shopping (WP5DE041).

### Everyday life

In everyday life beyond the workplace, employees in the hospitality industry performed activities at home, e.g. (pre)cooking, washing and cleaning, they spent time in the nature, e.g. at lakes or on mountains, and met with family and friends on-site, digitally or – on an irregular basis – in faraway places (WP5DE008, 011). However, TCNs considered it rather difficult to make friendships with local youngsters, especially in case one was in a relationship already (WP5DE019). In case one also had children, it was also hard to maintain a healthy work-life balance due to work, vocational school, housework, grocery shopping and child rearing.

### Staying/Retention

When it comes to the staying/retention of TCN employees in the companies, the hospitality industry and the rural and mountain region, the perspective of TCNs and their future aspirations as well as the activities of companies were found to be core.

The interviewed TCNs planned to **stay in the company** at least until the end of the apprenticeship and justified this with positive, appreciative social relations at the workplace, e.g. with the boss, the colleagues or the guests, and the absence of discrimination (WP5DE008, 011, 019, 020). The employees also highlighted that they already got to know the work processes and anticipated learning new things also in the future (WP5DE019). Prospectively, TCNs could imagine leaving their current employer in case they will not

receive good payments or feel stressed or exploited (WP5DE019, 020). From employers' perspectives, various activities were established that aimed at nurturing the 'well-being of employees' (WP5DE014). Employers did not only offer unlimited working contracts, high loans and extra payments, which increase with the period of employment, opportunities for promotion and upward mobility in the companies, but also flexible working hours, e.g. four- or five-day-weeks, continuous instead of partial shifts and holidays even during peak season to visit family and friends. In addition, meals free of charge or with discount, shopping vouchers and housing are provided (WP5DE007, 010, 011, 012, 013, 014, 041; Berchtesgadener Anzeiger 2020, Traunsteiner Tagblatt 2021). For reasons of personal development, TCNs could make advantage of annual performance reviews as well as apprentice sharing and trial internships in other houses (WP5DE041). To strengthen identification with the hotel or restaurant, the companies promoted self-organization and flat hierarchies and decided together about the future orientation of the company (WP5DE015). To foster team building, in contrast, enterprises organized regular events, excursions or even joint holidays (WP5DE007, 013, 041). Entrepreneurs also had a sympathetic ear for the problems of the TCNs, considered themselves also responsible to assist with residence issues and family affairs and stayed in contact even during the low season or the COVID-19 pandemic, when employees went to their countries of origin (WP5DE007, 013, 022).

Reflecting about the TCN's **staying** orientation **in the hospitality industry and the rural place of living**, work-related issues were of utmost importance. TCNs liked the versatility of the job and the opportunity to work with people and get to know new ones every day (WP5DE019). They also emphasized the advantage of receiving tips (ibid.), but pointed to the stressfulness of the work, too (WP5DE020). Those who considered the apprenticeship in the hospitality industry only a spring board to come to Germany, however, may move on to other sectors (WP5DE041).

Reasons to stay in the rural and mountain region revolved around the straightforwardness (WP5DE011), the friendliness of people and an experienced acceptance (WP5DE011, 020, 047) as well as the renownedness and attractivity of the region for leisure

purposes (WP5DE008, 019, 047). One employee hesitated to move again, because of the difficulty to find housing (WP5DE019), while others make their future decision dependent on the loan and working conditions, the quality of the hotel, the living standard and availability of housing (WP5DE020). Some may also want to live close to fellow country people or to family members and therefore move on to cities (WP5DE007, 047). Those who wanted to become self-employed, e.g. with a restaurant or café, also considered to move to bigger cities in order to have a bigger base of potential customers (WP5DE008).

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### Handicraft in the region of Oberallgäu and the role of TCNs

Similar to the other sectors presented above, handicraft faces a shortage of skilled workers, assistants and trainees for many years already (Allgäuer Zeitung 2022, WP5DE002, 017, 018). Due to ongoing supply shortages in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, most recently, some companies hesitated to hire new apprentices (WP5DE018). In terms of recruitment, on-boarding and staying/retention, the handicraft sector has many similarities with (health)care and the hospitality industry, which is why only specificities are outlined below.

**Recruitment**

Recruiting from abroad encompassed skilled and unskilled workers (WP5DE001) and was usually organised by institutional actors such as the Federal Employment Agency (WP5DE017) or the regional chamber of handicraft (WP5DE018). In most cases, the employers of small-scale companies acquired new workers among relatives of employees with whom they have a good personal relationship and reported desired persons to the chamber (ibid.). Due to **lengthy visa procedures**, however, business owners attempted to exert political influence (ibid.). The **recognition of foreign professional experience** was a core element of recruiting from abroad. A regional expert estimated that many TCNs are awarded only partial equivalence and had to do post-qualification, while many of them did not receive recognition at all. Only little received full professional recognition (WP5DE018). Reasons for the non-recognition or partial recognition are caused by the difficulty to

compare vocational training in Germany with other countries and the lack of documents (ibid.). In many countries, professional skills are not put into writing and therefore cannot be submitted to the authorities (ibid.). Since the handicraft sector is dependent on skills with hands, a **qualification analysis** from abroad via video was performed to remedy this situation and check competencies (ibid.).

Regarding the recruitment on-site, it was considered an advantage of the handicraft sector that one can test his or her own craft skills in advance and thus assesses rather quickly, whether the activity is suitable or not (WP5DE002). Offering **internships, trial work or auxiliary jobs**, therefore, was perceived as a promising way for both recruiting and on-boarding, as this can easily lead to an apprenticeship or a permanent job (WP5DE044, 045, 048, 049). Almost all interview partners highlighted the relevance of **personal contacts** for the matching process – especially in the case of recruiting TCNs (e.g. WP5DE001, 002, 017). Companies and employers presented themselves at gatherings of refugee relief groups to promote job vacancies (WP5DE017) and were also approached by volunteers vice versa (WP5DE017, 045). In addition, TCNs established contact with companies on their own initiative, e.g. to inquire about an internship or an auxiliary job (WP5DE017, 045, 048). However, in the course of declining numbers of volunteers for refugee relief in the region (Allgäuer Anzeigeblatt 2021), the importance of personal matching decreased and the professionalization via organized recruitment channels gained more relevance. One interviewee criticized this development as a slowdown in recruitment (WP5DE001).

**On-boarding**

The **working atmosphere** plays an important role for on-boarding. On the one hand, however, as one regional stakeholder pointed out, many companies are not welcoming. The first foreign worker is also often seen as a 'representative' for wider groups, e.g. foreigners in general, refugees in particular, and thus pave the way for future workers (WP5DE018). TCNs, on the other hand, reported that they received **support** and were guided by the boss and the colleagues, which was highly appreciated (WP5DE001, 044, 045, 048, 049). In individual cases, schedules for the work steps and individual practice evenings were offered

(WP5DE044). To improve German language skills, TCNs also participated in **individual German classes** run by volunteers. However, TCNs expressed that tutors did not always have the adequate technical knowledge relevant to pursue vocational training (WP5DE045, 048). In the vocational school, team-teaching was offered within the classes to ease everyday school life for TCNs (WP5DE001). When it comes to support in terms of **housing**, contact with authorities, communication with the chamber of crafts and the arrangement of language courses, i.e. the on-boarding in the locality, the role of employers was highlighted by local stakeholders. However, the willingness of employers to get involved in these issues varied greatly (WP5DE001, 018, 044, 045).

**Staying/Retention**

Local experts emphasized that the handicraft businesses have a great interest in their employees' **staying in the company** (WP5DE001). An advantage is seen in the close personal ties within the sector, which is attributed to the small-scale structure of the companies (WP5DE001, 017, 018). However, changes to better-paid industrial enterprises (WP5DE001, 044) or entrepreneurial self-employment (WP5DE044) were identified as reasons for stopping work in handicraft.

# Conclusions

During the activities, some cross-sectional key points could be identified in terms of migrant employment with regard to the three phases mentioned above:

(1) Recruitment
- Diverse mechanisms of recruiting: private and public agencies as well as self-application and making use of personal social networks, especially by TCNs who already lived on-site
- Long duration to receive visa (for TCNs who moved to Germany from abroad) and working permits (for TCNs who already lived on-site)

- The provision of housing is crucial, while some companies play an active role
- Trial work, internships and auxiliary jobs as a way to enter the labour market (for TCNs who already lived on-site)

(2) On-boarding
- Language barriers as a challenge: the acquisition of German language in general, the local dialect and work-specific language in particular
- Difficulties regarding the recognition of foreign credentials especially in (health)care and handicraft
- Welcoming culture and provision of mentors to get to know the company and the working processes (for all) and make oneself acquainted in the new country, e.g. bureaucracy, getting to know the region and the people
- Personal problems, e.g. difficulties to make friends of their own age, homesickness, waiting for family reunification, necessity to send money to family in country of origin, double burden of work and vocational school, work-life balance

(3) Staying
- Staying at least until the end of the apprenticeship
- Staying orientation of TCNs in the company and the sector depends on the working environment of TCNs in the company (teamwork, good colleagues) and beyond, i.e. the region as well as TCNs' future aspirations (e.g. family foundation, self-employment, desire/necessity to live close to family members)

The participatory-oriented research, may be able to contribute to a reflection process among local stakeholders concerning the on-going activities of the health region plus (*Gesundheitsregion plus*) in NEA, which aim at fostering the on-boarding and retention of (health)care workers. Simultaneously, they may provide valuable information about the future orientation of the activities of the local branch of the German Hotel and Catering

Organisation (DEHOGA) in BGL regarding the requalification and retention of employees in the hospitality industry. For TCNs, the activities were a valuable starting point for reflections about their achievements and their staying orientation in the region. The impact of the action-research activities, however, cannot be fully estimated, but needs o be evaluated in the long-run.

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# Italy: South Tyrol and Turin

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## Summary

The Italian team (including the University of Turin, the Metropolitan City of Turin and Caritas Bolzano, with the support of Andrea Membretti from UEF) worked on two different case studies, one in South Tyrol (from now on ST), the other in the Metropolitan City of Turin (from now on MCT), with two different thematic focus.

**ST case study** (eastern Alps) focused on **TCNs labour integration**. The main aim of the action research was to engage local stakeholders in the identification of tools capable to improve the current situation of TCNs in relation to the labour market, both with regard to those migrants seeking a first job and those who are already employed but want to improve their professional status.

**The MCT case study** (western Alps) focused on the impact of TCNs on housing patterns and socio-spatial transformation of mountain villages. The action research was devoted to the **use of public spaces**, to the local community's ways of living and perceiving itself within the considered territory, and to the connections between mountain areas and the metropolitan region.

# Description of activities

## The case studies objectives

**ST case study** focused on **TCNs labour integration**, considering in particular the mountainous district of Burgraviat (around the town of Merano), in the Province of Bolzano. The main aim of the action research was to identify innovative approaches and test concrete tools to improve the current situation of TCNs in relation to their integration in local labour market. Profiting from the fundamental support of the local partner – Caritas Bolzano – and the involvement of several stakeholders (local firms, trade unions, the Province, other associations, etc.), the main tool adopted and tested during the action research has been the **Check of Competences (CoC)**: this complex tool allows – due to its dialogical configuration and the use of specific cards – to conduct in-depth job/life interviews with migrants, in order to bring out the soft skills and the uncertified competences they hold, in relationship with their concrete life experiences. At the same time, the CoC represents an occasion of empowerment for the TCNs involved in it, as they can recognize their own potential, and re-construct their informal career, favoring their empowerment and self-confidence. The final output of the CoC is therefore an enriched CV to be spent by TCNs in their seek for a job, as to be used as a basis for proceeding in further training and education parcourses. The CoC has been tested, thanks to the involvement of several structures for migrants run by Caritas, with a dozen of TCNs in Burgraviat, while other testing has been done in a local firm (Markas) located in Bolzano, thanks to the engagement of its director and head of personnel.

The **MCT case study** was centred on the impact of TCNs on the territorial dimension, focusing on housing and socio-spatial transformation of mountain villages, and considering in particular the municipality of Bussoleno (Susa Valley), close to the main town of Turin. The action research was devoted to investigating and re-configuring the actual distribution of the foreign population in the selected municipality (housing dimension, local urbanism) together with the meanings and **use of public spaces**, both by local community and newcomers. The action research has involved a wide network of local stakeholders (NGOs, migrant organizations, schools, local administration, parish, etc.), through the use of different participatory tools as **social mapping and mobility mapping**. Focusing finally on a specific site within the village, that was intended to be requalified by the local administration for public use, a residential 4-days **architecture workshop** has been realized, involving TCNs, local population and students (also coming from other regions, responding to a national call organized with the support of Camposaz national association) in the self-building of a convivial wooden structure (the "MATILDE big bench"). The final output of the activities is therefore represented by a new and concrete public space of encountered, offered to the different populations of the village for the future.

## Actors involved

**Sampling and access to the field**.

An important preliminary work of preparation of the field of investigation was conducted during the collection of information for the writing of the WP5 briefing. This allowed, in both case studies, to recruit participants for the action research activities in an atmosphere of trust and mutual cooperation. This was made possible by the **mediation and gatekeeping activities of some local partners and stakeholders.**

With regard to ST, this role was basically played by the **local partner Caritas Bolzano**, which acted as a link between the researchers and the TCNs involved in the action research, thus allowing the identification of a group of people available to carry out the activities. The TCNs involved are all people with whom Caritas started an assistance program for a long time to accompany them in their search for work and housing. From this point of view, therefore, the climate of trust was already very high and the activities carried out by the researchers together with Caritas took place in a climate of general trust and cooperation.

With regard to the MCT, a crucial role in facilitating sampling and access was played by the **Municipality of Bussoleno**, where the action research took place, with the support of the research agency FIERI (Forum Internazionale ed Europeo Ricerche sull'Immigrazione) of Turin, involved by MCT fo carrying on specific local actitivities; the gatekeepers' work carried out by some members of the municipal administration made possible to involve other local stakeholders connected to local TCNs: the third sector stakeholders and those of local education system who are also involved in processes of schooling of TCNs. The sampling of TCNs involved in the action research relied on this triangulation between public institutions, the third sector and the educational one.

**Stakeholders involved**

During the action research **three types of stakeholders** were involved: a) TCNs, b) Local stakeholders; c) Local partners.

TCNs

The total number of TCNs involved in the action research in the Italian case studies (ST and MCT) was over 40.

The TCNs directly involved in the action research in ST have close relations with Caritas Bolzano, with whom they have been dealing for a long time to achieve progressive

autonomy in work and housing. Some of them are employees of the Markas company in Bolzano and were involved by the staff of their recruitment and personnel internal department. In total, TCNs engaged in ST action research activities were 15 (eleven women and four men), first-generation migrants coming from Africa (Mali, Nigeria, Morocco, Burkina Faso), Latin America (Colombia, Brazil), Asia (Iran, India) and Europe (Albania, Ukraine, Georgia).

The TCNs directly involved in the action research in Bussoleno (MCT) have been 30 (of whom one third are female) and are referable to a smaller number of ethnic groups (mainly Albanians and Moroccans), both first and second generation TCNs, and some TCNs in transit, who are temporarily in Bussoleno but with the intention of crossing the nearby border with France. With regard to the TCNs in transit (N=4), they are all male, Central African, and are currently hosted by the Red Cross in Bussoleno; some of them are involved in a professionalization process within the Red Cross project LISA (acronym for work, inclusion, develop, independence), which targets fragile, homeless or asylum seekers. Concerning Albanians, 14 people were involved; half of them is first generation and half second generation TCNs who live in Bussoleno or have maintained close links with Bussoleno; the other TCNs (N=12) are either first and second generation Moroccans, or people coming from Africa (Guinea, Somalia) or Bangladesh, most of them resident in Bussoleno, the others gravitating to Bussoleno as attending the CPIA adult school.

## Local stakeholders

There was a very good level of involvement of local stakeholders in both case studies.

With regard to the ST, **public institutions**, **employment agencies**, **third sector** associations operating with TCNs (job search), and even the recruitment offices of some **companies** were involved. Considering in particular the public institutions, the Province of Bolzano was actively participanting, above all through the offices of KOI – the Coordination Service for Integration of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano - but also the municipal administrations of Merano and Tesimo and the "Comunità Comprensoriale" of Bugraviato district. Randstad

South Tyrol represented the private recruitment/placement companies, to which was added the voice of the trade unions (CGIL ST) and the world of education (evening schools for foreigners). Regarding the third sector, numerous experts working in associations (Spirit and Albatros social cooperatives) or at Caritas itself (in the reception centres Casa Noah and Casa Arnika, in the counselling service for migrants Moca service, Input service and Domus service, and in the Research and Study Centre) were involved. Finally, private companies operating in ST (Markas, Hoppe, Gra-Wu) and interested in improving the selection processes of foreign workers were also involved.

With regard to the case study of the MCT, **public institutions**, **third sector** associations operating in the reception of migrants and social/housing inclusion of TCNs, and the world of **education** were involved: in addition to the commitment of the Municipality of Bussoleno (Mayor, Councillors and Town councillors), valley actors such as the CONISA (Susa Valley Social Welfare Consortium of Pinerolo) and the Valdese Diaconia of Torre Pellice were involved. Specifically considering the third sector, the engagement in actions research activities regarded: the Red Cross of Bussoleno, which plays an important role in assisting the migrants passing through the Susa Valley towards France; the parish of Bussoleno; the Talita Kum association; the Orso and Frassati social cooperatives; and the CEIM association for asylum seekers. With regard to the world of education, the CPIA adult school of Bussoleno and representatives (students and teachers) of the Bussoleno high school (Liceo artistico) were involved.

## Local partners

The local partners of the project are Caritas Bolzano and the Metropolitan City of Turin. With Caritas Bolzano an intense collaboration and exchange of information has been developed, so that the local partner of the ST case study has been able to actively participate in the whole action research of WP5 also thanks to the direct involvement of Caritas operators.

The MCT decided to assign to the research agency FIERI the most operative part of the activities of its competence and it was therefore this research agency that collaborated to the preliminary investigation and to a part of the action-research itself.

# Activities performed

Between spring and winter 2021, in ST and in the MCT, on the institutional websites of the local authorities and local project partners **56 posts were published together with 20 articles** in local and regional newspapers. This **intense communication activity** (for which see the Communication Activity Annex) accompanied the whole action-research of WP5, acting as a sounding board for the activities that we are going to describe, aimed at increasing awareness and recognition of the role of migrants for the territory.

## Activities performed in South Tyrol

**ST** case study focuses on **TCNs labour integration.** The action research relied on the first focus group to outline the framework in which labour supply and demand in ST meet. This revealed the possibility of facilitating TCNs seeking for a job and companies offering it by enhancing the CV of candidates through the use of the Check of Comptences (CoC) that would highlight the soft skills hold by TCNs. The **action research aimed at raising attention on the issue of migrant labor integration trough the dissemination of the CoC**, its testing and validation through institutions, companies and collective actors such as the provincial association of enterprenuers (AssoImprenditori).

The first **focus group** took place at Casa Moka, a Caritas reception centre in the mountain village of Tesimo (Burgraviat district). This focus group was attended by representatives of the Province of Bolzano, of the third sector involved in facilitating the access of TCNs to the world of work, of the trade union CGIL ST, of the Randstad employment agency for ST and of some important ST companies. The meeting focused on the role of TCNs in the labour market in ST with some questions: what strategies should be taken forward in order to match labour market supply and TCNs demand and to steer migrants towards even higher levels of qualification? What can be the role of migrants in innovation processes within local firms? How can migrants' entrepreneurial skills and soft skills be

developed? Numerous points emerged from the focus group (for details see § 2.1). Among them, it emerged that soft skills are not often considered during recruitment and selection processes. However, those who have used a tool such as the CoC, which gives strong relevance exactly to soft skills, claim that it can be a great opportunity in order to place the job seeker in the appropriate professional role.

Outcome and reflections from this first focus group convinced the Italian researchers to devote **the action research to the testing and implementation of the CoC**, **which is suitable for highlighting the soft skills of TCNs** seeking employment or, if already employed, to improve their professional status.



**Figure 1. The first focus group in Bolzano**

Therefore, it was decided to use a version of the CoC realized and tested in ST during the **Interreg project EUMINT - Euroregions, Migration and Integration (2018-2020), an international project for the integration of asylum seekers and refugees.** The EUMINT project intended to strengthen institutional cross-border cooperation between Italy and Austria mountain regions, in order to face the social, economic, political and cultural challenges

connected to migrant integration. A **training day on CoC tool** was therefore held by WP5 coordinator Andrea Membretti, as already involved in EUMINT as WP leader. The training meeting took place in the provincial premises of the KOI and was organised together with Caritas. The meeting was attended by 8 professionals interested in learning how to use the CoC (seven Caritas operators plus the personnel selection manager of the Markas company of Bolzano), a representative of the KOI office who reiterated the interest of the Integration Council in supporting this kind of tool, and finally a manager of the District Community of Bugraviato (Comunità Comprensoriale), already involved in the experimentation of the CoC during the EUMINT project, who testified her positive experience.

At this stage of the action research, following the guidelines of WP5, the **LCSWG Local Case Study Working Group was also set up**, with the participation of all actors involved so far: institutional actors, the third sector and the world of entrepreneurship and job placement. This LCSWG local case study working group – still operating - will also be the reference for the subsequent WP6 phase, strating from the forthcoming roundtables.

During autumn 2021, Caritas operators and the personnel selection manager of the Markas company **tested autonomously the CoC** involving some already employed TCN workers and migrants job seeking in this experimentation. The following month, a **feedback meeting** on the CoC was held with Caritas operators and the human resources manager of the Markas company. The feedback of the operators who used the CoC were positive, in some cases very positive. Suggestions for an improvement of the tool were given (for details see §2.1).

After this CoC testing phase a **second focus group** was held online, involving once again the Director of KOI, the Director of Randstad, the responsible for work integration at the Albatros social cooperative in Merano, an operator from the Caritas Input Service and a representative of the Markas company. The focus group participnats were engaged around the following topics, both on **the role of soft skills in labour inclusion processes** and on **the governance of actors who can foster these processes** (for the results see §2.1): why is it important to focus on soft skills? Are there sectors in which it is particularly important to valorise the informal competences of foreign workers to the benefit of both them and the

local economy in ST? Could the CoC help immigrant workers to improve their professional opportunities? In order to promote further and faster integration of TCNs into the local labor market, what kind of initiatives and good practices are needed, and which actors should be involved?

Within action research activities - between the end of 2021 and early 2022 - an **itinerant photo exhibition** entitled "Work in progress. "Skills and potential: a new perspective on migration and work in South Tyrol" has been realized. In fact, one of the themes that was emerged is that migrants have little awareness of being economic drivers for local development. This lack of awareness also means that it is difficult for migrants to self-assess their own curriculum and skills, and it is therefore difficult for them to think about professional improvement in the future. Morevoer, this unawareness translates also in a lack of social recognition and status for these migrant workers at local level. For these reasons, it was decided to devote the exhibition to the labour inclusion of people with migratory background, with a focus on the issue of soft skills and the CoC. The exhibition involved a local artist/photographer who, from mid-November 2021, started to meet TCN workers and employers from companies in the area. From these meetings, six TCN workers were selected and made thmselves available for photo shooting. They are women and men of different ethnicities who work in very different contexts: agriculture, industry/mechanics, cleaning, cooking, hotel sector. Three of them also partecipated to the CoC testing. The exhibition featured three types of photos: "frontal portraits" of the selected protagonists; work situations chosen by the protagonists; documentation of the CoC activity. The photographer Daria Akimenko (http://cargocollective.com/akimenko/bio) created a photo-documentation of the CoC process and a visual translation of the TCN worker's soft skills. While the photo contents are ready, the exhibition will be inaugurated at the Markas premises in Bolzano on 11.3.2022 with a public event involving local authorities and LCSWG participants. The exhibition will then be moved to Merano (Burgraviat), first at the "Liebeswerk/opera serafica" and then at the Moca counselling office (Caritas). The exhibition will also be uploaded to the MATILDE Virtual Gallery online.

**Figure 2. Testing the Check of competence in Bolzano**

Within the activities of the LCSWG, work is going on to build the future sustainability of the CoC experimentation started with MATILDE, in order to leave something concrete to the communities involved in the project: a first meeting with some members of the association of local entrepreneurs (AssoImprenditori) was held in January 2022, to explain the objectives of the CoC and the role of soft skills in the labour field, proposing an active involvement of the association in promoting the CoC within their associated firms.

A second meeting, to widely present MATILDE and the CoC tool at Assoimprenditori is being planned for Spring 2022, in order to involve more companies in the experimentation and to enhance the institutionalisation of this tool in the future.

Activities performed in the Metropolitan City of Turin

Bussoleno Case Study (**MCT**) focused on **the use of public spaces as a way of social recognition and shared sense of belonging with respect to TCNs and local communities**.

The action research involved several groups of first and second generation TCNs who reflected on the use of the public spaces in the mountain village of Bussoleno. After running different participatory activities at local level, it was jointly decided to respond to one of the needs emerged, that of creating a new meeting ground in centre of the village, close to the public market area. It was therefore decided to opt for the self-construction of a wooden structure (the MATILDE Big Bench), adopting the **Camposaz participatory architecture method**, with the collaboration of Camposaz national association.

The action research process was developed over several months, between June and October 2021, with some work peaks involving each time different groups of TCNs. The very begin of the action research took place in June at the CPIA adult school and involved some teachers (from Bussoleno and other CPIA schools in the valley) and seven migrants from Morocco, Guinea, Somalia and Albania, living in Bussoleno or in other villages of the Susa Valley. In this first day the actions carried out consisted in the presentation of the MATILDE research objectives and in the presentation of the action research in Bussoleno, with particular attention to the activities to be carried out during the day. After the presentation migrants has been involved in a realization of subjective mapping of places that consists in an individual exercise on places in Bussoleno that are known and frequented by the participants; this map was the base to realize an individual **mobility map** that does not only consider Bussoleno, but the mobility dynamics that migrants develop between the valley and the capital city of Turin for work, leisure or study reasons to carry out their daily life. After this work, each migrant has presented and discussed his/her own map in front of the other participants. Finally, the group walked towards the train station of Bussoleno, stopping in the front square. There, a discussion on the use of the surrounding spaces by identifying some critical points and hypotheses for transformation took place.

After this first phase, a second important session of action research took place in July, at the Council Chamber of the Municipality of Bussoleno. The participants included members of the Municipality (the Mayor and some councelors), a teacher of the High School of Bussoleno and a dozen TCNs (mainly second generation, Albanian and Moroccan) living in Bussoleno. To the debate partecipated also some students from the University of Pavia

(single-cycle degree course in Construction Engineering and Architecture, course of Sociology, Prof. Andrea Membretti), connected online. These university students were envited to partecipate because involved in a university workshop focusing exactly on the analysis of public spaces in Bussoleno, in relationship with the aims of MATILDE action research.

After the presentation of the aims of MATILDE project and the greetings of the Mayor of the city, the participants worked on the topic of the public spaces in Bussoleno. Each partecipant reported on the meeting places of his/her past and present and all the information were collected in a big **diacronic social map.** After this activity, the group discussed with the students of the University of Pavia on some design ideas to redefine and ameliorate the public space of the village.



**Figure 3. Social mapping in Bussoleno**

Another important phase of the action research was then dedicated to explore through debates and discussions with other groups of TCNs the topic of public spaces for socialising, in particular **public open spaces**, that are very important in a mountain context as the Bussoleno one. The activities took place at **several locations in Bussoleno and involved different target groups of** TCNs, both recently arrived and first generation who have been

resident for decades. The ethnic groups represented were again mainly Moroccan and Albanian and, this time, exclusively male groups because women were more difficult to reach because of their family commitments. While in the first day of action research the period considered was the present, and in the second day the period turned out to be the present (although with strong rootedness in the past) it was decided this time to pay special attention to the future: to what one imagines to build in the future, to leave to future generations in the village. During the third day of action research people were also **engaged** for taking part to the subsequent Camposaz architecture workshop that would take place the following month, as a conclusive step of the action research process.

Camposaz is a **wood self-construction workshop** in 1:1 scale. This experience started in 2013 in northern Italy mountain regions, as an initiative stemming from the collaboration between the cultural associations Aguaz and Campomarzio, with the ambition to promote interaction between disciplines and practitioners dealing with architectural design. The workshop is open to architects, designers, carpenters between 18 and 35 years of age. During the workshop, living in close contact, they have to design and physically construct small wood installations, based on specific themes discussed with the local communities, aiming at enhancing the landscape and public use of space.

Camposaz was invited in Bussoleno in October 2021, to conduct a residential workshop on partecipatory architecture in an area considered by many local inhabitants and TCNs as a crucial one to the meeting and socializing needs: the market place. To the five days of Camposaz Workshop in Bussoleno partecipated two coordinators of the Camposaz staff from the city of Trento, two migrant guests at the Red Cross of Bussoleno, five young graduates and undergraduate youngsters, from different European regions, experienced in design and project planning subjects. All the participants were hosted at the Bussoleno Red Cross Logistic Pole, which, in addition to its institutional functions, plays an important role in assisting the migratory flows passing through the Susa Valley towards France.

During the first day **preparatory work** has been carried ut: a meeting with the workshop participants, the check of the building materials, an analysis of the site made available by the Municipality for the participatory architecture intervention with the aim to

create a meeting space for socialising; the choise of the type of intervention, a first draft of the project. In the second day the **workshop activity began**. The foundations of the structure were laid; some Camposaz coordinators met students at the High school (Liceo statale Norberto Rosa) to explain the principles and objectives of the participatory architecture workshop. In the third day the **architecture intervention began to take shape**. Representatives of the High School students and of the local community (including some TCNs) came to observe the work. Some stayed to participate actively in the construction.

During the fourth day the **project took its final shape** as a kind of large bench resembling the image of a mountain and of a "M" (the one of MATILDE and Mountain). It appeared clearly visible from afar as a sort of landmark for the area between the Lyceum, the Polyvalent Centre and the market area. During the day, participatory activities were run with a group of primary school children, coming to visit the structure. In the last day the workshop ended and **the place has been restituted to the community in its new form of a space for meeting and socialising**, which will be the background for cultural and recreational activities and initiatives. The care and maintenance of this new space will therefore be entrusted to the whole local community, as an occasion for sharing the responsibility of its duration through voluntary activity.



**Picture 4. Patricipatory workshop in Bussoleno**

During the last day of the partecipatory architecture workshop a **focus group** took place in Bussoleno in front of the bench in construction. To the focus group partecipated the UNITO and UEF researchers, members of the local partner the MCT, members of the Municipality of Bussoleno and other local stakeholders connected to the third sector and to the education sector. The aim of the focus group was to assess the results of more than six months of action research and engagement activities (for the results see 2.2). During the focus group the **LCSWG was also definitely constituted**, with the participation of all actors involved so far: institutional local actors, the third sector and the world of education. This LCSWG will also be the reference for the subsequent WP6 phase, strating from the forthcoming roundtables.

The last **focus group** of the action research was conducted online (because of the growing of the pandemic 4th wave) and involved members of the Municipality of Bussoleno, a member of the Bussoleno Red Cross Logistic Pole, a member of the Third Sector connected to the Bishop activities and a member of the Bussoleno High School. In this focus group the aim was to move from WP5 activities to the next steps of the MATILDE project (WP6), starting from some questions: what functions and initiatives could be envisaged in the coming months for the site object of the Camposaz workshop? What other priority Bussoleno has with respect to the creation of public spaces? How local communities can be involved in projects to upgrade the area? Can private individuals and local companies play an active role in the territorial inclusion of migrants in addition to the traditional local stakeholders (public institutions, third sector, education sector)? (for the results see § 2.2).

## Tools and approach

The **tools used** for the action research are: 1. focus group, 2. mobility mapping, 3. social mapping, 4. self-construction workshop, 5. check of competences.

## Tool 1. Focus group

**Eventual modifications:** 4 focus groups were carried out, two for each case study, using the tool in preliminary and final stages with the objectives of: 1) better defining the objectives of the action research; 2) debriefing on the action research activities carried out; 3) connecting the activity of WP5 with the following steps of the Matilde project. The only change that was made was that the last two focus groups were held online due to the fourth pandemic wave. Researchers found no significant differences between the online and offline versions of the focus groups: in the online version the participants seemed more concentrated while in the in-person version, held outdoors, there was more dispersion.

**Target group**: Each focus group involved a minimum of five and a maximum of eight people. These were local stakeholders involved in the field of TCNs inclusion. For ST, as the focus was on labour integration, the professionals/operators involved came mainly from the business world, the third sector and training and employment agencies. For the MCT, which focused on public spaces, the participants mainly came from local public institutions, the third sector and the education world.

**Setting of the activity**: The locations chosen for the meetings were familiar to all (the Caritas premises in Bolzano, the premises of the Municipality in Bussoleno), favouring outdoor spaces whenever possible; the atmosphere of the meetings was always largely participatory, also because the participants had a common vision of the themes of immigration and the role that TCNs have or may have for local development.

**Eventual interactions between the conducted action research and other local projects/ activities**: none.

## Tool 2. Mobility mapping

**Eventual modifications**: The mobility mapping was carried out within the first action research day of the case study of Bussoleno (MCT). The mobility mapping served: 1) to reflect on the interdependencies between mountain villages and the provincial capital (Turin); 2) to

create a common basis (the mobility strategies) between TCNs residing in Bussoleno and TCNs from Susa Valley, living in other villages but attending Bussoleno for adult school. There were no significant changes to the tool: the realisation of the mobility maps was individual, and the return was then collective, in front of the group of participants.

**Target group**: In the realisation of the mobility maps 7 TCNs were involved, mainly women, from Morocco, Guinea, Somalia, Albania, of different ages and, in addition to two researchers from the Italian Team, 3 teachers from the CPIA school, one from Bussoleno and two from other CPIA sites in Susa Valley. The group of TCNs was composed of foreigner resident in Bussoleno and not. Some of them have recently arrived in Italy and are learning Italian language. A linguistic mediation function was therefore necessary to facilitate the understanding of the work.

**Setting of the activity**: The mobility mapping took place on the premises of the CPIA school, well known to all participants as students of the school. Its realisation was made possible thanks to the help of the teachers, who facilitated the understanding of the objectives of the map and made it possible to work in a friendly atmosphere. Although the activity had been proposed and explained a few days beforehand, the TCNs were a bit diffident and would not have participated without the help and motivation provided by the teachers.

**Eventual interactions between the conducted action research and other local projects/ activities**: none.

Tool 3. Social mapping

**Eventual modifications**: social mapping was carried out within the second action research day of the case study of Bussoleno (MCT), addressed to a new group of participants. Social mapping was chosen as a tool able to provide information on the frequentation of places in Bussoleno. The target group of TCNs was composed of second-generation migrants living in Bussoleno.This decades-long frequentation of Bussoleno since childhood meant that the map took on a diachronic dimension, both of yesterday and today, of the places significant

in the past and those significant in the present, with the distinction between yesterday and today marked by the transition to adulthood and becoming parents. The only modification to the tool is therefore to take account of this diachronic dimension with the result of having a map in which two dimensions intersect.

**Target group**: a dozen foreign youth and adults, mainly second-generation migrants Albanian and Moroccan were involved in the realization of the social map.

**Setting of the activity**: The social map was conducted at the Council Chamber of the Municipality of Bussoleno, an indoor public space known and frequented by all. The atmosphere was particularly relaxed, with an excellent level of interaction between participants and between researchers and participants, and no particular mediation was necessary. If the aim of the tool was to "explore the spatial dimensions of people's relativities"[18], it went much further: there was no need for icebreaking among the participants because they were people who have known each other since childhood. However, the collective review of past places, the placing and resemantizing of one's own places, seeing them confirmed by others, all enabled a strong strengthening and awareness of a common and shared spatial heritage. The TCNs who entered the Council Chamber to do social mapping when they left had become more of a group, with a legacy of memories to leave to their children of which they had become more aware. So, while this tool is useful for exploring the spatial dimension of individuals, it can also be useful for building or strengthening a common spatial heritage in those group contexts where people have known and frequented each other for some time.

**Eventual interactions between the conducted action research and other local projects/ activities:** none.

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[18] Kumar, S. (2007): Methods for community participation: a complete guide for practitioners. Repr. ITDG Publishing: London, P.57.

**Eventual modifications**: The self-construction workshop was used in the last phase of the action research of the case study in Bussoleno; compared to the standard model of self-construction workshop that lasts 10-12 days, a shorter model of only five days was tested. This shortening of time has the advantage of being able to include more people in the team work (not everyone has 10 free days). The disadvantage is that, since it is not possible to reduce the already tight time of the material execution, it is necessary to reduce the time needed to engage the community (preliminary meetings, inspection on site) and to create the group/ icebreaking. In more, it is also necessary to accept a less complex project. Concerning the community engagement, the problem was solved by using as engagement activities the three days of action research that involved several groups of migrants in mobility mapping and social mapping activities. Concerning the icebreaking activity, it was made possible also in a shorter time thanks to the hospitality offered by the Bussoleno Red Cross Strategic Pole that allowed the participants to sleep, eat and work together fo 5 days. With regard to the simplification of the project, a less complex but visually effective design was used. A final point is the number of people who must belong to the community in which the project takes place, which should ideally be half of the participants. However, due to the tight time frame of the engagement and the fact that the aim of MATILDE was to involve TCNs who often have problems with language comprehension, the involvement of TCNs has been limited to two (around one third of the participants).

      **Target group**: the workshop was attended by two coordinators of the Camposaz staff, two African migrants actually living at the Bussoleno Red Cross Strategic Pole, five young graduates and undergraduates experienced in design and project planning coming from different regions of Italy and even from Argentina. During the construction activity some community members, TCNs and not TCNs asked to collaborate.

      **Setting of the activity**: The location chosen for the self-construction workshop is a green space in front of the Multifunctional Centre, near the market area and the high school. It is a space bordering the city centre, in front of the river, sunny and well connected to the

road network. Despite the fact that autumn was just around the corner, the workshop benefited from five days of sunshine; the atmosphere among the participants was very good, as was the interaction between the Italian and TCNs members of the group; TCNs participated at first only as executors, then proposing modifications and best solutions. A second location for the self-construction workshop was the Bussoleno Red Cross Strategic Pole, a modern, welcoming and efficient place where migrants trying to reach France transit every night: here the workshop participants slept and had meals and rest. In fact, the self-construction workshop always involves cohabitation (usually in tent-like structures) and having the logistic pole available was a great fortune that facilitated the icebreaking and team-building processes, giving MATILDE's action research activity the right conceptual background.

**Eventual interactions between the conducted action research and other local projects/ activities**: none.

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Tool 5. Check of competences

**Eventual modifications**: The model of the check of competences (CoC) that was used for the action research of the ST case study comes from a previous Interreg project EUMINT.[19] No changes have been made to the CoC with respect to this version. The tool foresees that there should preferably be two individual colloquia with each TCN; in some cases, however, it was possible to hold only one interview: in fact, it was not always clear to the TCNs the purpose of the meetings and some of them, understanding that it was not a job interview, were not interested in holding a second one. From this point of view, the role of the operators was very important in making them understand what the CoC is for.

**Target group**: The migrants (mainly TCNs) directly involved in the CoC have close relations with the Caritas, in a path of progressive autonomy to get work and housing. Some of them are employees of the Markas company and were involved by the personnel selection

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[19] The CoC in the EUMINT version was used because Andrea Membretti, as coordinator of the Work Integration WP in EUMINT, had already tested the tool.

department of the same company. Twelve people (eight women and four men) first-generation migrants from Africa (Mali, Nigeria, Burkina Faso), Latin America (Colombia, Brazil), Asia (Iran, India) and Europe (Albania, Ukraine, Georgia) were involved.

**Setting of the activity**: The CoC were conducted in person by the Caritas operators and the personnel selection manager of the Markas company in their respective workplaces that are places familiar for the migrants involved. Regarding the interaction, although it was an interaction between people who know and trust each other, there was sometimes a certain level of tension and difficulty in understanding the objectives of the CoC. Markas employees were concerned that the interview was intended to re-evaluate their professionalism for possible dismissal; unemployed Caritas TCNs hoped it was a job interview.

**Eventual interactions between the conducted action research and other local projects/ activities**: as already said the CoC model comes from a previous project, the Interreg project EUMINT. This connection seemed particularly important to us both because it shows that European projects are not 'an end in themselves' but become tools to move forward in research and development, and because when the tool is continued to be used on the same territory (as in this case, EUMINT took place in the North East) it takes deeper root by spreading among stakeholders, creating a shared culture and approach to problems.

# Main outcomes

## South Tyrol case study

The ST case study focused on **TCNs labour integration** and led to two main results:

1.    **A better understanding of the potentialities of the CoC tool**, both in terms of its usefulness for the supply side (the world of enterprises and employment agencies) and its

usefulness for the demand side (TCNs workers). The work also allowed the identification of two different targets of TCNs workers who could benefit from the skills profile; another result was the refinement of its use, highlighting some criticalities that can be overcome, not so much by modifying the tool but by creating optimal conditions for its use.

2.      **A diffusion of the CoC** tool not only in quantitative terms (more subjects using it) but also in qualitative terms (new fields of application), allowing the emergence of a **'job placement chain'** that communicates better and obtains better results in less time by using a common tool (the CoC).

Let us see them point by point.

1.      The CoC is a tool which allows, during job interviews, the emergence not only of the hard skills of a subject (e.g., technical skills), but also of the soft skills (e.g., relational skills), **facilitating a more strategic and functional placement of the subject within a company**. From this point of view, it is **a very useful tool for employers**, who often have little time to understand who is in front of them, beyond the technical skills stated in the CV. Even more so in this Covid-19 phase in which there is often a lack of manpower at local level: the reduced mobility of workers imposed by lockdowns and increasingly restrictive health regulations often create emergency situations in which it is necessary to recruit staff without much time to devote to selection. It is therefore important that, in addition to the limited data on hard skills, there are also data on soft skills. A CoC is also good for relocation: it is thanks to a CoC that an employer can realise that a TCNs employee had been placed in a position that did not match his/her skills and could instead take on a more responsible one.

The CoC is **very useful also for job seekers**. It constitutes a **sort of refocusing on one's own past**, which tends to bring out the professional and non-professional events that allowed the subject to outline/strengthen certain qualities (inner strength, motivation,

adaptability, problem solving, empathy). Frequently, TCNs have had to make a clean break with their past: abandoning everything, making a difficult journey and starting over once they have arrived in Italy. In this journey, even a painful one, many things are abandoned, many skills are forgotten, segments of the past that seem useless to the new present are not taken into consideration: the CoC aims at bringing out the useful things, at making subjects aware of the value of their past and of their skills. This pathway does not allow to overcome migratory traumas nor is it conceived as a psychological support, but it serves the subject to focus on himself/herself and to take stock of what he/she is and what he/she wants to become in the future, in order to foster individual empowerment. From this point of view, the CoC is very useful both for those who are looking for a first job and for those who have a job but are thinking about a change of professional status and growth in the future.

The action research also showed that **the CoC in the EUMINT version** is fine and does not need to be substantially refined. In some case it was considered a bit long and perhaps it could be useful to make a short version, or to translate it into several languages, given the multilingualism of job applicants. What emerged well is that **there are some conditions for the CoC to give good results**: the first is that the operator (the employer, the recruiter) knows the tool well, the second is to establish a relationship of trust, one-to-one, collaborative and not hierarchical/assessmental, in a spatial context already familiar to the TCN.

2.  As already said, MATILDE action research relied on the CoC EUMINT version. In EUMINT project, the CoC was realised, tested and disseminated by the operators of Caritas and Volontarius, the two main third sector organisations in ST dedicated to solidarity and reception of migrants. The CoC was then disseminated in four of the seven districts of ST (including Bugraviat, which is the district of the MATILDE case study in ST). However it did not succeed in being disseminated among labor market actors, i.e. employment agencies and the business world. This was also due to **a certain mistrust expressed by local enterprises regarding the usefulness of the tool**. Similarly in MATILDE project a certain

mistrust towards the use of CoC by the labour world emerged, especially from the more traditional sector linked to small enterprises (such as agriculture). The widespread opinion was that those who do a manual job with little contact with the public do not need to develop soft skills. In reality, **soft skills allow the person to be more motivated with effects both on the quality of the work provided and on the sense of belonging to the company** (which wants to invest on him/her).

**The work carried out during MATILDE was therefore aimed at further disseminating the tool** both within the third sector (through a workshop and a day of restitution with Caritas operators) and towards new sectors of the professional placement chain: in particular, information and/or training activities were carried out for the personnel selection managers of two important service companies (Hoppe, Markas), which then led to a meeting with the representatives of AssoImprenditori Alto Adige, the association that brings together 480 of the most innovative, international and productive companies in the area.

Alongside these encounters in the corporate sector, however, there have been **testimonies from the agricultural world** of small business that consider the CoC positively in their sector as well. These are companies (e.g. Gra-Wu, wine producers) already vocated to welcoming TCNs and therefore sensitive to the issues of labour inclusion and TCNs' rights.

Another sector that confirmed the validity of the CoC is that of **employment agencies**. Even if Randstad agency does not use the EUMINT version of the CoC but another version, it gave positive feedback. Finally, there is the **public sector**: both in the Bugraviat District (which had already experimented the CoC in the EUMINT project) and in the KOI were interest was reiterated in institutionalising this tool in order to spread it on a provincial scale.

All these considerations allow us to affirm that **also thanks to the action research, the basis for the identification of a professional placement chain** has been estabisihed in the region. This chain consists of enterprises, public institutions, third sector and employment agencies, which need to communicate better through a common language: the CoC could

represents *the* language, obtaining better results in less time during job interviews, to the greater advantage of both demand and supply.

## Metropolitan City of Turin case study

The Bussoleno case study (MCT) - focused on the **use of public spaces by TCNs** - has obtained these main findings:

1.      Engagement and even empowerment of TCNs can take place not only through labour integration but also **through a mindful use of public spaces;**

2.      Public spaces play an **important role** for social cohesion and recognition, especially **in mountain and rural areas** where there are fewer places for organised socialisation;

3.      Public spaces play an **even more important role for TCNs** living in mountain and rural areas because they have fewer economic resources and relational networks, and lack non-commodified spaces of encounter;

4.      Engagement can translate into **rootedness and sense of belonging**; in the case of public spaces, it refers not only to the use and maintenance of an asset but also to its design and creation. In this way, the **space-making process become a sense-making process**, with a construction of shared meanings through the creation of spaces.

 Let us look at the points analytically.

**1.      Engagement and even empowerment of TCNs can take place through a conscious use and co-creation of public spaces.**

This can be interpreted as the habit of frequenting, in addition to one's private home, a set of spaces for collective social use, without access constraints, both indoors (such as a public library) and outdoors (such as a garden, or a street). In public spaces, the individual carries

out activities, establishes ties, exchanges information, while she/he is visible and recognised within the social fabric, thus exercising his/her rights of citizenship. What are the characteristics of a public space? First of all, it must be a semanticized space. It is not a question of simply having an empty space, such as a field or a courtyard, of which there is a great deal in mountain villages, but of a space to which the community gives and recognises a series of meanings. Its characteristics are often site-specific and can vary, but common features include being an accessible, safe, visible place, facilitating relationships, adaptable to different uses over time.

2. **Public spaces play an important role for social cohesion**, especially in mountain and rural areas where there are fewer places for organised socialisation, both public, such as public museums, and private, such as associations, places of cult, shopping centres.

Among the **indoor public spaces** in Bussoleno there is a library, a museum-workshop for schools (a former mill, the Varesio Museum) and a railway museum currently closed. However, our research was mainly aimed at **outdoor public spaces** because what emerged in the previous WPs (3 and 4) was a low awareness of TCNs about mountain space and landscape: TCNs often do not realise that they live in a mountain village and do not frequent paths and outdoor spaces very much. The action research, with the realisation of a public outdoor space offering a view on the mountain panorama, therefore aimed to facilitate this use and awareness. In Bussoleno, the existing outdoor public spaces include some playgrounds, but mainly dedicated to the youngest (kindergarten and primary school children) and a football field, while there is a lack of meeting grounds for adolescents; for this reason, adolescents and young people often move to other villages by train in their free time. TCNs in Bussoleno mainly use the benches they find scattered around the town, including those in front of the station, where, however, there is no space for a real square. The largest square of the village, the market square, is used for the market one day a week and becomes

a car park the other days. There are no other usable squares for socialising. The central street of the village, which is very beautiful, is narrow and has to guarantee access to the cars of the residents: therefore cannot be pedestrianised. **Private leisure spaces** are also somewhat limited and mostly indoor: the nearby shopping centre (not easy to be reached by walking), some shops, bars and restaurants/pizzerias.  There are plans to use the old cinema, closed a long time ago, to build an indoor climbing gym, a very important project that would give space to young people and would connect indoor to outdoor. In Bussoleno there are some cultural, sport (CAI, Italian Alpine Club) and voluntary associations, but they are thought more for adults than for young people. There are no TCNs formal associations: therefor, for the Moroccans, the most important place of indoor encounter remains the mosque, that is a small Islamic prayer room, which only welcomes men. Finally, there is the parish with its spaces. In this context the regional capital Turin plays an important role. Many TCNs go to Turin on saturdays for the Porta Palazzo market, which is large, cheap and multi-ethnic, well connected by train, offering a way to 'counterbalance' the daily mountain experience with occasional urban incursions. Despite the fact that there are not many outdor spaces for meeting, many **activities are implemented to foster civic participation and engagement**, mainly through the synergies developed by the Municipality and local authorities on one hand, and associations, cooperatives and the local parish (which also coordinates Caritas activities) on the other.

3.      **Public spaces play an even more important role for mountain and rural TCNs** that have fewer economic resources and relational networks. When considering public space, some considerations on the topic of housing have to be recalled. Mountain villages usually have a high share of old and cheap houses, often beautiful and traditional but poor from the point of view of materials and building techniques; for those who are owners (Italian and not) the houses are now renovated and insulated, but for those who are only tenants, as it is the

frequent case of TCNs, this represents an uncomfortable housing situation. And this is where the issue of public spaces comes in: **those who do not have a sufficiently large and comfortable house need public spaces more than others**. It must also be said that the TCNs - when they have money enough to be spent - do not always have a **leisure culture** similar to that of Western Europeans: membership of gyms, clubs and associations is not always frequent, and if anyone in the family does join this facilities, it is usually the children, but not adults, and certainly not women, who are often relegated to the domestic space. A fortiori therefore public spaces become crucial for getting out of the private home and exercising one's right to visibility and socialisation, to avoid socio-spatial ghettoisation. Among TCNs (but the same applies to Italians) the **most disadvantaged individuals seem singles or couples without children**. The loneliness of the big city that is often talked about is in reality only partial: at metropolitan level there are cultural associations, sports clubs, organisations of all kinds promoting socialisation among singles, because in the city the population of singles is very large. In mountain villages, on the contrary, this social infstrastructure does not exist and a single-person risks to be just a lonely man/woman with no landing fields; even more so if it is the case of a TCN.

4.      **Engagement of TCNs translates into their rootedness and sense of belonging to the place**. For developing rootedness, mere frequentation of public spaces is not enough: what is needed are engagement activities as the design and transformation of places, which can be stimulated by an inclusive public debate, participatory planning and choral implementation. This visibility of migrants, in a public place designed and shared by them together with locals, can foster mutual recognition between the parties, and thus lay the foundations for pathways to forms of negotiated citizenship. In this way, the public space is not given – as a top-down intervention - but is self-produced by the community within a botto-up approach: each TCN who has participated in this process will be able to say to his/her children with pride "we made this and you will have to take care of it in the future", laying the foundations for the establishment of a common intergenerational heritage.

# Norway: Innlandet County

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## Summary

This report summarizes key findings from a set of participatory action research activities carried out in the two regions Midt-Gudbrandsdalen (MG) and Nord-Østerdal (NØ) in Innlandet county, Norway. The activities were planned and carried out over a period of eight months, from June 2021 to January 2022, as part of the action research task in WP5 of MATILDE. The action research consisted of world-café workshops organized as two-day events in each region, with migrants and participants from the public, private and third sector. The World Cafés resulted in five concrete ideas for integration and inclusion across three thematic areas in MG, and six concrete ideas across three thematic areas in the region of NØ. The workshop in MG highlighted problems and needs for measures related to 1) transport and logistics, 2) the need for more flexible public services aimed at migrants, and 3) the need for sponsors or mentorship schemes for migrants. The workshop in NØ addressed the importance of 1) mitigating barriers for work inclusion for migrants, 2) highlighting the importance of making information about local/regional activities and events more accessible in different languages, and 3) creating spaces or meeting places for socializing and networking. The report describes the proposed solutions in further detail and reflects on the broader implications of the applied action research methods.

# Introduction

## Background

The planning and organization of the participatory action research described in this report are based on insights from preparatory research assessing the impact of migration in the two case regions. The initial research was based on qualitative interviews at the local level, as well as an assessment of relevant statistics. The findings were compiled in a case study briefing outlining relevant themes to focus on in the participatory action research (MATILDE, 2021, p. 211-244). These preparatory studies were important to gain insights into the local contexts related to demographics, the local labour market, and the organization of services related to migration and integration. The interviews also provided valuable insights into how key actors in the regions perceive opportunities and challenges related to migration and integration, and what themes they find relevant to focus on. Thus, the case study briefing provided an important foundation for the planning and organization of the participatory action research.

### The Case Regions

The two case regions, Midt-Gudbrandsdal (MG) and Nord-Østerdal (NØ), are largely mountainous with low population density. Moreover, both regions have aging populations and are facing challenges related to depopulation. Immigration is important for curbing population decline and thus constitutes an important strategic area for regional development and sustainability (MATILDE, 2021, p. 211-244). Furthermore, the municipalities in the two regions are tied together through various inter-municipal collaborations in different public service areas, among others within integration and refugee services. Moreover, both regions have regional councils that are committed to developing shared

regional policies and strategies, as well as to promoting regional development across municipalities. These inter-municipal relations are particularly important for the organization and provision of public services to immigrants and strategic work related to diversity and inclusion. Issues related to immigration and integration are thus largely of inter-municipal concern, which is why the participatory action research was organized as regional events rather than centred on individual municipalities.

The case study briefing also highlighted how shifts in national immigration and settlement policies imply that smaller rural municipalities need to increasingly collaborate and integrate their services in order to yield benefits from immigration (MATILDE, 2021, p. 194-195). Regional interactions and collaborations thus become increasingly important. We found examples of this in both regions, as well as examples of increasing collaborations across the different service agencies, organizational units, and across the private, public and third sector. Consequently, opportunities and challenges related to such geographical, sectorial, and organizational cross-cutting arrangements were identified as themes that we wanted to explore further through participatory processes in both regions. In this way, we chose to focus on themes that the briefing identified as relevant and timely, but at the same time, the themes were broad, which allowed the representatives from the participating municipalities to take part in further specification and demarcation of themes. In the end, the participatory processes were organized with this relatively open point of departure so that the workshop participants themselves could raise questions and concerns that they perceived to be relevant and pertinent for addressing problems while strengthening integration and social inclusion at the local level.

## Objectives

The participatory action research and the World Café had the following objectives:
- To spur engagement and awareness on issues related to migration, integration, and social inclusion in the two case regions

- To help establish networks and new social relations in the regions

- To foster idea generation on concrete measures and solutions that can a) strengthen local mechanisms of integration and social inclusion and b) help address problems related to exclusion and marginalization of migrant groups in particular

- To lay the foundation for implementation of concrete measures and solutions through dialogue with decision-makers among relevant local and regional stakeholders

Additionally, the overall objectives of MATILDE links to the development of a toolbox of methods for assessing the impact of migration on different levels. The aim of the case studies is thus also to test elements of the toolbox and to reflect on experiences with the applied methods, in order to develop the toolbox further.

# Methodology and Data

## Participatory Action Research

Participatory action research (PAR) is used as an umbrella label for various participatory approaches to action-oriented research that aims to bring about change or improvement within a given problem area. Participants in PAR may be involved in different ways and to different degrees. The MATILDE stakeholder involvement plan draws inspiration from the 'ladder of citizens participation by Arnstein (1969) and suggests that stakeholders can be involved according to six different stages. Our participatory action research places emphasis on the two highest levels of participation in this ladder: 5) networking and 6) joint creation. To enable this, our action research is mainly centered on the World Café method (Löhr et al., 2020), followed by focus group interviews.

The main action research activities were planned and carried out in the period of eight months, from June 2021 to January 2022. They were collaboratively planned and implemented through a local case study working group (LCSWG) consisting of two representatives from the research partner (INN), two representatives from the local partner (Innlandet County), and two representatives from collaborating municipalities in the two regions (Tynset and Sør-Fron). The research partner (INN) initially proposed to organize the action research around World Café workshops (Brown & Isaacs, 2005; Löhr et al., 2020). The regional and local partners supported this idea and took an active role in the decision-making around details of the organization of the events, such as whom to invite as participants, the choice of venue, structure, and thematic focus.

## Tools

As explained in the introduction, the participatory action research is based on a case study briefing of the central characteristics of the two case regions. This laid the foundation for the participatory action research, which centred on the World Café method, designed to involve a diverse range of participants from the local communities. Four online focus group interviews were carried out with selected participants as a follow-up to the World Cafés. In the following section, we describe the two methods applied in further detail.
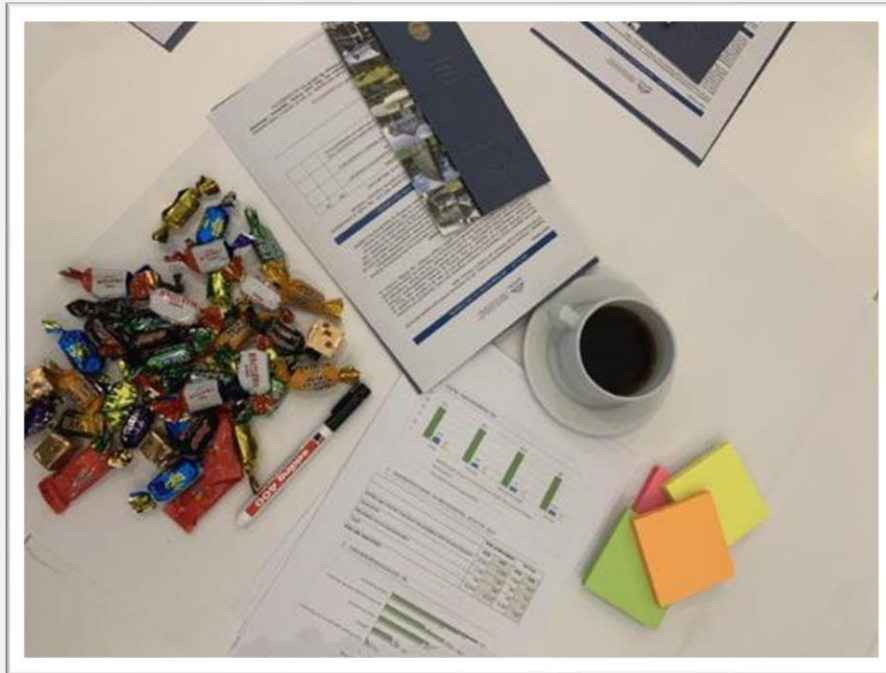
**Figure 1. Preparations for World Café**

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## World Café

World Café is in the draft for the MATILDE toolbox listed as a qualitative method with an open format, with close connections to Open space technology (OST). World Cafés are well suited to facilitate discussions and collective idea generation in groups with diverse participants and are considered particularly useful in the exploration phases of a project. (i.e., Brown & Isaacs, 2005; Löhr et al., 2020). We describe next the more detailed structure for our implementation of the World Cafés.

### Recruitment / target groups

The invitation and recruitment of participants were planned in the LCSWG. To ensure diversity among participants, a list of key actors from the public, private and third sector was prepared by the municipality representatives. These actors were then invited personally (see attachment 1). The invitations were generally well-received, but recruitment of participants from the private sector/ local businesses was difficult in both regions. Students at language

training institutions, advanced educational programs (high school level), and migrant introduction programs, were also invited to participate in the workshops. In addition to sending direct invitations, the workshops were announced as Facebook events, through the municipalities' websites, and through Innlandet County's website. Information about MATILDE and the workshops was also broadcasted through a radio interview on the regional radio broadcast, and in newspaper articles in local newspapers.

In the end, approximately 40 participants attended the workshop in Nord-Østerdal. There were participants from the third sector/volunteer organizations (7), from the private sector/businesses (2), the public sector (15), and migrants enrolled in either language training, the introduction program, or upper secondary education. There was a total of 23 migrants participating in the workshop, representing diversity in terms of migration purposes (refugee, family reunification, work migration), gender (equal representation), marital status (single, married, married with children), employment status (student, fulltime employee, language studies, pupil, etc.) and background (European, African, Asian, Middle Eastern).

The workshop in MG engaged around 30 participants, mainly from the public sector (16), and migrants enrolled in language training at the adult education centre (10), but also from the third sector (4). The participating migrants were all TCNs but represented diversity in terms of Norwegian language proficiency (from beginner to intermediate), ethnical background (mainly Middle Eastern and African), marital status (single, married with children), gender (4 women, 5 men) education level, and duration of residency in the case region (ranging from less than a year to 4 years).

Five participants from the MATILDE research partner (INN) and two from the local partner (Innlandet County) also participated in both workshops.

**Setting / venue**

The workshop in MG was held in Dale-Gudbrands Gard, an old farm and historic site, which is now operated as a hotel conference venue. The hotel has significant symbolic and cultural value in Sør-Fron and has historically been a resting place for pilgrims on their way to Nidaros, in Trondheim, further North. The buildings are set in a beautiful rural landscape with

surrounding hills, and the indoor and outdoor environment created a good atmosphere for the workshop. The room where the workshop was held had a small stage, a small kitchen and was organized with five tables with space for 5-6 participants per table.



**Figure 216: Outdoor and indoor surroundings in Midt-Gudbrandsdal**

The workshop in NØ was held in Tynset Town Hall, also referred to as the municipality's cultural center. This is a grand, 10 story building, set in the heart of Tynset, which is NØs regional center. The building is considered a vital meeting place in the municipality, containing a library, cinema, and several other cultural services and activities. The workshop itself was organized on the top floor in a large conference room with a beautiful view of the village center and the surrounding mountains. The room was spacious and organized with 6-7 participants seated around six tables. The venues were chosen by the representatives from the municipalities in the LCSWG, and were chosen because they were suitable for the

purpose, but also because they were associated with symbolisms that suited the agenda for the workshops. Both workshops were organized over two days, from lunch to lunch, on the 2nd -3rd of October in Sør-Fron and on the 10th-11th of October in Tynset. Coffee and snacks were served at the tables, and a proper lunch was served in the restaurant/cafeteria as a closure of the events on the second day.



**Figure 3. Venue and outdoor surroundings in Nord-Østerdal**

**Implementation**

In this section, we describe how the World Café method was implemented and adapted to our context. The overall theme for the workshop was open and formulated as a question in the invitation: *Do you want to contribute to the creation of a viable and inclusive local community?*

The program had four main parts, two parts per day.

**DAY 1:** The first day of the workshops started with a plenary session to set the stage and introduce MATILDE as the backdrop for the event (part one). This was followed by a creative group work focused on knowledge sharing and idea generation, in line with the World Café principles (part two).

DAY 2: On the second day, the groups had to select one or two ideas or themes discussed on the first day and concretize and develop these further (part three). The selected ideas had to be deliberated, concretized, and made into a poster presentation. Each group then presented their idea(s) to the rest of the groups in a plenary session using various presentation techniques (part four). Each of the four parts of the workshop is presented below:

1) Plenary session: The official welcome and introduction to the event was given by the Deputy Mayor in both regions. This accentuated that the topic for the workshop was prioritized and important to the municipalities on a strategic and political level. This was followed by a panel dialogue with forced migrants sharing their stories of how they had been welcomed in the case region, the challenges they had faced, and the opportunities they saw for strengthening mechanisms for integration and social inclusion in their respective communities. The dialogues were monitored by representatives from the municipal refugee and adult education services. These dialogues were an engaging way of introducing the theme and setting the stage for the day. After this dialogue, the participants from Innlandet County presented statistics on demographic trends in the region, and researchers from INN presented key findings from MATILDE. The plenary session ended with an introduction by INN to the World Café method, both its underlying ideas and principles and the concrete structure and plans for the specific World Café. The specific question to be explored in the World Café session was also introduced: *How may we work collectively to create viable and inclusive local communities*? (In the respective regions)

**Figure4: Plenary session**

2) Groups session 1: The World Café was led by a process leader from the INN research team. The process leader monitored the processes in all groups, gave regular instructions on how to work, explained each step of the process, and ensured adherence to the schedule. Additionally, for each group and café table, there was a pre-appointed Café host that had been given a brief on their role and responsibilities in advance. This was done through a written briefing that was sent to the Café host in advance or handed out during the workshop (see appendix 2). The observations of the groups (to be explained further below) showed that the role of the Café host was very important for group dynamics and for ensuring progress in the groups. They had an important role as liaisons between the process leader and the participants in the groups and were also key to ensuring a safe and inclusive atmosphere in the groups. The group work started with some simple ice breakers so that the participants got to know each other in an informal and playful way. All participants were also asked to

reflect and share their expectations for the workshop. Next, the participants were asked to work with individual reflections and to use post-its to write down 2-3 ideas or topics they were concerned with relating to the broad theme for the workshop. The individual ideas were then shared in the group and post-it notes were placed on a shared poster for the table. The groups were then asked to go on a "tour" and visit the other tables, to hear about the ideas and discussion that had come up on the different tables. While the groups toured the room, the Café hosts remained at the table to present the group's main ideas to visiting groups. When the group returned to their original table, the Café host and the participants shared what they had learned from the tour and added elements they had found interesting and relevant to their poster.

3) Group session 2: The second day also started with some simple icebreakers to ensure that the participants spent got some time getting to know each other better. As well as to continue working based on the trust that we had attempted to establish within the groups on the first day. When the group work continued, the participants were asked to first structure the ideas from the day before into thematic categories. (See an example in the image below). They were then to select ideas that they wanted to concretize and elaborate on further. The selected ideas had to be presented on a new poster, and the groups had to prepare a presentation of the ideas in a final plenary session. When developing and preparing presentations of the ideas, the groups were asked to consider the following questions:

- What is the main idea/proposed solution?
- What is the target group?
- Who will need to contribute?
- Will funding be needed?
- What will be the first steps in realizing the idea?

It was underlined that ideas and proposed solutions could be based on already started initiatives and projects in the regions. The ideas could be related to further development of existing initiatives, or it could be a proposal for new solutions and projects.

4) Finally, all groups presented their ideas and proposed solutions using different presentation techniques such as role-plays, 'interviews', or merely a presentation of drawings, models, or structured text on posters (see example in the image below). Each presentation lasted approximately 10 minutes. The content of the presentations, including the groups' ideas and proposed solutions, is presented in the next chapter on results and outcomes.
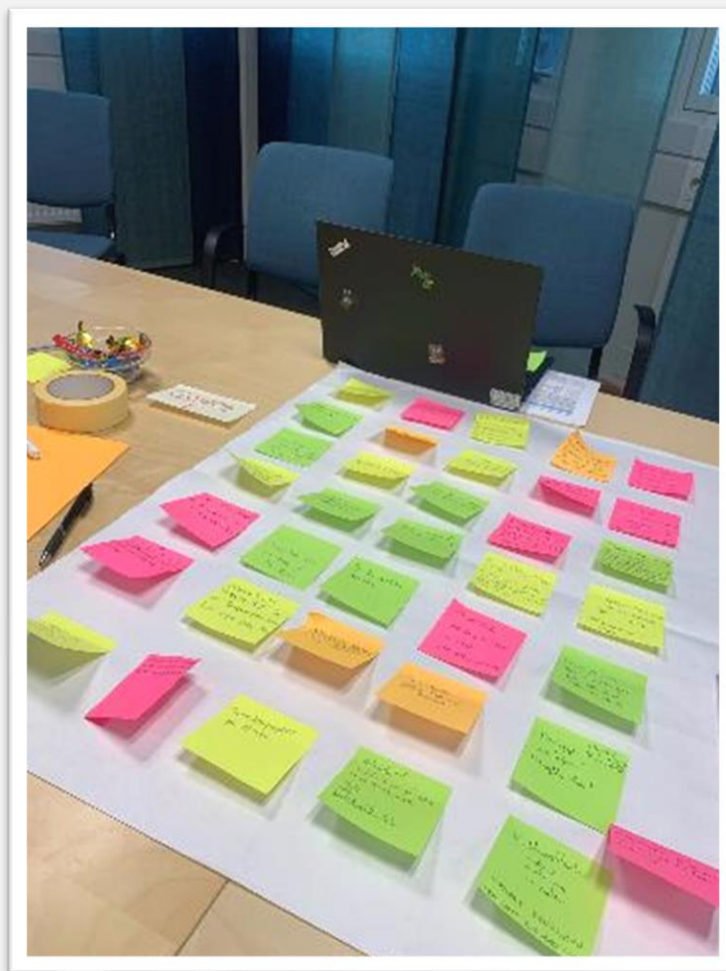


**Figure 17: Process work at the World Café**

**Observations and documentation**

The group work at each table was observed and documented by researchers from INN (3) and Innlandet County (2). In Tynset, unfortunately, we were one observer short, as there were six tables (due to a higher number of participants). Detailed documentation of one of the tables is therefore lacking. The observers were modestly engaged in the group discussions. That is, they took part in conversations, though were careful not to influence the flow and authenticity of the ongoing discussion. When necessary, the observers assisted the Café host for guidance, but they were not actively involved in decisions or in developing ideas. In this sense, the researchers' role can be described more as participant observers than non-participant observers (Babchuk, 1962). This approach was considered the most appropriate in this context, as we wanted to create a natural and safe atmosphere and considered a more distanced and non-participant observer to be more intimidating and potentially limiting to active participant participation. The level of engagement among the observers depended on the functioning and dynamics in the groups.

The observers were to pay attention to both the processual work and group dynamics, and the results in terms of ideas and concrete proposed solutions generated by the groups. However, since the participants in many ways documented the results through the posters produced during the group work, the most important role of the observers was to document the processes, the group dynamics, and the mechanisms leading to the development of ideas and suggestions for solutions. Observation guides were developed to ensure that the observers paid attention to similar aspects in the groups. This also functioned as a template for the observation summaries (the observation guide is attached in appendix 3). The observers also documented the groups' work process through taking photos.

After the workshops, extensive minutes with summaries of the results from all the groups were presented in working papers, written in Norwegian. Separate summaries were produced for each of the regions and shared with the relevant stakeholders in the regions via the representatives from the municipalities in the LCSWG. The Norwegian summaries were meant to help the regions follow up on the ideas and suggestions that had come up during the workshops and to facilitate idea sharing between the regions.

**Evaluations and debriefs**

Small and informal evaluations and debriefs were integrated into the processes of the workshops. At the end of each day, the participants were asked to give feedback on how they had experienced the workshop by writing down on post-its what they thought was working well, and what could have been better. This information was used to make minor adjustments for the second day and between the first and second workshops. This also provided insights into outcomes of the workshops, in terms of the personal experiences among the participants (for instance feelings of being heard, seen, included, etc). The research team and organizers also held debriefs at the end of each day. Sharing experiences from the observations, what we had learned, what kinds of modifications might be needed etc. This enabled us to be sensitive to dynamics among the different groups and participants and to adjust plans and observations accordingly.



**Figure 5: MATILDE team debrief**

## Focus groups

As a follow-up to the workshops, focus groups were conducted with selected participants. These focus groups were conducted approximately three months after the workshops and had a dual purpose: a) gain in-depth insights on the participants' *reflected* experience of the World Cafés, and b) get an update on the progress of the proposed ideas and solutions. To clarify whether the communities were planning to implement any of the proposed ideas, as well as to identify potential enabling factors and hindrances to the implementation of proposed solutions. Thus, the second purpose links to the action aspect of participatory action research.

**Recruitment / target groups**

The plan was to conduct two focus groups among participants in each case region. One with relatively newly arrived migrants, who faced language barriers during the workshops, and had potentially experienced challenges related to social and/or labour market exclusion. The other focus group was planned with participants in managerial and decision-making positions that could influence the implementation of the proposed ideas. The plan was initially to conduct the focus groups physically, face-to-face, but due to the increased intensity of Covid-19 and related restrictions, the focus groups were repeatedly postponed and, in the end, organized as videoconferences using Zoom. An overview of the interviews is presented in the table below.

| Interviews | Participants |
|---|---|
| **Focus group 1** <br> Migrants enrolled in training and education in NØ | 4 |
| **Focus group 2** <br> Decision makers NØ | 2 |
| **Focus group 3** <br> Decision-makers NØ | 3 |
| **Individual follow-up interview** <br> Migrant enrolled in training/education MG | 1 |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adapted focus group/ roundtable NØ** | 11 |
| **Adapted focus group/ roundtable MG** | *Planned* |
| Sum follow-up interviews: 5 | 22 |

**Table 1: Overview of follow-up interviews after the workshops**

## Setting

In the end, three focus groups were conducted on Zoom, and in one of the focus groups only one participant showed up, so this was conducted as an individual follow-up interview instead. The focus groups were conducted by one researcher from INN and one representative from the local partner. One had the main responsibility for monitoring the conversations and the other focused on documenting and taking notes.

## Implementation

An interview guide was prepared for the focus groups, which reflected the dual purpose of the interviews (see appendix 4). We had some problems with recruiting participants in decision-making positions for the focus groups and were not able to organize a focus group with decision-makers in MG. We found that this was not due to a lack of interest from potential participants but rather due to busy schedules. Therefore, instead of organizing a separate focus group, we asked to participate in the next meeting in a collaborative forum on migration and integration where representatives from the three municipalities meet regularly. In this meeting (to be held on the 22nd of March) we will summarize and present the results from the workshop and initiate a dialogue around their perceptions of the event and on how, or whether, they are following up on the proposed ideas. Our participation in this forum thus replaces one of the planned focus groups, and we treat this as a roundtable to be organized for WP6. We participated in a similar forum in NØ and found this to be an effective way to discuss the proposed solutions with decision-makers, and gain insights into how the regions plan to take action on the issues raised during the workshop. Also, in this meeting there was one participant from the research partner and one from the local partner.

One had the main responsibility of leading the dialogue with the group and the other took notes and summarized the main points.

## Adaption of Tools

Overall, we found that the planning and implementation of the World Cafés went well, which was also reflected in the feedback collected from the participants both during the workshops and in the subsequent focus group interviews. Careful planning and preparations were needed and making time for introductions and activities/icebreakers that made all participants feel safe and included were necessary. Mainly since many of the migrant participants faced language barriers and explained that they felt insecure at the outset of the workshops. However, at the end of day two, many of the migrants took part in the plenary presentations. Some even took lead on the presentations and contributed to creative presentations such as role-plays. This can be seen as an indication that the groups and the World Cafés entailed including and empowering dynamics. Since we had observers at each table during both World Cafés, we have a rich material on group dynamics and implications for methods. The space limits of the report do not allow us to go into this in-depth, but we may summarize some key points and lessons learned from the World Café workshops:

- Café hosts: The group observations showed that the Café host was key to the interpersonal dynamics in the groups. Preparing the hosts for the task in advance was important, and more time could have been spent on this. We did not have time for a proper meeting with them in advance, and we would recommend a combination of written guidelines and a talk for similar World Cafés. Pre-appointed and briefed Café hosts seem especially important in World Cafés where people participate on unequal grounds, due to for example language barriers, which can lead to feelings of insecurity and inferiority. The Café hosts are important for including all group members, making

sure everyone understands the tasks, and ensuring progress. This is a demanding and tiring task, and the Café hosts should therefore be selected carefully.

- Observation: If World Cafés are to be used as a qualitative research strategy, not just a method to facilitate change and development processes, there need to be resources for observation and documentation available. Löhr (2020) suggests that Café hosts can be prepared for observation and note-taking in addition to moderation. However, we believe that doing both will be too demanding, as note-taking is likely to compromise the moderation role and vice versa. Ideally, each group should have a café host and an observer, and the observers should follow some shared guidelines.

- Moderation: Instructions from the process leader should be clear, relatively detailed, and follow a set time plan. At the same time, it is important to be responsive to the progress in each group and make adaptations when needed. The program should follow a balanced level of detail, as participants need to have time for reflections and discussions. For different tasks or sessions, the participants should be allowed to first reflect individually and then share in the group. This makes it easier to ensure that everyone is heard.

- Duration: These World Cafés were conducted over two days, from lunch to lunch. This has advantages and drawbacks. To some, it can be hard to commit to participation for two days. The events become more costly and demand more complex logistics. We found that there were some changes in the participants from day 1 and day 2. This had some negative consequences for the groups, and it made the process more demanding for the Café hosts. Still, we also found that using two days made the work less intensive, and some ideas and thoughts could mature overnight. Many participants reported that they appreciated this. Selecting ideas, developing & detailing them, and then preparing presentations can be hard work. Starting with this in the morning instead of in the afternoon can thus be an advantage. The appropriate

duration of the workshops needs to be seen in relation to the diversity and composition of the groups, the complexity of the theme, and the available resources.

# Results

This section presents the main results of the participatory action research. We suggest that results can be understood in terms of outputs, outcomes, and impact (Piggot-Irvine et al., 2015; Rauschmayer et al., 2009). By outputs, we refer to the concrete ideas and proposed solutions that the stakeholders/ participants in the workshops produced. By outcomes, we mean the more practical consequences of the workshops and their outputs. This can be related to participants learning outcomes, feelings of empowerment, the establishment of new networks and relations, or it can be related to concrete and practical plans for the implementation of ideas and proposed solutions. Impact refers to the broader and more long-term consequences of the action research. This could for example be the societal consequences of implemented solutions.

For instance, in both workshops, participants highlighted that logistics and transport have major implications for integration in rural and remote characterized by dispersed settlements. Having access to a car can be pertinent for participation in social arenas and labour market participation. To lower the threshold for obtaining a driver's license it was proposed that migrants should be able to take theory classes in their native language. This concrete and executable idea (providing online classes for eligible students in different parts of the country) can be seen as an output from the workshop. The outcomes refer to the municipalities and regions' responses to this idea, whether they develop systems and collaborations that make it possible to offer these theory classes. Impact, on the other hand, refers to the consequences of providing theory classes in different languages. Does this reduce the time migrants use to obtain a driver's license? Does it increase the number of migrants that are able to obtain a driver's license? And does the ability to drive your own car influence the motivation to settle in rural and remote areas? And does it affect migrants'

participation in social arenas and opportunities in the labour market? Assessing these questions would provide insights on how this solution may have an impact on integration in the rural regions, while also offering the opportunity to assess what affects the impact of migration.

Due to the time constraints of the MATILDE project, we cannot assess the impact of the participatory action research. However, we may advise decision-makers in the regions to develop indicators that can be used to assess the impact of the solutions that they choose to implement. In our outline and discussion of results, however, the focus is on outputs and outcomes. We present first the main outputs from the workshops (summaries of ideas and proposed solutions) and then reflect on outcomes identified through observations at the workshops and though follow-up interviews.

## Outputs: Ideas/proposed solutions

### Workshop 1: Midt-Gudbrandsdal

All five groups in this workshop presented concrete ideas and solutions to how the communities could enhance the integration and social inclusion of newcomers to the community, especially persons with migrant backgrounds. The idea each group presented in the plenary session was selected among a broader selection of ideas the group had generated through the workshop. Meaning that the groups produced more ideas than what they finally presented, although the presentations tended to draw together elements from various ideas discussed in the groups. In this presentation, we have summarized and thematically structured the solutions proposed by the groups. The solutions can be structured into three thematic categories. Three groups came up with solutions concerning different forms of mentorships, one group discussed potential and opportunities for developing more flexible municipal refugee services, and one group addressed problems related to logistics and transport - developing ideas on how to assist migrants in obtaining a driver's license.

1)      Transport and logistics:

Challenges related to transport and logistics were discussed in all groups and was highlighted as an issue of particular concern for integration in rural and remote regions with geographically dispersed populations. Being able to drive your own car can be of vital importance for expanding work opportunities, and it can be highly important for being able to take part in leisure activities in the communities, and for giving children opportunities to take part in organized sports and cultural activities. While there is a willingness in parent groups to offer lifts to children whose parents cannot drive, it can create a feeling of inferiority to always have to ask for help from others instead of being able to contribute to transporting the children. Being able to drive thus affects feelings of self-worth, independence, and conditions for participation on equal terms.

Group 1 presented a concrete solution that could lower the barrier for migrants to obtain a driver's license. Currently, it is possible to take the theory test in different languages, but the theory *classes* are currently only offered in Norwegian. The group's suggestion was therefore to offer such classes in different languages, which could make it easier for migrants to pass the theory test. It was discussed that these classes could be provided online to enable several participants to take part without the classes becoming too costly or resource intensive. Access to qualified teachers could be easier in urban areas with larger minority groups, and collaborations could make it possible to offer online classes for migrants living in different parts of the country.

Another suggestion discussed under this topic was related to measures that could help migrants practice driving outside the formal driving lessons. Driving lessons are costly, and the number of driving lessons needed to pass the test can be reduced if those under training can practice driving with skilled drivers. Getting systems in place with volunteers that can offer opportunities to practice driving was thus discussed as another solution.

2)      Flexible refugee services:

Group 2 discussed challenges related to the operating of the municipal refugee services. Since this is a public service there are regular working and opening hours, while problems

and challenges for settled migrants often occur in the evenings or weekends, when access to help and support is limited. Especially for those lacking network in the new community. Thus, opportunities for developing systems with more available and flexible refugee services were discussed. The group considered it to be unlikely that the formal positions and working hours in the refugee services could be changed. Since this would involve change beyond the municipalities, require changes in the legislation, and involvement of the unions, which would be a lengthy process. However, the group discussed that another way of meeting these challenges could be to develop closer collaborations between the municipal refugee services and the volunteer sector. In this way, volunteer service could complement and extend the municipal refugee services. It was suggested that a concrete way of nudging or facilitating such collaborations, could be to physically co-locate the municipal services and the volunteer centre. The municipalities generally fund one position to run volunteer centres, and those running the centres are involved in the recruitment of volunteers, coordination of volunteer activities, and possible development of new activities. It differs across the municipalities which areas or service sectors the volunteer centres focus on, and which groups are recruited for volunteering. From the group discussions, there seemed to be a potential in this region to develop volunteer activities targeting migrant minority groups and measures related to integration and social inclusion.

3)      The third thematic area that was discussed in the groups related to a need for different forms of mentorships. Three of the participating groups developed proposals for solutions related to this. The different proposals were interrelated and somewhat overlapping, but they used somewhat different terms and emphasized different aspects of such arrangements.

a.      Welcome coordinator (Group 3): One group discussed the need for a welcome coordinator offered as a regional or inter-municipal scheme. It was suggested that this should be a position, or several smaller positions, funded by the government. Expectations related to the role should be formalized and clearly described. It was also described as an

advantage if the individuals recruited for these positions had migrant backgrounds themselves so that they could draw on their personal experience when guiding newcomers settling in the region.

b.       "Midtdals-guide" (Group 4): This idea had parallels to the idea of a welcome coordinator, but the group emphasized current systems where interns or new employees in a workplace are supported by a mentor. They wanted to expand on this and develop solutions for mentors that could guide newcomers in how to get to know people, customs, activities, and opportunities in the community. Thus, a mentor that provides guidance for daily and social life. In this case, it was also highlighted that it would be beneficial to recruit individuals with migrant backgrounds as mentors.

c.       Mentor and language buddy (Group 5): The third variant of mentorship was framed as 'language buddies.' This suggestion also drew attention to the need for mentors that could offer guidance on how to cope and get settled in the workplace and daily life in the community. Similar to the other groups, this group also suggested that such mentors could be recruited through the volunteer sector, but it was underlined that coordination and funding was needed for developing systems that could link mentors and migrants. For such a system to work it would also be necessary with continuous follow-up monitoring and counselling of mentors.

Workshop 2: Nord-Østerdal

All the groups in the second workshop, in NØ, also presented concrete ideas and solutions on how to strengthen mechanisms for integration and social inclusion in the region. The ideas and proposed solutions presented can be grouped into three thematic categories. First, one theme relates to labour market inclusion and more specific measures contributing to lowering the thresholds for employment. The second theme was related to the need for making information on activities, events, and services in the community more accessible in

different languages. The third theme was related to the need for social meeting places and networking opportunities.

1)      Lowering the threshold for labour market inclusion:

Challenges relating to labour market inclusion for migrants were discussed in all groups, but it was mainly group 1 that focused on solutions that could help lower the threshold for labour market participation. Their concrete suggestion for a solution was to establish a *work central,* with both a regional and municipal outlet. The work central would be a place to assess and identify competencies (formal and informal), for offering small, ad-hoc jobs, and could be developed as a physical and digital meeting place. It was also suggested as a place for producing small services or products (different forms of repairs, mending, catering, etc,). The work central would not be a competitor to the public labour and welfare services (NAV-offices) but could represent an extension to these. The group stressed that such work central can be found in other regions and municipalities, so it would be possible to learn from other existing examples. Inhabitants receiving social security benefits from the municipalities' social services (NAV) would be an important target group for the work central. For those younger than 30 years of age, it is mandatory to participate in activities to receive benefits. However, the municipalities often have problems offering these individual meaningful activities that allow them to gain experience and develop competencies that will enhance their qualifications and employment opportunities. A work central can be a way of dealing with this challenge, but the central may also reach other groups and mitigate other challenges related to labour market exclusion.

The group suggested that the work central should be run by the municipalities as an inter-municipal arrangement, with support from Innlandet County. As a first step, it was suggested that the idea should be presented to the Municipality council and that a political committee could examine opportunities related to this proposal in further detail.

2)      Making information on events and activities more accessible:

The second theme discussed by the groups linked to the need for making information on already existing events, happenings, and activities in the region more accessible. Migrants

participating in the groups felt that there were existing opportunities for activation and socializing that they were simply not aware of and that they did not know where to find this information. They also felt that the information should be available in several languages. To them, access to such information was vital for their opportunities to participate in social arenas and to establish networks within the community. Two concrete solutions were proposed:

a.       Group 1 discussed the need for making information about activities and events in the region more accessible. Information about events should also be integrated with information on opportunities for (shared) transport. For families without a car and driver's license, it is challenging to take part in activities because they are not able to get there. It was suggested that a platform providing information on activities should be linked to systems for transport. For instance, the volunteer centre could coordinate transport offered by volunteers, or Facebook groups could be set up for carpooling. These discussions also developed into broader reflections on other kinds of measures that could help overcome challenges related to transport. The need for access to theory classes in different languages was raised as well as the need for access to volunteers that could help with practicing driving before and between driving lessons. This corresponds to ideas discussed in the other case region.

b.       Group 3 discussed similar challenges but was more concrete in terms of how to improve communication. They proposed the development of a web portal with information available in different languages. They also connected this to strategies for making the region more attractive; the platform should have content and convey information that could help promote the attractiveness of the region. They suggested that the platform could contain information on job opportunities, organized sports, cultural activities, language training, education opportunities, and more. To be able to realize this idea, the group concluded that there would be a need for funding to hire a project manager. Resources would also be needed for translations of content, but this could also be accomplished by contributions from

volunteers. It was suggested that a first step could be to apply from funding from a foundation or government funds. The group also conceded that support from all sectors would be needed to realize the project, but that a working group with representatives from the cultural office and the adult education centre could take aa lead in getting the initiative started.

3)      Arenas for networking and social meeting places:

A final theme addressed in the groups was the need for social meeting places and arenas for networking. Four of the groups in the World Café presented ideas that can be placed under this thematic category.

   a.    Group 2 introduced the idea of different mentorship schemes. They proposed two kinds of mentorships: Parent mentors and language mentors.

   • Parent mentors would be aimed at migrant parents and help with information about how the Norwegian welfare system works, explain rights and obligations as a Norwegian citizen, and provide guidance into the more informal and tacit rules and cultural codes of conduct.

   • Language mentors would be a scheme aimed at all newcomers to the region (both immigrants and internal migrants). This mentor should provide guidance to local communities and help newcomers get settled and gain access to networks. The idea is to bridge connections between migrants and ethnic Norwegian citizens, and both groups can act as mentors to newcomers.

   • Group 6 suggested expansion of the system with 'Friends groups' in schools. The primary schools in the region organize 'Friends groups' for the youngest pupils, which

entails that parents alternate on inviting their 'Friend group' for different kinds of playdates on a regular basis. Through this system, the parents get to know each other, and the pupils broaden their social relations and networks. The group suggested that this system could also be needed on the higher education levels as well, to ensure continuous inclusion and expansion of social networks through this low threshold measure. The group also proposed the creation of a social meeting place, '*A meeting place for all*' which served food and beverages from a central location in Tynset.

• The latter idea was further elaborated by group 4 who suggested the establishment of an 'International house' offering a range of activities for citizens in the region. The group listed examples of several activities and services that could be offered through the 'International house'. Arguing that many of these activities and offerings are already available but need better coordination and marketing (ref. the ideas proposed under the first thematic heading). The group also proposed existing buildings that could be suitable and found it likely that local resource persons and local organizations and clubs would support this initiative and help facilitate its realization. The group suggested that the international council in Tynset should take the idea forward, and that the project could apply for funding from relevant foundations to get started.
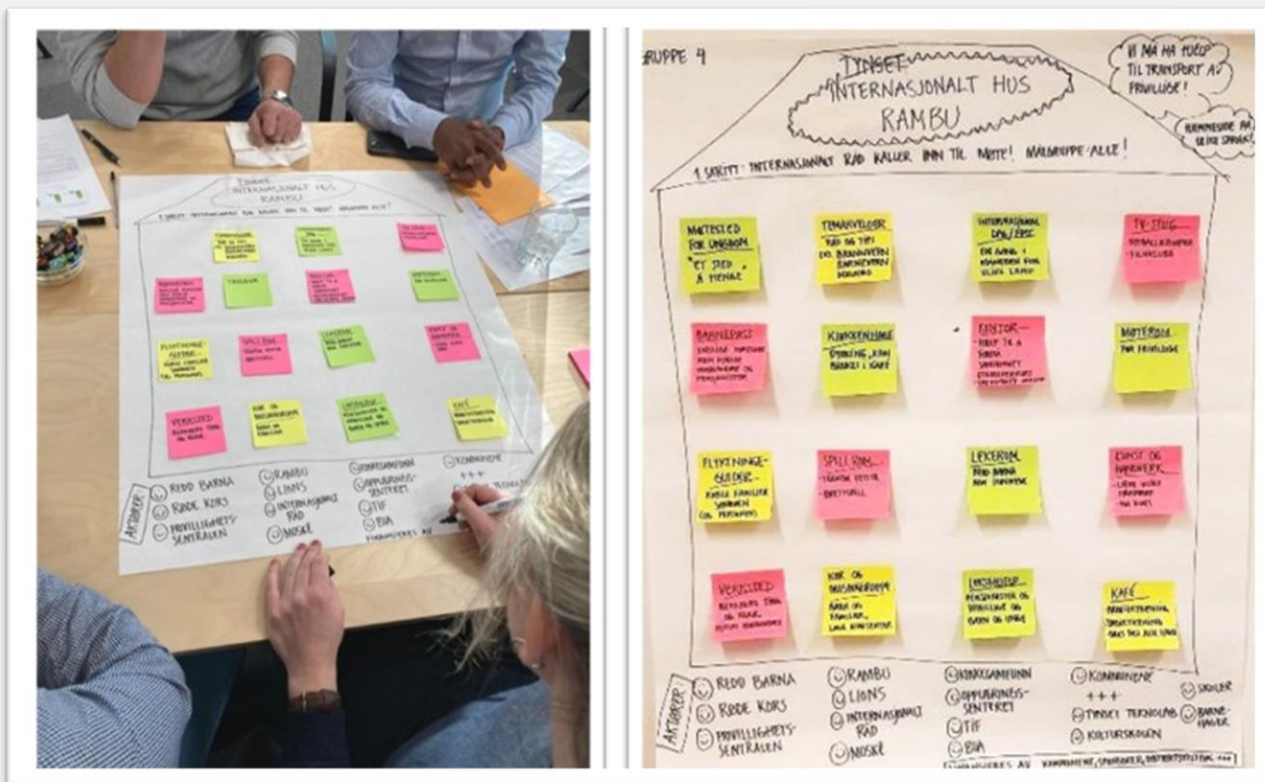
**Figure 6: Process work and presentation of ideas**

# Outcomes

Plans for implementation

In both regions, they made concrete plans for following up the ideas generated through the World Cafés. In MG, the managers responsible for integration and migrations in their respective municipalities (Sør-Fron, Ringebu, and Nord-Fron) have established a forum for inter-municipality collaboration. In their next meeting, scheduled for the 22nd of March, the forum will discuss the outputs and how to follow up on the concrete ideas that emerged during the workshop.

In Tynset, they have had an active International Board for several years. Such a board is not mandatory for the municipalities to have, but the role of such municipality boards is to

ensure a broad, open, and accessible participation. The International Board of Tynset municipality is actively promoting the establishment of similar boards in other municipalities in the region. Their Board has representatives from resettlement and integration services in Tynset municipality, local police, kindergarten, local businesses, immigrants, and politicians. The head of the International Board participated in the workshop and could ensure commitment from the Board in following up. Concretely, they suggest establishing a working group to develop an action plan for the ideas that were raised during the workshop. The International Board will invite externals to this group, such as the head of the regional Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) and municipality administration such as the head of culture, head of the service desk, the head of adult education, etc. The board will ask the Municipal Director for the mandate to carry out this work.

## Participant experiences

The head of resettlement and integration issues in MG (which is a jointly financed position for the three municipalities) received a lot of positive feedback from immigrants that participated in the workshop (particularly from the participants enrolled in the introduction program). They reported that they felt that they had been involved in an important event, that they had been heard, and that they had been able to contribute. The focus groups also showed that the participants found the world cafes rewarding. Here are some of the quotes from the interviews with the participating migrants to illustrate:

- *"This was useful, I knew method already, but it was applied to a new context. It was really good that the immigrants got to share their opinions on topics that concern us, and it led to lots of good ideas and suggestions. It is just about starting somewhere."*
- *"I learned a lot from this, I got to know people that I would have been scared to talk to, but in this setting it went well."*

- *"I became more aware of how newcomers to the community live. All of us, also Norwegians coming from other parts of the country all have the same needs. We think alike – namely that we need to be integrated."*
- *"I used to think that it was the job of the Norweigans to integrate us, but I learned at the workshop that Norwegians too need to be integrated from a different place. I also learned that we all need to contribute – we need to be bold enough to take that first step – we cannot be afraid for getting in touch."*
- *"As a direct result from the workshop, I gained confidence to approach a mother who recently moved to Tynset. My son has played with her son, and I have wanted to go and visit them. So, after this workshop, I finally got the courage to ask if my son could visit them, because during the workshop I in in touch with people that I could ask about how I could make this first step when getting to know knew people."*
- *As refugees, we face other challenges than work migrants. People from Europe have other opportunities to get work and learning the language. They learn more by having daily contact with Norwegians. So when it comes to integration, they do better than refugees.*

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## Other outcomes

Based on the positive feedback from participating immigrants in MG, the municipalities have decided on arranging a similar workshop for all participants in the introduction program, where the focus will be on employment and housing, as these are crucial factors for preventing migrants from moving to more centralized areas after finishing their introduction program. This will be jointly planned with migrants, where the participants (in the introduction program) will influence and design both elements/content of their introduction

program and their need for support. This will also spur reflection as to what is required from themselves in terms of self-effort and setting their own goals.

In NØ, one of the participants ended up getting an internship in one of the municipality administrations as a direct result of her participation in the World Café. The participant, a university-educated female refugee from the Middle East, held a high-level bureaucratic position in her home country before fleeing to Norway. Since her arrival in Norway a few years ago, she has taken on small part-time jobs, such as cleaning and other jobs where she hasn't been able to make use of her education. During the World Café, she was in the same group as the municipality counselor who helped her get the position. Her story and experiences appeared to have been an eye-opener for the councilor, who approached her after the workshop with an offer of internship. The refugee was obviously thrilled by this and was grateful for the opportunity the workshop had provided her to network with new people, that eventually gave her this opportunity.

# Conclusion

The purpose of this report has been twofold: First, to account for and reflect on applied participatory action research methods, and second, to present the outputs and outcomes of the applied methods.

Our participatory action research has been centred on the organization of two regional workshops based on the World Café method. As a follow-up to the workshops, we conducted focus groups with selected participants to gain insights into their experiences with the World Café and their reflections on its potential practical implications.

The overall theme for our World Cafés was broad and open. This allowed us to create arenas for participation in line with the two highest stages of involvement in the MATILDE framework for involvement: 5) Networking and 6) Joint creation. The World Café method involves participation in the form of networking as the stakeholders meet and are free to collaboratively develop ideas that they together feel would be relevant for their local

communities and for their ability to welcome and include new members into the community. This also overlaps with level 6, joint creation, since the participants worked together to develop concrete solutions and measures, that can be implemented. The follow-up interviews indicate that key stakeholders in the municipalities plan on taking action to realize the proposed ideas and solution, but at this stage, there is no guarantee that they will actually follow through on their plans. Our research nevertheless shows that there is a willingness to do so, also at top strategic levels.

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# Appendix

## 1. Invitations

**Vil du bidra til å skape et levedyktig og inkluderende lokalsamfunn? Vi inviterer til idéverksted!**

**MATILDE** - Migration impact assessment to enhance integration and local development in European rural and mountain regions.

MATILDE er et forskningsprosjekt som finansieres av EU, og som handler om hvordan innvandring påvirker små distriktskommuner (med vekt på fjellområder). Prosjektet er opptatt av hvordan innvandring påvirker samfunnsutviklingen lokalt, hva som kan gjøres for å bedre integrering av innvandrere fra land utenfor EU, og hvordan politikkutformingen bedre kan legge til rette for integrering og inkludering, både på lokalt, regionalt, nasjonalt og på EU-nivå.

Du finner mer informasjon om forskningsprosjektet Matilde her:
https://matilde-migration.eu/

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

Vi inviterer til idéverksted **10.-11. november i Tynset Rådhus, Kommunestyresalen, 9.etg.**

Program:
Dag 1: **Kl. 12-15.30**
- Velkommen v/ Ordfører (kl.12)
- Introduksjon
  - Hva er Matilde?
  - Hvem innvandrer til Nord-Østerdalen?
  - Hvordan opplever innvandrere møtet med regionen?

- Cafédialog og gruppearbeid
  - Hvordan kan innvandring bli en varig ressurs for regionen? - Vi vil ha dine innspill og idéer!
  - Idéutvikling, og kunnskapsdeling

Dag 2: **Kl. 8.30-13**
- Sosialisering og kaffe (kl. 8.30-09.00)
- Cafédialogen fortsetter (kl. 09.00)
  - Konkretisering av ideer og forslag
  - Presentasjon av gruppearbeid
  - Hva blir veien videre?
- Vi avslutter med felles lunsj (kl. 12-13)

**Påmelding kan registreres her:**
https://nettskjema.no/a/222307
**Frist for påmelding: 3.november.**

**Ved spørsmål ta kontakt med:**
Svanhild Næverdal
svanhild.neverdal@tynset.kommune.no

**Med vennlig hilsen**

Svanhild Næverdal og Manuela Ciutac (Tynset kommune)
Signe Lise Dahl og Ørjan Lande Hansen (Innlandet Fylkeskommune)
Maria Røhnebæk og Nora Warhuus Samuelsen (Østlandsforskning/HINN)

Innlandet fylkeskommune
Høgskolen i Innlandet
Tynset kommune
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Du finner mer informasjon om forskningsprosjektet Matilde her:
https://matilde-migration.eu/

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

Vi inviterer til idéverksted **2.-3. november.** på Dale-Gudbrands Gard i Sør-Fron (se lenke i kart)

Program:
Dag 1: **Kl. 12-15.30**
- Velkommen v/ Varaordfører (kl.12)
- Introduksjon
  - Hva er Matilde?
  - Hvem innvandrer til Midt-Gudbrandsdalen?
  - Hvordan opplever innvandrere møtet med regionen?
- Cafédialog og gruppearbeid
  - Hvordan kan innvandring bli en varig ressurs for regionen? - Vi vil ha dine innspill og idéer!
  - Idéutvikling, og kunnskapsdeling

Dag 2: **Kl. 8.30-13**
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- Cafédialogen fortsetter
  - Konkretisering av ideer og forslag
  - Presentasjon av gruppearbeid
  - Hva blir veien videre?
- Vi avslutter med felles lunsj (kl. 12-13)

**Påmelding kan registreres her:**
https://nettskjema.no/a/222315
**Frist for påmelding: 18.oktober.**

Ved spørsmål ta kontakt med:
Marte Brunæs Torgersen
marte.brunaes.torgersen@sor-fron.kommune.no

**Med vennlig hilsen**

Marte Brunæs Torgersen (Sør-Fron kommune)
Signe Lise Dahl og Ørjan Lande Hansen (Innlandet Fylkeskommune)
Maria Røhnebæk og Nora Warhuus Samuelsen (Østlandsforskning/HINN)

Innlandet fylkeskommune
Høgskolen i Innlandet
SØR-FRON KOMMUNE "Dalenes blomme"
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## 2. Café host briefing

### Veiledning til Caféverter

Takk for at du tar ansvaret for å være cafévert på idéverkstedet! Her er en kort veiledning om hva denne rollen innebærer.

**Hva er cafédialog?**
Cafédialog er en arbeidsmetode som får frem den kollektive kunnskapen i grupper med høy diversitet, det er prosesser som understøtter interaksjon og dialog. Metoden kan blant annet brukes til deling av informasjon, relasjonsbygging, refleksjon, planlegging og idéutvikling. Det er ulike måter å organisere det på - vi lager vår variant.

**Hvordan gjør vi det?**
**Formål:** Skape engasjement, idéutvikling og implementering av konkrete tiltak som kan bidra til styrket inkludering av innvandrere i Midt-Gudbrandsdalen.

**Forventet resultat:**
- Vi forventer at prosessene skal resultere i konkrete forslag til tiltak som kan bidra til å styrke inkludering av personer med innvandrerbakgrunn, eller mer inkluderende samfunn generelt.
- Vi håper også at prosessene skal bidra til økt bevissthet og engasjement om innvandring og inkludering, og at det bidrar til å skape nye relasjoner og nettverk.

**Organisering**
Det blir ca. 30 deltakere på idéverkstedet, og disse fordeles på fem bord slik at det blir seks deltakere på hvert bord, inklusive cafevert. Prosesslederne (Maria og Nora fra Høyskolen) har ansvar for å lede prosessen og vil guide alle gruppene gjennom hvert steg i prosessen. Du som cafevert har en viktig rolle som består i å sørge for at samtalen på bordet blir dokumentert, at alle blir involvert på en god måte og å kort presentere hva som har blitt snakket om på bordet når nye grupper kommer på besøk til ditt bord.

**Tips til hvordan sørge for at samtalen blir dokumentert?**
- Si «skriv en lapp på det» når noen har sagt noe som ikke ennå er skrevet på en lapp. Noen ganger må man mase litt om dette.
- Minn gruppa på spørsmålet de jobber med, på en hyggelig måte, hvis de beveger seg for langt ut på vidda.

**Tips til hvordan involvere alle på en god måte?**
- Lytt og still gjerne åpne spørsmål til deltakerne hvis samtalen stopper opp
  - «Fortell gjerne mer om det..,»
  - «Hvordan opplever du det...»
  - «Hva tror du er årsakene til det...»
- Vi kommer til å instruere gruppene til å jobbe etter IGP-metoden i flere runder – hjelp gjerne deltakerne med å ta tiden og å følge metoden

## 3. Observation guidelines

**Guidelines for observation and documentation of ideation workshop based on World Café method**

The world café is organized in five main phases. This guide presents first issues to focus on throughout the process and secondly issues to focus on within each of the five phases.

- **General issues to focus on:**

  - **Instructions/guidelines:** Do participants understand and follow the instructions for the group work? Are the groups working in line with the guidelines, why/why not?
  - **Café-host:** Describe how this role is working, is the café host able to facilitate the group work? Is this role important for the processes in your group?
  - **Group dynamics:** Are everyone involved? Are some participants dominating while others more reserved?
  - **Discussions:** How will you characterize the group discussions? Are participants active and engaged or passive and inactive? Are discussions heated/conflicted or more harmonious?
  - **Processes:** Are participants focused on working on concrete ideas/solutions or to share knowledge, experiences of issues related to integration/inclusion - or combinations.
  - **Outputs:** What are the main outputs (finally selected ideas/solutions) and are they mainly results of individuals inputs or from the collective group work?

- Issues to focus on linked to each of the five phases:

  Day 1:

  1) **Working with ideas and themes within the group**
     Note the atmosphere and dynamic in the group and levels of involvement (for instance are everyone contributing with individual ideas/themes to the shared flip-over). How many ideas in total, is there a diversity or are they similar/overlapping?
  2) **Sharing and collecting ideas from other groups**
     How is this working – for instance the dynamics between the host and the visitors from other groups.
  3) **Returning to the initial group for sharing**
     -Are the participants bringing new insights to the table after visiting the other groups?
     -Are they adding new ideas or new themes to the flip over or readjusting the initial structure?

  Day 2:

  4) **Selection and concretization of ideas**
     How is the group working to reach shared agreement when selecting ideas or solutions to focus on, how would you describe the level of detailing/concretization/plans for realization
  5) **Plenum presentation**
     Take picture of the poster/posters and fill in descriptions of the idea/solution based on the oral presentation.

  *Remember to take pictures of all documents (flip overs) where the groups ideas / themes are noted. Record both process documents and the final 'products' / end presentations*

## 4. Interview guides for the focus group interviews

### Intervjuguide 1 oppfølgingsintervjuer

**Introduksjon**

1. Kort om deltakerne og deres bakgrunn.
2. Hvilke grupper deltok de på i ideverkstedet
3. Hva slags løsningsforslag kom gruppa frem til?

**Erfaringer med deltakelse**

4. Hvordan opplevde du å delta i ideverkstedet?
5. Fikk du noe ut av å delta? Hva/på hvilken måte?
6. Er det noe tenker burde vært gjort annerledes?
7. Hvordan opplevde du gruppedynamikken?
8. Har du andre kommentarer til metoden og organiseringen av ideverkstedet?

**Resultater / forslag til løsninger**

9. Kan du si litt om ideen/løsningsforslaget som gruppa di kom frem til?
10. Var det andre ideer/løsninger som ble diskutert i gruppa som du mener kunne vært viktigere/ like viktig å forfølge?
11. Bør/kan ideen dere presenterte forfølges videre?
    a. Hva skal til for å realisere den?
    b. Vil du/ kan du ha en rolle i realisering av forslagene som kom frem i din eller andre grupper? Eventuelt hvordan?

**Avslutning**

12. Hva tenker du/dere er viktige prioriteringer i regionens arbeid med inkludering og integrering fremover?
13. Er det andre ting dere vil legge til?

## 5. Consent form

**MATILDE**

Migration Impact Assessment To Enhance
Integration and Local Development in
European rural and mountain regions

### MATILDE – INFORMASJON TIL DELTAKERE

Kjære deltaker

Høgskolen I Innlandet ved Østlandsforskning deltar i det EU finansierte forskningsprosjektet MATILDE som blir koordinert av Eurac Research som holder til i Bolzano, Italia.

MATILDE (Migration Impact Assessment to Enhance Integration and Local Development in European Rural and Mountain Areas) er et 3-årig forskningsprosjekt som tar sikte på å beskrive de sosiale og økonomiske konsekvensene av migrasjon på lokal utvikling og samhold, spesielt med fokus på europeiske landlige områder og fjellområder. Prosjektet har definert "tredjelandsstatsborgere" (TCN-er) som personer som kommer land utenfor EU og som er lovlig bosatt i EU eller Norge. Vurderingen er basert på en antatt forutsetning om at utenlandsk innvandring er en viktig driver for sosial og økonomisk utvikling, og som også påvirker sammenhengen mellom urbane områder, og landlige områder og fjellområder.

**Personvern og databehandling ved deltakelse i idéverksted**
Prosessene som du bidrar til som deltaker i idéverkstedet vil observeres og dokumenteres av forskere ved Høgskolen i Innlandet og ansatte ved Innlandet Fylkeskommune som er samarbeidspartner i prosjektet. Dokumenteringen skjer ved at det tas notater fra samtaler i gruppearbeidet, men det som blir sagt vil ikke knyttes til enkeltpersoner, og det vil ikke lagres personopplysninger om deltakerne i disse dataene. Dataene fra gruppearbeidet kan bli brukt i rapportering og publiseringer fra prosjektet, men deltakernes identitet vil anonymiseres.

### SAMTYKKESKJEMA FOR DELTAKERE

Jeg har blitt informert om formålet med forskningsprosjektet MATILDE. Jeg forstår at informasjonen innhentet i forbindelse med ideverkstedet vill bli brukt og lagret av Høgskolen i Innlandet.

Med dette utgangspunkt gir jeg samtykke til: (kryss av for riktig alternativ)

| Bruke informasjonen jeg har gitt til dette prosjektet alene | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Jeg forstår at det jeg sier kan bli sitert eller gjengitt i anonymisert form i publiseringer, i rapporter, på websider eller i andre forskningsresultater. | | |
| Jeg godtar at fotografier eller videoer av meg tatt under intervjuet arkiveres og formidles for gjenbruk. | | |
| Jeg har tillatt at forskere kan kontakte meg via epost teller telefon om forskningen (f.eks. forskningsresultater eller når det behov for å avklare/ oppklare uklarheter). | | |

Dato/Signatur_____

**Datakontroll og personvernombud**
Datakontroll:           Høgskolen I Innlandet
Personvernombud:      Hans Nyberg
Du kan kontakte personvernombudet på epost: hans.nyberg@inn.no

I tilfelle det skulle være spørsmål, bekymringer, kommentarer, tvil eller du ønsker å trekke samtykke tilbake, kan du kontakte: **Prosjektkoordinator: Per Olav Lund, forsker, Høgskolen i Innlandet/ Østlandsforskning, Postboks 400, 2418 Elverum. Tlf: 976 70 711,** per.lund@inn.no

## 6. Communication and Media

# Utfordrer hele Tynset

2021-10-23

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ØSTLENDINGEN | Lørdag 23. oktober 2021 | NYHETER | 7

Gigantisk forskningsprosjekt om inkludering og integrering:

# Utfordrer hele Tynset

**TYNSET:** Høgskolen i Innlandet deltar sammen med forskningspartnere i 11 europeiske land i et stort forskningsprosjekt om hvordan man kan skape levedyktige og inkluderende lokalsamfunn rundt om. Tynset er plukket ut som eksempel på en kommune på landsbygda.

JON IVER GRUE

INVITERER TIL IDEVERKSTED: Bildet er fra et møte tidligere i høst for å snakke ut om situasjonen og styrke tilgjengeligheten til hjelpetjenester for afghanere bosatt på Tynset. Fra venstre: Merete Myhre Moen, Elisabeth Lundberg, Svanhild Nøverdal og Mehdi Hassan.

FOTO: ERIK FRENGSTAD

**I de fleste kommuner**

**Styrke bevisstheten**

**Nettverk på tvers**

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# Hvem bør ta influensavaksine?

Alle kan bli alvorlig syk av influensa, men noen er mer utsatt for alvorlig sykdom enn andre.

Alle over 65 år bør ta vaksine hvert år. Er du kronisk syk, har alvorlig fedme eller er gravid bør du også ta vaksine.

Sjekk med legekontoret eller på kommunens nettsider om hvor du kan vaksinere deg.

Over 65 år — Gravid — Diabetes
Hjertesyk — Nyresvikt — Kreft

Les mer om influensavaksine på fhi.no/influensavaksine

**FHI**
Folkehelseinstituttet

www.matilde-migration.eu

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# Høgskolen og Tynset meed i gigantisk forskningsprosjekt om inkludering og integrering av innvandrere

2021-10-25

© Arbeidets Rett

INVITERER TIL IDEVERKSTED: Bildet er fra et møte tidligere i høst for å snakke ut om situasjonen og styrke tilgjengeligheten til hjelpetjenester for a Svanhild Næverdal og Mahdi Hassan.

## Høgskolen og Tynset me forskningsprosjekt om i og integrering av innvan

**Høgskolen i Innlandet deltar sammen med forskningspartnere i 11 europeiske land i et stort forskningsprosjekt om hvordan man kan skape levedyktige og inkluderende lokalsamfunn rundt om. Tynset er plukket ut som eksempel på en kommune på landsbygda.**

I den forbindelse inviteres næringslivet, privatpersoner og lokale lag og foreninger i alle de fem kommunene i Nord-Østerdal til et idéverksted i kommunestyresalen i Tynset rådhus torsdag 11. og fredag 12. november.

### Utfordring i de fleste kommuner

De fleste kommuner i Norge har utfordringer med innvandring og inkludering. Enten det handler om arbeidsplasser i forbindelse med nedlagte mottak, brisk rundt mottak og nye tilbyggere, nærere eller som en del av en strategi for å holde på innbyggertallet i norske bygder, så engasjerer dette temaet og engasjementet.

– At Tynset er plukket ut, sammen med Sør-Fron kommune i Midt-Gudbrandsdal, er blant annet fordi vi har markert

oss med mange samarbeidsprosjekter i det interkommunale samarbeidet i Fjellregionen. Forskningsprosjektet MATILDE ser ikke nødvendigvis bare på bykultur, men hva som skal til for å integrere og inkludere innvandrere ute på landsbygda framfor de store byene. Den viktigste faktoren er at de får jobb og blir inkludert i lokalsamfunnet som selvstendige borgere, sier rektor Svanhild Næverdal ved Tynset Opplæringsenter.

### Styrke bevisstheten og engasjementet

Her ønsker med idéverkstedet er å få frem forslag til tiltak som kan bidra til å styrke bevisstheten og engasjement om innvand-

ring og inkludering i regionen. Påmeldingsfristen går ut i slutten av neste uke og Næverdal håper på mange påmeldte som vil være med å tenke og komme med ideer og innspill.

– Vi må ha en håndterlig mengde, men gjerne så mange som 100 personer siden at vi kan lage grupper og få til en god idéutvikling. Kommunestyresalen og rådhusene rom er reservert. Så kan vi få tilgang på andre rom hvis det blir mange grupper. En enhet kan ikke bosette og integrere flyktninger alene. Vi må gjøre det sammen med næringsliv, lag og organisasjoner, understreker hun.

### Nettverk på tvers av kommuner

FOLK                                    4 minutter lesetid

# – Viktig å tenke på innvandrere som en ressurs



http://www.tynsetingen.no/2021/folk/viktig-a-tenke-pa-innvandrere-som-en-ressurs/[07.01.2022 13:36:20]

ENGASJERTE: Daniela Sanchez, fra venstre, Joanna Karolina Stefaniak, Mainar Qassab, Jihad Zakria, Beate Hjertager og Melchiade Sadiki var blant de 60 deltakerne som deltok under MATILDE på Tynset. Foto: Trond Findahl



**TROND FINDAHL**
E-POST: TROND@TYNSETINGEN.NO
TLF: 995 04 631

Publisert: 13 nov
Oppdatert: 13 nov

**Innvandrere opprettholder folketallet**

## Sør-Fron plukka ut til unikt europeisk forskningsprosjekt: - Spennende og viktig å bidra

Folk flest inviteres til å komme med gode ideer til å skape et mer inkluderende lokalsamfunn.



Dølen skrev tidligere i år om familien Gunduz, som bor på Sør-Fron. Familien er allerede godt integrert, og trives godt i bygda. (Illustrasjonsfoto)  Foto: Tone Sidsel Sanden

# Idéverksted for bedre integrering

Velkomstkoordinator og nye måter å samhandle på. Det er to av innspillene som kom opp under idéverksted i Sør-Fron.

Denne uka var det duket for idéverksted på Dale-Gudbrandsgard på Hundorp. Arrangementer er en del av EU-finansierte forskningsprosjektet MATILDE, som handler om hvordan innvandring påvirker små distriktskommuner (med vekt på fjellregioner).

Marte Brunæs Torgersen er avdelingsleder for Midt-Gudbrandsdal flyktningetjeneste. Hun håper på konkrete ideer til hvordan man skal integrere nye beboere i framtida.



Integreringsrådgiver i Innlandet fylkeskommune Signe-Lise Dahl, Aka Gunduz og avdelingsleder for flyktningetjenesten i Midt-Gudbrandsdal Marte Brunæs Torgersen .
Foto: Leila Øvreseth

- Jeg håper også at det blir et positivt fokus framover på det med innvandring og integrering, og på hva de som kommer hit faktisk betyr for bygdene våre, sa Torgersen i forkant av det planlagte gruppearbeidet.

## Begrensa arbeidsmarked

Torgersen påpekte at flyktningene opplever bygda som trygg. Det er lite kriminalitet og barna kan gå alene til skolen. Utfordringen i små distriktskommuner er jobb.

- For at flyktningene skal bli her, må de ha en jobb. Arbeidsmarkedet er gjerne begrensa

og vi må se på hvordan vi kan kvalifisere flyktningene som kommer hit for de jobbene vi faktisk har.

Arbeidsmarkedet i distriktet er gjerne knyttet til jobber innen helsesektoren, transport- og anleggsbransjen, samt servicenæringen.

- Ellers tenker jeg at man i framtida også kan rekruttere til landbruket vårt. Det er heller ikke langt til Lillehammer og Otta. Det er jo en del som velger å bo her, men som pendler til jobb, både flyktninger og andre.

## Fra Tyrkia til Sør-Fron

Aka Gunduz kom til Norge som flyktning fra Tyrkia for seks år siden. Han er gift og har tre barn, ett barn i barnehagen og to i barneskolen. Kona hans jobben innen helsevesenet og skal ta fagbrev som helsefagarbeider. På spørsmål om hvordan han opplevde å komme til Norge, et land med et annet klima og en annen kultur svarte han:

- Det var ikke så lett. Det var mange utfordringer, men vi hadde mange hyggelige og hjelpsomme mennesker rundt oss. Vi følte oss trygge og ønsket å lære oss språket, men dialekt er mitt mareritt, sa han og lo.

- Vi bodde først ett år på asylmottak i Ulsteinvik. Nå trives vi godt i Sør-Fron. Det er vakker



Mange ideer kom på bordet under idéverkstedet på Dale-Gudbrandsgard.
Foto: Windy Kester Moe/Høgskolen i Innlandet

natur og lite kriminalitet her. Nesten alle kjenner hverandre. Vi liker å bo på landet, fortalte Gunduz under samtalen med Marte Brunæs Torgersen i starten av idéverkstedet.

Han understreket viktigheten av å selv være aktiv for å bli integrert i samfunnet.

- Det er lett å bli kjent hvis man er litt aktiv. Vi har bodd her i fire år nå og har alltid møtt hyggelige og smilende folk i Gudbrandsdalen. Det viktigste er ikke bare å lære norsk, men å delta i frivillighet som dugnad.

## Er en del av samfunnet

Gunduz fortalte at han nå føler seg som en del av samfunnet og at det er kjempeviktig.

- Innvandrere må ta initiativ. Vi har fått venner og barna våre har fått mange gode venner. De snakker dialekt.

På spørsmål om hva nordmenn kan gjøre for innvandrere for å lette integreringen svarte han:

- Innvandrere må få en sjanse til å bidra i samfunnet og noen må gi dem den sjansen, spesielt arbeidsmarkedet. Ellers at nordmenn viser empati og forståelse for innvandreres historie og bakgrunn.

- Det viktigste er at dette landet har åpnet dørene for oss, så vær aktiv og delta på frivillighet, oppfordret Gunduz som nå er styremedlem i Sør-Fron idrettslag.

- Jeg prøver å gjøre mitt beste og ønsker å bli boende i kommunen.

## Stort engasjement og bra dynamikk

Det var to grunnleggende spørsmål som var utgangspunktet for idéverkstedet:

- Hva kan bidra til å skape levedyktige og inkluderende lokalsamfunn i Midt-Gudbrandsdalen?
- Hvordan kan samhandling på tvers bidra til å bedre inkludering av personer med innvandrerbakgrunn?

- Det var stort engasjement og bra dynamikk under gruppearbeidet. Gruppene var bredt sammensatt fra flere nivåer, som rådmann, varaordfører, tjeneste-/virksomhetsledere, lokalpolitikere, flyktningetjeneste, deltakere ved introduksjonsprogrammet, frivilligheten og lærere, sier integreringsrådgiver i sammfunnsavdelingen i Innlandet fylkeskommune, Signe-Lise Dahl i etterkant av arrangementet.

## Mentorordning og velkomstkoordinator

Hun forteller videre at ideene som kom på bordet omhandlet blant annet ulike typer mentorordninger.

- Det ble ytret ønske om mentorordninger som blir koblet opp mot både yrkesliv og fritid. Ellers kom det innspill på hvordan nybosatte kan få bistand til å ta førerkort.

Dahl forteller videre at andre ideer var nytenkning rundt samhandling mellom flyktningetjeneste/kommune og frivillighet, samt opprettelsen av en «velkomstkoordinator» for nyankomne i Midt-Gudbrandsdal.

## Konkretisere foreslåtte tiltak

Veien videre er at Høgskolen i Innlandet tar kontakt med utvalgte deltagere på idéverkstedet for å konkretisere foreslåtte tiltak.

- Arbeidet og ideene vil også bli diskutert og forankret i faglig forum i Midt-Gudbrandsdal, som består av kommunedirektører og Midt-Gudbrandsdal flyktningetjeneste, avslutter Dahl.
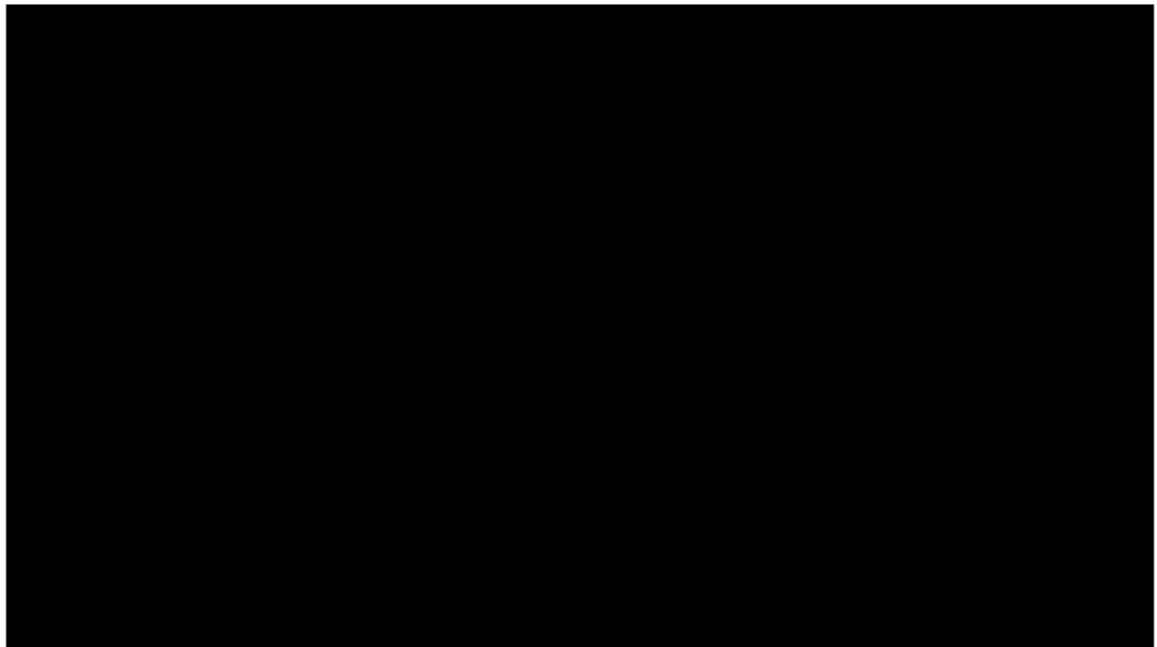


(Foto og videoredigering Windy Kester Moe/Høgskolen i Innlandet)

## Hva er forskningsprosjektet MATILDE?

Idéverkstedene organiseres i forbindelse med gjennomføringen av prosjektet MATILDE - *Migration impact assessment to enhance integration and local development*

*in European rural and mountain regions.* MATILDE er et forskningsprosjekt som finansieres av EU, og som handler om hvordan innvandring påvirker små distriktskommuner.

Prosjektet gjennomføres i samarbeid med partnere i 11 europeiske land. I Norge deltar Østlandsforskning v/ Høgskolen i Innlandet som forskningspartner og Innlandet fylkeskommune deltar som lokal partner.

Tynset og Sør-Fron er valgt ut som casekommuner og deltar i gjennomføringen av lokale, deltakende casestudier høsten 2021. Kommunenes samspill med de øvrige kommunene i regionen vektlegges og casestudiene forankres derfor i Midt-Gudbrandsdalen og Nord-Østerdal som case regioner. 10.-11. november 2021 er det idéverksted på Tynset.

## Flere saker:

- Hvilke effekt har migrasjon på fjellregionene? (13.01.2020)
- Postkortkampanje forteller om migrasjon (08.02.2021)

Publisert av: Leila Øvreseth   Sist endret: 10.11.2021 09.16

☐ Nyheter forsiden

# Hvordan skape et inkluderende og levedyktig lokalsamfunn?

Nå blir det idéverksted i Sør Fron 2.-3. november og på Tynset 10.-11. november.

Med idéverkstedene ønsker vi å få fram ideer og forslag til tiltak som kan bidra til å styrke inkludering av innvandrere og øke bevissthet og engasjement om innvandring og inkludering.

## Påmeldingsfrist 25. oktober

Det blir lagt til rette for å knytte nye kontakter/nettverk på tvers av kommuner, sektorer og organisasjoner. Vi vil særlig utfordre deltakere til å tenke nytt om hvordan samhandling på tvers kan bidra til bedre inkludering av personer med innvandrerbakgrunn.

MATILDE er et forskningsprosjekt som finansieres av EU, og som handler om hvordan innvandring påvirker små distriktskommuner.
Foto: Jørgen Skaug

Kontaktperson og påmelding i Sør Fron: marte.brunaes.torgersen@sor-fron.kommune.no

Kontaktperson og påmelding på Tynset: svanhild.neverdal@tynset.kommune.no

## Styrke stedsutviklingen

Hensikten med verkstedet er å bidra til økt bevissthet, engasjement og kunnskap om innvandring og inkludering i regionene. Å skape inkluderende samfunn kan være viktig for å gjøre regionen til et attraktivt område for innvandring og tilflytting, og kan bidra til at flere ønsker å bli boende. Dette kan være viktige tiltak for å motvirke befolkningsnedgang og styrke stedsutvikling.

## EU-finanisert prosjekt

Idéverkstedene organiseres i forbindelse med gjennomføringen av prosjektet MATILDE - *Migration impact assessment to enhance integration and local development in European rural and mountain regions*. MATILDE er et forskningsprosjekt som finansieres av EU, og som handler om hvordan innvandring påvirker små distriktskommuner.

Prosjektet gjennomføres i samarbeid med partnere i 11 europeiske land. I Norge deltar Østlandsforskning v/ Høgskolen i Innlandet som forskningspartner og Innlandet fylkeskommune deltar som lokal partner. Tynset og Sør-Fron er valgt ut som casekommuner og deltar i gjennomføringen av lokale, deltakende casestudier høsten 2021. Kommunenes samspill med de øvrige kommunene i regionen vektlegges og casestudiene forankres derfor i Midt-Gudbrandsdalen og Nord-Østerdal som case regioner.

www.matilde-migration.eu

# Hvordan vil du at ditt lokalsamfunn ser ut?

PUBLISERT 2021/10 AV WINDY KESTER MOE

Blogg partner Eastern Norway Research Institute

Forskere fra Høgskolen i Innlandet og Innlandet Fylkeskommune vil gjerne høre din mening og gode ideer om hvordan vi kan skape levedyktige og inkluderende lokalsamfunn i Midt-Gudbrandsdal og Nord-Østerdal. Derfor inviterer de til idéverksted i Sør-Fron 2.-3. november og i Tynset 10.-11. november.

Med idéverkstedene ønsker de å få fram forslag til tiltak som kan bidra til å styrke inkludering av innvandrere og øke bevissthet og engasjement om innvandring og inkludering. De legger til rette for å knytte nye kontakter og danne nettverk på tvers av kommuner, sektorer og organisasjoner. Deltakere utfordres til å tenke nytt om hvordan samhandling på tvers kan bidra til bedre inkludering av personer med innvandrerbakgrunn.

## Øke engasjement i områder med befolkningsnedgang

Hensikten med verkstedet er å bidra til økt bevissthet, engasjement og kunnskap om innvandring og inkludering regionene. Deltakelse skal understøtte prosesser som kan bidra til ideutvikling og implementering av tiltak og løsninger som styrker inkluderingen. Å skape inkluderende samfunn kan

være viktig for å gjøre regionen til et attraktivt område for innvandring og tilflytting. Det kan bidra til at flere ønsker å bli boende. Dette kan være viktige tiltak for å motvirke befolkningsnedgang og styrke stedsutvikling.

## EU-prosjektet MATILDE

Idéverkstedene organiseres i forbindelse med gjennomføringen av prosjektet Matilde – *Migration impact assessment to enhance integration and local development in European rural and mountain regions*. MATILDE er et forskningsprosjekt som finansieres av EU, og som handler om hvordan innvandring påvirker små distriktskommuner, med vekt på fjellområder.

Prosjektet er opptatt av hvordan innvandring påvirker samfunnsutviklingen lokalt. Hva kan gjøres for å bedre integrering av innvandrere fra land utenfor EU, og hvordan kan politikkutformingen bedre legge til rette for integrering og inkludering, både på lokalt, regionalt, nasjonalt og på EU-nivå?

**Innlandet er involvert**

Prosjektet gjennomføres i samarbeid med partnere i 11 europeiske land. I Norge deltar Østlandsforskning v/ Høgskolen i Innlandet som forskningspartner og Innlandet fylkeskommune deltar som lokal partner. Tynset og Sør-Fron er valgt ut som casekommuner og deltar i gjennomføringen av lokale, deltakende casestudier høsten 2021. Kommunenes samspill med de øvrige kommunene i regionen vektlegges og casestudiene forankres derfor i Midt-Gudbrandsdalen og Nord-Østerdal som case regioner.

DELTA PÅ ET IDÉVERKSTED?
Ønsker du å bidra på idéverkstedet på Dale-Gudbrands Gard i Hundorp 2.-3-november? Ta kontakt med Marte Brunæs Torgersen, marte.brunaes.torgersen@sor-fron.kommune.no

Vil du delta på Tynset 10.-11.november? Ta kontakt med: Svanhild Næverdal, svanhild.neverdal@tynset.kommune.no

Følg med i sosiale media og #MatildeMigration

Og les mer om MATILDE-prosjektet her:

https://matilde-migration.eu/

https://www.facebook.com/MatildeProject

https://twitter.com/MATILDE_Mig

https://www.linkedin.com/company/matilde-migration/

https://www.instagram.com/matildemigration/

https://independent.academia.edu/MATILDEMigration

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Matilde-Migration

**GUDBRANDSDALSRADIOEN**

GudbrandsdalsRadio
en primo Nov 2020.m

Interview with WP-leader Maria Røhnebæk, regional FM-radio station, broadcasted October 25th

Example of blog: stakeholder Alvdal municipality.
Other stakeholders published similar blogs to announce workshop
engage their citizens

< Aktuelt

## Kjenner du til Matilde?

I korte trekk handler MATILDE om å forstå hvordan innvandringen påvirker regional utvikling i distriktskommuner, og i fjellområder spesielt. Den lange forklaringen på dette initiativet er: *Migration impact assessment to enhance Integration and local development in European rural and mountain regions.*

Nå vil Tynset kommune, i samarbeid med andre, invitere deg til et idéverksted for å få dine innspill og ideer til hva som kan bidra til å skape levedyktige og inkluderende lokalsamfunn. Hvilke tiltak som kan bidra til å styrke inkludering av innvandrere og øke bevissthet og engasjement om innvandring og inkludering? Hva kan gjøres for å bedre integrering av innvandrere fra land utenfor EU, og hvordan kan politikkutformingen bedre legge til rette for integrering og inkludering, både på lokalt, regionalt, nasjonalt og på EU-nivå?

Vi vil legge til rette for å knytte nye kontakter/nettverk på tvers av kommuner, sektorer og organisasjoner.
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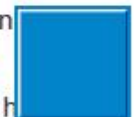
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**Østlandsforskning** @ostforsk · Oct 26      505      11
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**MATILDE CASE STUDIES**
Norway

# Spain: Aragón

**Authors:** Raúl Lardiés-Bosque & Nuria del Olmo Vicén

## Summary:

This case study focuses on the thematic of the demographic and socioeconomic revitalization of rural areas in Aragón, Spain. This report has a double objective. First, to analyze the living conditions and resources in the two selected comarcas (Alto Gállego and Los Monegros), with the aim of making proposals that allow the revitalization of both territories based on the integration of immigrants; also, in parallel, it pretends assess the possibilities of methodology based on participation action in research on migrations.

In a first section, both comarcas are described from a socio-demographic point of view. Next, the three techniques used in the action research activities are explained, with the description of the participating actors involved and other methodological aspects: in-depth interviews to different stakeholders in both comarcas were conducted, followed by Focus Groups and a Mobility mapping.

In a second section, the main results on action research are collected. Firstly, based on the problems and opportunities of living in the comarcas, and secondly, on the contribution of the TCNs to the revitalization of these territories.

A third section contains the proposals for innovative solutions formulated by the different actors, focusing on the inclusion and recognition of the population and the TCNs.

The main conclusions from the methodological point of view confirm the usefulness of research tools that include all actors (stakeholders and immigrants). In addition, key aspects for revitalization are exposed, such as facilitating access to training, housing, improving communications and the development of activities that help break down barriers between the inhabitants of the area.

# Description of activities

## Case study objectives, specific thematic

Our case study assesses, spatially, the impacts of migration at local level and looks at the interactions between institutions (macro), organizations (meso) and individuals (micro), with the territorial impact of this phenomenon. **The case study has been carried out in 2 of the 33 *comarcas* (districts) in the Autonomous Region of Aragón**: Alto Gállego and Los Monegros (Fig. 1).

1) **The comarca of Alto Gállego** is located in the north of the province of Huesca and borders on France to the north; it has a population is 13,434 inhabitants (2020), and the capital municipality (9,185 inhabitants) accounts for 70%; the comarca has 8 municipalities and 85 population centres, some of which are uninhabited.

2) **The comarca of Los Monegros** is located in the south of the province of Huesca and a southern part belongs to the province of Zaragoza. The comarca has a population of 18,447 inhabitants (2020), and its capital (4,184 inhabitants) accounts for 23%. This comarca is made up of 31 municipalities and 50 population centres.

**Figure 1. Location of the comarcas Alto Gállego and Los Monegros in Aragón**

The two **regions were chosen** due to their contrasting, different socio-economic dynamics, which have led to different migratory processes and different characteristics of the immigrant population. The comarca of Alto Gállego is located in the mountainous area of the Pyrenees and it is quite services oriented (tourism and with ski resorts) and a industry-based economy only in the capital of the comarca. On the other hand, the comarca of Los Monegros comprises more territory and it is in a flat area at the end of the Ebro Valley, with 81.5% of the land used for agriculture; the main economic activities are based on the primary sector - agriculture and livestock farming.

In our case study, we have assessed the impact of foreign immigration, in relationship with concrete place-based strategies and initiatives of migrants integration favoring their active role in a bottom-up process of participatory action research. We could get this aim thanks to the participation of local stakeholders such as local policy makers and officers, NGOs, migrants, as will be later described, in order to ensure the engagement of beneficiaries in the identification of these impacts on social and economic realms. Together with them, proposals for place-based innovative response to local challenges will be co-

designed, in order to promote improved governance of migration at the local level, capable to enhance integration of TCNs and balanced territorial developments.

In parallel, the work with the **case studies** has tried to: 1) identify local challenges related to the arrival and settlement of foreign immigrants; 2) depict needs of local communities, in terms of enhancing the active role of migrants in territorial development and supporting their integration through innovative initiatives; 3) reflect on opportunities associated to immigration of TCNs in these rural areas.

From the problems and difficulties found, we intend **to formule policy recommendations** considering different areas of integration territorial and political levels and TCNs groups, to promote measures and governance processes capable to better include TCNs and better connect urban and rural/mountain areas.

Different **methods** have been designed and implemented for the analysis of the case studies. Besides qualitative interviews and Focus Groups, we also developed 'Mobility mappings'. This last technique is a spatio-visual tool which allows to investigate the spatial dimension of everyday life of individuals or groups, and to quantitatively and qualitatively capture both spatial (im)mobility and the meanings attached to places (Kordel et al. 2018).[20]

At the same time, with the participatory action research, the case study explored and tried to understand socio-cultural perceptions and representations about the local impact of migration, considering territorial differences of the phenomenon.

Thematically, the focus of the case study has been on the "Impact on demographic and social revitalization of rural/mountain localities through TCNs integration". Due to this, the socioeconomic and territorial impact of foreign immigration tries to evaluate the contribution of TCNs and their settlement in the maintenance, growth and diversity of the population, with a view to the socioeconomic revitalization of these territories.

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[20] Kordel, S., Weidinger, T. & Hachmeister, S. (2018): Lebenswelten geflüchteter Menschen in ländlichen Räumen qualitativ erforschen. Methodische Überlegungen zu einem partizipativ orientierten Forschungsansatz (Thünen Working Paper 106). Thünen- Institut: Braunschweig.

# Preparation (sampling and access)

The participating actors (individual and collective) in the three techniques were asked to reflect on the impact of the immigrant population. They were informed that they were going to participate in activities in order to analyze the resources of the area and the living conditions and impact of immigrants, in order to later make proposals on the revitalization of the comarcas based on the integration of immigrants; therefore, they were aware of the role they were going to play in this participatory action research. For this, a key aspect has been to explain the objectives proposed in each of the stages of the investigation to the informants in both case studies -comarcas-.

A first important aspect has been the **construction of the sample of informants/participants**, since they belong to different sectors and activities. They were **participants (stakeholders)** linked to the sectors of: compulsory education, generic adult training focused on socio-labor insertion -with students getting professional skills and certificates of Spanish language-, representatives of public administrations (mayors), public social services organizations, non-profit social action organizations -such as associations against depopulation-, trade unions, business associations, immigrants and the media.

The second important aspect is that the stakeholders had to reside in the area and have extensive experience in their activities in order to provide correct views on the phenomena, although sometimes even contradictory. Altogether, **17 in-depth interviews have been carried out** (Table 1), and the size of the sample has been determined by theoretical saturation in relation to the areas under investigation.

**Table 1.** Preparation of the action research, Aragón, Spain

| 17 in-depth interviews (9 Alto Gállego / 8 Los Monegros) **\*** |
|---|
| 14 stakeholders / 3 TCNs |
| **\* People involved:** Alto Gállego (7 nationals / 2 TCNs) // Los Monegros (7 nationals / 1 TCN) |

The themes raised for the interviews were the spatial distribution and socio-demographic characteristics of TCNs, and the social, economic and territorial dimensions. By analyzing the previous results, we have been able t**o design the activities for the action research**. For this reason, and based on the results of the previous phase, we have been delimiting and zooming in on those aspects, resources and living conditions that will allow us to make integration/revitalization proposals.

The key and **thematic questions of the in-depth interviews** were about:

1) An overview of the composition of the population residing in the area, with special emphasis on the volume of foreign population TCNs, sector/s of work activity, educational level, religious affiliation and differences with the native population (local?) in the use of municipal and regional services. When the interviews have been with immigrants, the person interviewed has been asked individually and, also in a more general way, about the characteristics of the group to which they belong.

2) Settlement patterns, especially on rural-urban preferences.

3) Perceptions regarding whether there is spatial segregation, making a brief assessment of the impacts of migration, and if applicable, according to the profile of the stakeholder interviewed, with the institutional response to the phenomenon.

4) The economic situation, with special emphasis on access to housing and housing patterns.

5) The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on different groups and as a whole.

6) Displacements -in the territory- for daily activities.

7) Relations between local and foreign population, integration and social cohesion.

8) The feeling of belonging to the comarca, and the perception of the local population about the presence of foreigners and conflicts.

9) Also, on the sociodemographic and economic perspectives of the area in the future.

Finally, as mentioned above, another objective of these 17 in-depth interviews was to obtain a **sample of those actors who would participate in the action research**. Thus, some of the

participants in in-depth interviews have contributed to forming the sample, and all the interviewees had a high degree of commitment to the objectives of the research, facilitating new actors. Through this sample -intentional and theoretical-, profiles of other actors have been selected who have been able to generate information about the two comarcas, due to their life experience, knowledge and interest.

## The actors involved in the action research

The main objective of The Participatory Action Research (PAR) -in addition to collecting information- has been the need to get involved people living in these two areas, in order to evaluate the contribution and the integration of the TCNs, proposing initiatives and transforming the living conditions of the TCNs and general population. Therefore, among the actors involved in the action research, a wide variety of profiles have been chosen, which provide a huge perspective to consider the different areas of community life.

### The TCNs:

Immigrants from mainly Latin American and Moroccan countries have participated in the Focus Groups of the Alto Gállego comarca. To a lesser extent, there have also been immigrants from European countries, including Romanians, since although they already belong to the EU, they have been installed for several decades and were not from the EU at the time of their initial arrival.

They have all been in the area for a long time (they arrived at the end of the 90s and the beginning of the 2000s), they are in a regularized situation and, with the exception of some women -and particularly of North African origin-, all of them are currently working.

The selected profiles are described below, presenting their commitment to the settlement and inclusion of the population (Table 2).

The order of presentation is arbitrary and does not respond to any characteristics of quality or reliability of the information, or development/revitalization contributions provided.

a) **Representatives of the public administration (regional political decision makers**): they have provided a global vision of immigration and the sociodemographic situation of the areas. Mayors and presidents of the comarcas have also participated. Their level of commitment to the permanent settlement of the foreign and native population has been high.

b) **Social providers**: they have contributed with quite experience because they have much contact with the immigrant population. Social workers and social promoters from public social services and non-profit entities with local implementation (as well as national) have participated in this profile. In addition to them, also educators and/or those responsible for training adults, given that immigrants usually attend this training, mainly for two specific purposes: linguistic immersion aimed at labor and social insertion, and obtaining a professional training certificate (socio-sanitary, needed for personal care).

c) **Associations of entrepreneurs and owners of the agricultural sector**: they have provided knowledge about the labor activity of the foreign population, the situation of the labor market and the demands of entrepreneurs. In this profile is an association of farmers and ranchers owners, whose contribution has been relevant because the agricultural sector is one of the main sectors of labor activity of the foreign population. The business associations that have participated had a global vision of the dynamics of contracting and the evolution of economic activity in all sectors.

d) **Education and training institutions**: they have provided knowledge about minors and about women from groups with low presence in public life (mothers with little knowledge of the language, without work activity and with low presence in public life); in particular, they

have reported on their adaptation to the educational system and their level of interrelation with the different cultural groups (native or foreign).

e) **Neighborhood associations and other cultural and sports associations**: they have contributed to the perception of community life, the relationships between different groups and their incidence on different groups, and on aspects related to the variables of sex, age, cultural belonging and time of settlement.

f) **Immigrants**: given the low degree of development of immigrant associations in both areas/comarcas, individual immigrants have been included. These immigrants have contributed the perception from their immigrant communities and have shown a vision on the projection of the social group in terms of interrelation and social cohesion.

g) **Media**: they provide the most noteworthy aspects of the impact of migrations in the local context.

**Table 2. Type of actors involved in participatory action research and challenges in Aragón, Spain**

| Type of actor | Type and challengees of engagement | Ability to mobilize participation at local level |
|---|---|---|
| **Public administration representatives** | Commitment to the settlement of the population (native or foreign). Commitment to increasing social participation. Commitment to social cohesion. | Yes |
| **Social providers** | Commitment to the economic and social integration of the foreign population in a vulnerable situation. | No, with the exception of educators and those responsible for training adults, who mobilize students in order to increase social interactions with the local population. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Workers' and employers' associations** | Commitment to the economic development of the area. | Yes, but with very moderate intensity. |
| **Responsible for compulsory education** | Commitment to the social integration of minors and to academic and curricular adaptation.<br>Commitment to developing values of coexistence. | High, but with long-term projection given that they work with minors in aspects related to coexistence. |
| **Neighborhood associations and other cultural and sports associations** | Commitment to increasing the social and cultural participation of the foreign population.<br><br>Commitment to improving coexistence. | Low, they could potentially arrive, but the reality is that the foreign population does not attend or is associated. |
| **Immigrants** | Commitment to the social integration of the foreign population. | The degree of associationism is low; the associations do have the capacity to mobilize but partially and only their members. |
| **Media** | Commitment to the visibility of migration, in general. | No, their action is only considered for informational purposes. |

The local partners:

The local partner is the Department of Citizenship and Social Rights of the Government of Aragon, represented by the General Directorate for Development Cooperation and Immigration. Its main function has been to collaborate in facilitating some contacts for the sample of stakeholders; its commitment has focused on the dissemination of the communications of the research objectives of the two case studies developed in Aragón.

# The activities

Two types of activities have been carried out: Focus Group y Mobility mapping:

Table 3. TCNs and total participants involved in the action research, Aragón, Spain

| Technique | Alto Gállego (total participants) | Los Monegros (total participants) | Total TCNs (total participants) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1) In deep-intervierws | 2 (9) | 1 (8) | 3 (17) |
| 2) Focus Groups | 15 (37) | 9 (18) | 24 (55) |
| 3) Mobility Mapping | 16 (49) | 15 (70) | 31 (113) |
| Total | 31 (95) | 33 (99) | 58 (185) |

## Focus Groups

**10 Focus Groups** have been held in the two comarcas (6 in Alto Gállego and 4 in Los Monegros); 5 of them were made up of stakeholders, and other 5 of TCNs. The people involved were 22 nationals and 15 TCNs in Alto Gállego, and 9 nationals and 9 TCNs in Los Monegros. Considering the 55 people involved in the Focus Groups, 24 were TCNs (Table 3). One Focus Group was with mix participants (stakeholders and immigrants), in order to compare many aspects, particularly those related to the assessment of the opportunities and difficulties of living in the comarcas. The number of 10 Focus Groups and their profile is justified by having reached theoretical saturation regarding the proposed analysis topics.

**Composition of the Focus Groups** (Table 4): a principle of homogeneity has been followed. The intention has been to avoid stratification in the dynamics of groups,

conditioning the participation of those people -immigrants- located on the lowest scale in relation to the decision-making of the municipality.

In this way, the group formed by stakeholders, shows two common characteristics; on the one hand, the global knowledge of community life; on the other hand, having acquired the public commitment to make decisions about actions that affect the community, individually and collectively. In this group, the presence of people linked to areas related to the demographic revitalization of the counties has also prevailed, such as those responsible for education and training aimed at the social and labor insertion of the population in general, and of immigrants in particular.

The second type of Focus Groups is made up of TCNs. Most of them have been contacted through adult training schools, which has positive aspects, such as the fact that they are people who are interested in their social and labor insertion -both dimensions contribute to the settlement and revitalization of the comarcas-. Another positive aspect is that all the members knew each other beforehand, which has facilitated a more uninhibited participation. The negative aspect is that there is a risk that they express evaluations more oriented to please and few proposals.

It should be noted that the majority of immigrants who have agreed to participate are women, which may indicate a greater involvement in improving living conditions; however, it can also be explained because they have less work activity and more free time.

Finally, in the comarca of Alto Gállego, we introduced a mixed group of foreigners and natives, all of them students of the School for Adults, so they have a common profile in relation to the training and employment situation. The objective has also been to collect the opinion of the local population, which is why they have also participated in some Focus Groups.

**The size** of the Groups has ranged between 4 and 9 members (Table 4): we have paid special attention to the volume of participants in those Groups made up of Moroccan women -in both counties-, due to their greater difficulty of inclusion and social participation. Most of

these women come from rural areas in Marocco and they have a very low level of socialization in public activities.

**The timing** of the Focus Groups has oscillated between 1 and 2.5 hours (Table 4). Those that lasted the longest were those carried out with stakeholders, since they generally participated during their working hours. However, the Focus Groups with TCNs have been carried out mostly in the late afternoon, after the working day, having limited their time available. On the other hand, the difficulty of displacement has also conditioned them to be more extensive.

**Table 4. Composition, timing and main thematics of the Focus Groups:**

| FOCUS GROUPS | PARTICIPANTS | TIMING | Main thematics: |
|---|---|---|---|
| Focus Group 1: Alto Gállego. Stakeholders | 8 participants (Mainly natives) | 2h 33' | *Topic 1: Living in the region: problems and opportunities* <br><br> • Panoramic assessment of the demographic and migratory reality: why people don't come or do people leave? Where do they live - large/small towns, remote or not..., and with what endowments and services-? General population and, more specifically, TCNs |
| Focus Group 2: Alto Gállego. Stakeholders | 4 participants (Natives) | 1h 39' | • Assessment of employment opportunities (stability and development). Types of work that can be developed (qualified vs. unqualified). Are there job opportunities for the development of qualified work? Why do TCNs not opt for qualified employment? |
| Focus Group 3: Alto Gállego. TCNs | 4 participants (TCNs) | 1h 50' | • Assessment of opportunities for study and training in the region |
| Focus Group 4: Alto Gállego. TCNs | 5 participants (TCNs, Marocco) | 57' 43" | • Valuation of services (education, health, shopping, leisure, transport -infrastructures and public transport- infrastructures, Internet). And territorialize: where are they? <br> • Assessment of access to housing (where, how, access problems)? |
| Focus Group 5: Alto Gállego. TCNs | 5 participants (TCNs, Marocco) | 1h 36' | • Assessment of leisure opportunities <br> • Assessment of business opportunities <br> • Assessment of safety and well-being |
| Focus Group 6: Alto Gállego. Mixed | 9 participants (6 natives and 3 TCNs) <br><br> Students of certificate for professional training in sociocultural mediation (N-2) | 1h 08' | *Topic 2: Demographic, economic and sociocultural revitalization: the contribution of the TCNs* <br><br> • **Demographic revitalization:** <br> o Perception of the increase in the young population and their permanence in the area; the needs for their definitive settlement <br> o Number of children, fertility, family reunification, return, whether or not they live in towns... what do they do there, ways of life, etc. |
|  |  |  | • **Economic revitalization**: <br> o Perception about the contribution of immigrants to the economy of the area: labor market, condition of consumers... |
| Focus Group 1: Los Monegros. Stakeholders | 5 participants (Natives) | 1h 25' | o Investments in the area and/or sending remittances |
| Focus Group 2: Los Monegros. Stakeholders | 4 participants (Natives) | 2h 02' | • **Socio-cultural revitalization:** <br> o Assessment of feeling of belonging/identity |
| Focus Group 3: Los Monegros. TCNs | 6 participants (TCNs) | 1h 30' | o Management of diversity (age -intergenerational-, between groups, by ethnicity, gender, training, etc.): what kind of relationships are produced? |

| Focus Group 4: Los Monegros. TCNs | 3 participants (TCNs, Marocco) | 1h 23' | ○ Have there been significant cultural changes? Food products, gastronomy, clothing, lifestyles, religion |
|---|---|---|---|

*Topic 3: Proposals for action: what, how, where and by whom*

| Areas of action | Proposal: What to do? | ¿Where? (council /comarca) | Who would have to act / collaborate? |
|---|---|---|---|
| Work Activity | | | |
| Training | | | |
| Transport and comunications | | | |
| Basic Services | | | |
| Housing | | | |
| Leisure | | | |
| Welfare | | | |
| Coexistence | | | |
| Other | | | |

## Mobility Mapping

During the Participatory Action Research -PAR-, the Mobility mapping technique has been used, which has allowed research on the spatial dimension of everyday life and the meanings attached to places (Kordel et al. 2018). This technique becomes more important in rural and mountain areas, due to the fact that throughout the investigation the difficulties of access to services and resources have been highlighted, and the importance that mobility has in the interior articulation of the territory and in the connection between rural and urban areas. Later it will be explained that for the application of this tool, the original technique has been modified, adapting to the situation and needs of our project.

In the Alto Gállego comarca, the **distribution and collection of templates** has been carried out through the schools. In the largest municipalities (for example, Biescas and Sallent) the AMPAS (Associations of fathers and mothers, in schools) have collaborated, and in the smaller municipalities and little towns (for example, Caldearenas and Aineto), the directors of the schools have been contacted, since contact with parents is daily and direct.

Template with the main aspects collected in the Mobility mapping:

**PLACE, DATE:**

Sex:                                              Age:

Marital status:                                With children? How many?:

Town of current residence:                          Previous/previous place(s) of residence:

Country of Birth:                              Living previously in city or town:

Years living in Spain:                          Total years living outside your country:

Training level:                                Do you work, in what?:

| Ranking of importance | Displacement, where? (Indicate the place/s) | For what? (Motivation) | How many times? (Frequency) (Per day / week / month, etc.)? | How long does it take? (Duration) | How do you get around? (On foot, by car, by bus, by bicycle, etc.)? | Are you going alone or accompanied? For whom? | Assessment of accessibility (ease of getting there): very good, good, fair or poor | a) What does this place suggest to you? b) Valuation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | |

In Los Monegros comarca, the **distribution of templates** for the development of this technique has been carried out only through the director of the Sariñena Infant School - capital of the comarca-, given that the 26 classrooms currently open in the different towns depend on her.

In the two comarcas, a total of **113 templates have been collected** (49 in Alto Gállego and 70 in Los Monegros) (Table 3). Of the 113 templates, 33.6% were completed by TCNs, while slightly less than half were completed by foreigners (also from outside the EU). Of the 49 in Alto Gallego, they have been with the population that resides in the towns of Sabiñanigo (9), Biescas (16), Sallent (12), Caldearenas (5), Escuer (3), Yebra de Basa (3) and Aineto (1). In Los Monegros there have been 70, distributed throughout the comarca; there

are Children Schools in 16 of the 31 municipalities, but people from many -and other- municipalities attend them. Both the distribution and the collection of templates have covered most of the territory and a high degree of saturation is verified in the responses, particularly those that include aspects related to place, reasons and mode of travel.

About half of all Mobility mapping has been done in person (face to face), and the other half has been distributed through **email contacts**.

The total **duration** of the whole procedure has been around a month, including the contact with the liaison persons, the subsequent sending of e-mails with the information, distribution, and finally collecting and analyzing it.

About the **main themes**, previous and personal data of the participants have been collected with the aim of analyzing mobility depending on variables such as sex, age, marital status, number of children, years of settlement in the area, their level of training and work activity. Other interesting variables have also been included for the study, as the ranking and order of importance of the displacements, place/s and reasons of travel/s, frequency and duration, durations of activities done, mode of travel, or if it was alone or with other people - accompanied-, assessment of accessibility and assessment of the place. The templates had 12 rows, although an average of 6-8 rows have been completed (corresponding to 6-8 types of habitual movements) in most of them.

## Tools and Approach

### The Focus Groups:

As it was previously mentioned, no substantial modification of the tool has been introduced in the description of the activity. The main **preparation difficulties** have been the common ones, related to the selection of the participants and contacting them, obtaining an affirmative answer and adjusting the calendar to be able to develop the groups.

The **atmosphere** has always been cordial. After the introduction of the topic by the moderator, the participants self-introduced. Then, after a first round of interventions on the proposed theme, the interventions have followed one another naturally and with high participation.

The only **difficulty** that has arisen has been with the participation of some women, such as Moroccans, due to their low level of Spanish. This aspect made that other classmates -also Moroccans- or the teacher from the School for Adults, had to translate what she wanted to say. It was decided to do a Focus Group with only Moroccan women, because it was found that they spoke more freely among women, and not in the presence of men.

The spaces used have been mostly classrooms and work spaces that have facilitated a well-ordered layout in rows or distributed in a circle, which has avoided the formation of huddles or comments parallel to the main dynamic.

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The Mobility Mapping:

The original method / tool has been modified from the original, mainly due to the health measures imposed by the pandemic. This situation, and the limitation of working with large groups of people, have affected the preparation and development of the activity. Another option would have been to repeat numerous calls with a smaller number of people, but this would have required more travel and more time.

The main **modifications of the method** have been in relation to the **preparation ot the activity:**

- **The incorporation of linkpersons**: Key actors at the local level have been involved, who had already been contacted – or even interviewed – throughout WP5. These people have facilitated telephone contact with AMPA -Associations of Mothers and Fathers of Students-, presidents and directors of schools and/or nursery schools.
- **Sending email to link-people with information** about the MATILDE project and the Mobility mapping activity. These people received the template and an explanatory document so that they could print them and distribute them among the participants.

- **Collection of the templates**: they have been collected both physically and in digital format after scanning by the link-people.

**Used materials:**

Instead of giving the participants a blank card, a template showed above has been created. This template consists of a header with general information and a table with twelve initial rows, with the possibility of adding more. In the first row of boxes, variables considered interesting for the study were incorporated: order of importance and ranking of each type of displacement, place where the displacement is made, reasons, frequency, duration of the trip, duration of the activity carried out, way and mode of travel, if it was done alone or accompanied, and assessment of accessibility and assessment of the place.

Main **difficulties found** in carrying out the Mobility mapping: the link-persons have been key in the development of the activity, but the method has not been exempt from small bureaucratic difficulties that have delayed the process longer than expected. In particular, this has happened in the Los Monegros comarca, where the management of nursery schools is more centralized. There, the director of the Adults Schools needed an administrative authorization from the different mayors of the municipalities to be able to distribute the templates among the teachers of the children's classrooms, and later among the parents of the students so that they could complete them. The conclusion is that the implementation of methods that involve the participation of educational institutions has required greater control, and this has consumed more time.

The **main disadvantages** of the adapted method:

1. The need for link-persons to send the templates to the people who live in the different settlements / towns.

2. More tedious for the people involved. It is not the same doing an activity as if were a game, instead of filling in a blank template with many boxes.

3. More treatment work and analysis of the results obtained.

4. Greater risk of bias in the information collected. In this case, the activity has been carried out only through schools, so the responses came mainly from parents of students. To reach other population profiles, the sample of participants in the Mobility mapping could be completed by contacting other link-people, such as social workers, companies, neighborhood associations, etc.

The **main advantages** of the adapted method:

1. Greater amount of information collected: both in terms of travel and other variables that may be interesting, to detect differences in travel patterns, according to sex, age, educational level…

2. Ease of execution: once the link-persons were contacted, it was only necessary to send the templates, to send them later to the participating persons. A network structure was developed, and working properly.

3. Ease of reaching more people and more places (small towns) at a lower cost and without depending on the weather or orography of the terrain, which are complicated factors in remote and mountain areas.

# Main outputs of the participatory action-research process

The main outputs of the participatory action research are related to the following topics.

## Living in the comarca: problems and opportunities

The stakeholders maintain a general view that the **settlement in these rural areas** of very small population centers is determined by two main factors: the possibility of **having a job and having a family**. If one of these links does not exist, it is difficult for the foreign

population to settle in the municipalities of these comarcas. The third reason is linked to **housing**, due to its high cost and the difficulty of finding it; either it is scarce, or immigrants declare **xenophobic attitudes** when they try to access it to buy or rent. Therefore, even when you do not have a stable job or family, you can determine to settle in the area if housing is affordable.

The **availability of employment and services** in the most inaccessible rural areas is a problem; Living in these areas implies **a lot of daily mobility** and it is mandatory to have a driver's license and own car, which is often an impediment for the foreign population. That is why it is preferred to live in municipalities with more populations, where there are more jobs, services and social activities.

The TCNs are considered generally well accepted and with personal interaction with natives and other foreigners. However, **the Moroccan group** in both regions declares that they have less interrelation with the Spanish, because **they feel rejection at work and in society**, due to their religion, their ways of life and their culture.

It seems difficult to improve contact and communication between both groups (for example, Moroccan with the natives). However, these immigrants are optimistic about their children, already among the second generation, when they will grow up.

Regarding **entrepreneurship opportunities** or developing one's own business, it is not a common option, and the stakeholders consider that it is a cultural issue. However, immigrants from Eastern European countries (Bulgarians and Romanians) tend to be more entrepreneurial and develop businesses to offer services.

In general, there is a strong **labor stratification** among the TCNs. The immigrants with the most difficulties of insertion and job continuity are the Moroccans, and particularly the women. However, European TCNs and those from Latin American countries access **employment** and better forms of inclusion more easily, despite being the least qualified workers -many work in agriculture, cleaning and care services-.

Among the assessments of **life conditions in the comarcas, safety and well-being** stand out. In particular, families with children state that they can educate themselves with

greater peace of mind. On the contrary, and compared to the native population, the TCNs mainly highlight the lack of opportunities for training and access to qualified work. The mismatch that exists between the level of training and the level of qualification required by job offers is also highlighted, since there is an excess of qualification on the part of the native population, which influences the fact that they reject less qualified positions. and decide to leave the rural areas of both comarcas. The **lack of services and leisure opportunities** determines the abandonment of rural areas, since the younger population is educated outside but then cannot return to reside in the area due to lack of qualified employment.

## Demographic, economic and sociocultural revitalization: the contribution of the TCNs

In relation to population variations and the **demographic contribution of the TCNs**, there are different perspectives, depending on the comarca. In Los Monegros, the stakeholders consider that no more immigrant population is arriving, but the residing immigrants are consolidated population after two or three decades. Neither do they leave, nor do new ones come.

However, in the comarca of Alto Gállego, the loss of stable population in the smaller settlements is worrying.

The main difference in the demographic contribution of the foreign population between the two comarcas -its stability or increase- is conditioned by the origin of the TCNs. For example, the **Latin American population tends to work more in services**, so it is more concentrated in urban areas, or in rural areas with tourism development, such as in the Alto Gállego. In contrast, almost all job offers in Los Monegros are in the primary sector, and mostly, low-skilled jobs. For all these reasons, the settlement that allows a demographic revitalization is conditioned by the labor supply and by being able to find affordable housing.

On the other hand, **the contribution of the TCNs to the demographic revitalization is unequal** depending on the origin. For example, settlement is easier for the population from Latin America since they generally reunite families, despite being a slow process.

In relation to the **number of children**, it is specified that although they have more children than the average (1 or 2 children), although the number has also been reduced, with a common maximum of 3 children, particularly if they were born already in Spain.

There is a common perception about that these children -**second generation**- will contribute more to revitalization in the future, because in general, many parents - current immigrants - contemplate the possibility of returning to their country of origin.

In conclusion, the lack of work and services, and therefore the need to have a car to move to larger towns in their daily life, together with the **difficulty of accessing housing**, are the main limitations for the settlement of the foreign population and for the demographic revitalization of the territory.

Regarding the young generations, their definitive settlement is related to the possibility of **academic and professional training**. Although the number of children of immigrants who finish their compulsory secondary education (16 years) has increased, very few study at the baccalaureate (oriented towards higher studies). The safest option for access to the more qualified labor market is to study vocational training, but immigrants may have several limitations. From the point of view of supply, it is very scarce in both comarcas. For this reason, young people have to leave their comarca to be able to study the intermediate degrees of professional training, although many do not manage to make that leap; this is partly due to the scarcity of economic resources and partly they also recognize that it is a cultural issue.

All of this leads to the problem of the early school leaving, which is the conditioning factor for the subsequent stratification in the labor market. Therefore, there is a risk of reproducing labor integration patterns similar to those of their parents, despite the fact that these young people did not initiate the migration project themselves. However, the

stakeholders participating in the action research maintain that if they would receive this training, it would benefit both the young immigrants and the business in the area.

Regarding **economic revitalization** and the contribution of immigrants, there is a general and coincident perception among all the participants in the action research. The **importance of their activity in the agricultural and food sector, in services and care**, is highlighted. However, their contribution as consumers depends on whether they have been residing in the area for more years, or they are newcomers or seasonal workers.

As in many migration process, once family reunification has taken place, the **consumption** of non-perishable goods increases (greater investment in buying a house, refurbishing it, and buying a car) as well as other tangible and intangible products aimed at recreation cultural origin (demand for food, training in their own language, teaching and religious practice, etc.).

In general, in relation to the economic revitalization generated by the entrepreneurial TCNs, it is considered very scarce, due to the **low rate of companies and businesses** that they own. This is mainly due to the bureaucratic procedures that exist. There is a certain negative and pessimistic view of economic revitalization by the participants in the Focus Groups, because they consider that their contribution is scant compared to what they demand.

**Sociocultural revitalization** is perhaps the most difficult aspect to interpret and measure, because it requires positive interaction and interrelation. In the younger generations, a natural interrelationship between different sexes and cultural origins is observed. However, when adolescence comes, there is an intensification of relationships between women of the same origin, particularly among immigrants from Senegal and Morocco, which can be seen very well in Los Monegros as it has the majority of TCNs coming from these countries.

**Immigrants from Morocco and Senegal** present a greater **cultural difference** in terms of interpersonal relationships. However, small changes are observed, for example, in relation to the roles played by parents at school: initially, it was the parents who attended

the school follow-up of their children, but after some time, there is more and more participation of mothers. On the contrary, in other aspects such as economics, Moroccan women have not changed their role within the family and do not usually appear in the bank accounts of their husbands; also, as it was mentioned before, they prefer to remain in the care of the children, without developing any work activity.

The normalized relationship between different groups -foreigners with natives- remains difficult and **language and clothing are important barriers to inclusion**. It is demonstrated that when there have been significant cultural changes, for example in relation to clothing, the degree of acceptance by the native population is greater.

In any case, the informants believe that coexistence and knowledge of 'the other' improve relationships and acceptance of **cultural differences**. However, there is a risk that the younger generations "inherit" attitudes of rejection, do not socialize, and feel a certain rejection as their parents now feel, and do not take advantage of the differences as an engine of social and cultural revitalization. Regarding the sociocultural contribution of the TCNs, some participating stakeholders see a clear social **contribution to society**, although many others do not see it as evident at a social or cultural level.

But not only the cultural differences generate reactions of rejection, but also, sometimes, the economic situation of the TCNs. In general, we can be affirmed that some native population considers that they receive more than they contribute -both economic contributions through aid from social services and programs and actions aimed at their integration-. In relation to the small population that thinks that, even the cultural diversity is not considered as a contribution, but rather as the origin of new needs. In fact, the very response from these social actors implicitly includes the idea that diversity must be managed as a possible source of problems. It would be interesting to reflect on the evolution of diversity without the direct intervention of TCNs.

It is generally stated that social and cultural revitalization can come from the **younger generations**, in the future. For this reason, it is recognized that the **educational field** is committed to this management of diversity, with the main focus on reducing the differences

between the different ethnic groups in order to avoid stratification in relationships, and even the ghettoization of some ethnic groups or nationalities. The stakeholders believe that in the future, there will be a normalized and equal relationship between the different groups, although clear differences are now observed in the acceptance process depending on the country of origin.

Another important aspect of action is the management of the **difference between the sexes in some groups of immigrants**. The objective is to improve the interrelation of women with their environment, particularly among Moroccan women, fostering their contribution to socioeconomic inclusion. However, their level of participation in activities is very limited. On the contrary, the TCNs that have a greater degree of participation -in addition to intra-group sociocultural activity- are those from Eastern European countries and also from Latin American countries.

The **positive perception of cultural changes** comes from the gastronomic contribution, and to a lesser extent from the distribution of food products from other latitudes, such as food or fruit. However, other types of celebrations linked to the religious affiliation of the TCNs or the differences in dress and customs, are not considered as positive cultural contributions, but rather as a loss of original identity of the native population in both comarcas; in particular, this is in relation to the lifestyle imposed by religious affiliation to Islam. Spanish society has experienced a rapid social secularization, a decrease in people who declare themselves believers and a privatization of religion among practitioners; all these aspects collide with the expansion and public visibility of other religions. This clash is perceived by both natives and immigrants, and causes a certain isolation and reduction of relationships in people with a similar lifestyle and clothing.

It is necessary to delve deeper into this topic, since although these behaviors are detected in many areas, they are not generalized in both comarcas. On the contrary, there has also been evidence of an interesting cultural exchange.

To conclude, it should be noted that cultural revitalization has been partially hampered by the pandemic health situation, which has limited physical exchange and social life in the towns.

# Examples of innovative solutions

The proposals and solutions revolve around the following fields:

**To reduce bureaucratic procedures:**

- Both for individual actions (renewal of work and residence permits, family reunification, direct aid procedures, other procedures with the administration, etc.), and for institutional ones (processing grants for immigration management).
- Training and assistance in managing the digital administration, for all the people affected by technological changes (especially immigrants and the elderly). The help could be organized as an itinerant service that reached all the localities of the comarcas.
- Simplify the administrative procedure for business development at the local level.
- Streamline the processes for homologation of professional titles and skills, and, when necessary, facilitate complementary training -required for homologation- through study scholarships.

**Professional training:**

- Develop professional (job) training in rural areas, with a diversity of studies adapted to the demands of the main sectors of economic activity by comarca.
- Rotation of these studies every few years. In a complementary way, improve communications between the capitals of comarca and provincial, with the towns. In short, densify transport networks so that studies / qualification can be complemented and they do not have to be located where there is more demand (in the cities).

**Further training:**

- Offer of comarcal and/or municipal employment/training workshops, with advice and financing from the INAEM (Aragonese Employment Institute) to incorporate foreigners into jobs that are in demand.

**Living place:**

- Offer -for rent- of social housing by the City Councils, with the only requirement of having a job in the comarca (without discrimination of access for not being a national or for the registration in the municipality (in the *Padrón*) during more or less time). To do this, it would be necessary to grant powers and economic resources to the City Councils.

- Create a census of homes in need of rehabilitation, and offer aid from the town hall whenever they are intended to be used for rent.

**Mobility:**

- Creation of transport lines for studies and/or training that allows maintaining the settlement in the area.

- Integration of school routes. In order to improve the public transport system, the bus users could get on the buses that make the school routes, at the times that the children go to the school / institute. In this way, there would be enough towns that would have a line - round trip- between many small villages and during the school period, from Monday to Friday. This initiative has already been carried out.

**Participation and interaction:**

- In order to improve communication between the local population and migrants, the figure of a 'sociocultural mediator' is proposed in educational institutes. In addition, also to maintain and/or recover the Spanish teaching, as spaces not only for language training but also for cultural exchange.

- Intensify active and effective collaboration between the different social agents (Municipalities and Comarcas, Adult Schools, Institutes, Social Services, Neighborhood

Associations), so that they periodically review and reformulate proposals aimed at the participation and interaction of the population as a whole.

- Promote joint participation through gastronomic activities and exhibition of music and folklore of the different cultural groups.

- Promote free fees for associations and other activities of a social and cultural nature.

- Creation of a book-guide-map for immigrants, with places and telephone numbers of interest, and with information on:

  -Medical services: how is the procedure when one gets sick, what to do…,

  -Education: schooling age, stages of education, training possibilities for adult school, compulsory education (Secondary school + Bachiller, job training),

  - Administration: paperwork on registration, housing, etc.

  -Immigration: where to apply for work/residence permits, procedures…),

  -Shopping and culture, etc.

**Sensitization:**

- Organize radio programs at the comarca/provincial level where immigrants residing in the area are interviewed, to find out about their experience, current situation, problems, etc. It could be considered as a kind of "new settlers" program.

# Conclusion

This report presents the activities carried out in the research action phase, developed in the context of WP5: Case studies, in the comarcas of Alto Gállego and Los Monegros, in Aragón. The thematic of this case study is to analyze and evaluate the role of the TCNs and foreign immigrants in the sociodemographic and economic revitalization in the two chosen comarcas.

Initially, the activities developed have been described, basically, conducting in-depth interviews, Focus Groups and the Mobility mapping technique. With the use of these **techniques**, the participation of various stakeholders and immigrants residing in the selected areas has been encouraged. All of them have contributed with their points of view on the problems and difficulties of people residing in these areas, and the possible solutions or practices that could be developed to favor the arrival and settlement of the population - natives and foreigners - to these territories. Many results are different, depending on the comarca and the type of territory analysed, but it can be generalized with some common aspects.

The main conclusions from the **methodological point of view** confirm the usefulness of research tools that include all actors (stakeholders and immigrants). In addition, key aspects for revitalization are exposed, such as facilitating access to training, housing, improving communications and the development of activities that help break down barriers between the inhabitants of these areas. In particular, the development of the Mobility mapping has been a useful tool to find out the patterns of spatial mobility of the population -natives and immigrants- in territories with low demographic density and with few services, where distances and communications are not favorable elements for the settlement of population.

The main **problems and difficulties** encountered have to do with the knowledge of the Spanish language as a basic tool to find a job, which is the main element of inclusion in the host society. There is also a clear polarization in terms of **employment**, since foreigners mostly occupy the jobs with low qualification, the lowest paid and the most physically demanding jobs. For all these reasons, they are the people who, in general, are in a situation of greater economic, but also social, vulnerability.

In rural areas, housing is another prominent problem, as there is often little, it is expensive and it is in poor condition; housing rentals in tourist areas are focused on tourists, making it inaccessible for immigrants and the population with lower salaries.

**Socially**, the inclusion processes are not a big problem, although it varies according to the countries of origin of the immigrants. Latin American immigrants and the population of Eastern European countries do not usually highlight serious problems of inclusion or friction at the local level, but they do among the population of African origin, and in particular from Morocco. By gender, women present situations of greater vulnerability compared to men, since they work and participate less in social life; in particular, that situation should change with regard to Moroccan women.

From a **territorial point of view**, they are comarcas, as in many other parts of Aragón, where emigration and depopulation have had visible consequences: there are many villages and abandoned areas, where the lack of employment opportunities and social life make it difficult the settlement of new population, both for natives and foreigners. For this reason, the majority of immigrants are located, even on a regional scale, in the main villages/towns, where job, leisure, and socio-health opportunities are greater. In addition, the general lack of services in rural areas makes it necessary to have a private car, and immigrants -and especially if they are women- lack one.

In general, there is a great ignorance towards the different groups of immigrants, which varies according to their origin. Society reproduces many **stereotypes and prejudices**, sometimes without foundation or reason. To favor this "approach" and knowledge of 'the other', approximation measures would be necessary, in order to make the different groups visible, also building bridges of contact. More policies are needed to fight against racism and xenophobia, and although they already exist, these aspects could be worked on more at the local/comarca level.

With this analysis, some good practices that are being developed have been verified to solve some of the situations that could improve. Not all problems can be solved at the local level, but the municipalities and comarcas favor proximity and close contact between the powers/administrations and the person (immigrants and natives). Therefore, it is essential to develop skills at this local level.

# Sweden: Dalarna

**Authors:** Tina Mathisen and Ulf Hansson

## Summary

This report focuses on the action research in the case of Dalarna (the MATILDE local region in Sweden). The action research process was conducted in collaboration with local stakeholders in the two municipalities Hedemora and Vansbro focusing on employment (Hedemora) and language learning and diversity in communication (Vansbro). The action research revolved around a business fair and workshops and a day focusing on communication practices and language including workshops. Unfortunately, due to Covid 19, the activity in Hedemora had to be moved online. The target groups differed between the two municipalities, in Hedemora, the focus was on TCN´s and local employers and in Vansbro on departments within the local municipality as well as other actors such as civil society working with integration related issues. This allowed for the sharing of good practice and increased awareness of the role of language and communicative practices in the integration process. The tools used to gather information during the actions research were focus groups, world cafés and observations. The two events were seen by stakeholders as 'welcomed interventions' that led to further discussions and possible links and interactions with other ongoing activities and events in the respective municipalities. The action research highlighted the importance of collaboration between the municipality, the education institutions and private companies to benefit from each other in order to match students/employees with employers and learn from best practice. It showed that face-to-face interaction is essential in the job matching process since the bureaucratic language used on official web sites, web applications and matching systems, might be obstacles to find and apply for work. TNC's and employers also highlighted that the TNC´s former work

experience, education and interests need to be considered and validated to a higher degree in order to secure a good job match.

# Introduction

In the action research in Dalarna, we continue to pay particular attention to education and labour market participation among TCNs. The purpose of the action research in Hedemora was to spread knowledge about the employers that exist in the municipality and what job opportunities there are in the region and what kind of education and skills are needed to work within these businesses and within the public sector (education and health). The goal was to provide an opportunity for employers and future employees to meet face to face and make contact with each other.  Similarly, in the case of Vansbro – where the other piece of action research took place – the focus was set on the Swedish language and aspects of diversity. A particular emphasis was set on language, communication, and the challenges within this particular field. There was also an emphasis on finding solutions and ways to overcome challenges. The overarching goal was to make people within the municipality further aware of these issues. An additional purpose was to spread knowledge from the MATILDE research project regarding social and economic integration in Dalarna with a focus on inclusion into the labour market. The themes and focus of the action research were based on the interviews and conversations highlighted in the preparatory work for the action research, as described in the deliverable 5.2 report (Matilde, 2021) .

Preparing and setting up the action research. With regards to preparation and setting up the actions research, this started at an early stage, for example in the case of Hedemora already in the beginning of the MATILDE-project in October 2020, when the research team visited Hedemora municipality and the adult education centre and presented the research

project three representatives from the municipal administration, headmasters and teachers. This gave an opportunity to meet in person, establish rapport, and to prepare the municipality representatives for our upcoming research activities.

In the case of *Vansbro*, initial meetings were held in November 2020 with representatives from the municipality, such as the acting principal of the adult education centre. In relation to the action research, this started in August and continued in September 2021 and where the principal at the adult education centre together with the deputy (previous acting principal) about the content and context for the workshop and action research.

During the preparation phase initiating the action research we conducted dialogue interviews (See D52-13-10 briefings on case studies). The action research was characterised by the research team and local partner working together with the stakeholder groups in each of the municipality, identifying issues and seeking out ways in which they could be addressed. The *tools* used here can therefore best be characterized as meetings and focus groups. As highlighted in the preparatory work for the deliverable 5.2 report, a hugely important feature of our action research is that it should be process oriented, involving stakeholders from the very beginning to be able to build a solid foundation in the municipalities. The goal has been that this would lead to a feeling of ownership of the action research activities, interest in participating and ultimately actions that will be of value to the participant even after the MATILDE project is over.

In the case of *Hedemora*, this involved meetings, with the head of the education department, the head of administration at the education department and the principal at the adult education centre. During this meeting different ideas were discussed regarding what sort of action research would be valuable for the municipality. During our next meeting (11.10.21) the idea to arrange a business fair was established. Our collaboration with the adult

education centre made it possible to arrange the fair as a part of the education schedule focusing on labour orientation for the students. This was something that our collaborators in the municipality expressed that they had wanted to arrange for a while, and found that arranging it as action research together with the MATILDE team might give them some valuable insights in how to continue the work in the future.

During our next meetings with the working group (14.10.21, 01.11.21 and 08.11.21), the head of business administration in the municipality also attended. The municipality representatives and the principal of the adult education contributed with their contacts within the local business networks and sent out invitations to the fair. A total of nine companies responded positively to attend.

The fair was set to happen on the 25th of November 2021. The plan was to arrange a half day fair in Hedemora where local businesses would have stands where students from the adult education could walk around and visit the different stands and interact with the company representatives. In addition, we had planned for four parallel workshops with companies who would talk about their experience of how to work with inclusion in the workplace. After the parallel workshops, the company LYKO AB was planned to give a talk, and the day would end with a presentation of the MATILDE-research. The plan was that both students and company representatives could attend the workshops, discussing experiences and learning from "best practice".

Unfortunately, due to the escalating spread of the corona virus in Hedemora during November 2021, some of the companies gave notice that they were no longer able to attend. During another planning meeting the week before the fair was meant to take place, it was decided that it was no longer safe to gather approximately 120 people in one venue, and the event was cancelled.

During our next meeting on the 9th of December 2021, we decided to move the event online and focus on workshops with local employers. A new date was set to the 24th of January. A representative from the recruitment office at the administration of public care and a representative from the municipal preschools were contacted, as well as the CEO of a local carpenter company and a representative from the Swedish employment service. All the contacted parts gave positive response and agreed to present and lead four workshops.

In the case of Vansbro, the meetings took a similar trajectory, albeit with a different focus. During the first two meetings 10th of September and 17th of September meetings, the focus was set on identifying the themes of the action research and what was to be addressed/looked at. There was an overwhelming feeling that the onus was to be on language and language learning and trying to link this to the situation in the workplace. This then led to a second meeting where the integration co-ordinator from a neighbouring municipality took part and where the co-ordinator shared findings from a finished project and a forthcoming project and where the focus was set on intercultural workplaces. The third meeting was also held with an individual from another neighbouring municipality and where the focus was set on sharing experiences on 'Språkombud' on the workplaces and how it is possible to mitigate negative effects on multilingual workplace. These språkombud are employees with the task of supporting colleagues when it comes to language development.

In October, further meetings were held with the principal of the adult learning centre and other actors from the municipality. On the meeting on 21/10/15 and 21/11/01, Region Dalarna together with Högskolan Dalarna to best spread the invites and increase the awareness of the event. The plan here was to advertise and share information within the municipality and neighbouring municipalities, with a particular focus on range of agencies. A poster/programme was also designed. The actions research rah element here also involved

- beyond workshops and presentations – elements of discussions along the lines of a 'world café'.

It was decided that the event should not take place on-line as there was an ease in Covid restrictions, this allowed for it to take place 'on-site' in Vansbro in late November. The venue for the event was the Spegelsalen a room/facility also used for council meetings and an easy place to find, situated in the municipality centre. This is also the venue for the meetings of the meetings of the municipality council. The place is ideally placedin the city-centre and with amble parking amenities. At that stage, invites and information were e-mailed to a range of stakeholders within the municipality and elsewhere and the programme for the day had taken shape.

## Actors involved during the action research

The target groups for the two events differed slightly. In the case of Hedemora, the focus was set on students in adult education and SFI at Hedemora adult education centre who are educating and preparing themselves to enter the local labour market. Local employers who want to make themselves visible to future employees and clarify what is required of those who will work for them. Officials from the municipality who work with issues concerning the labour market, education, migration / integration.

In the case of Vansbro the focus lay elsewhere. Here the emphasis was set on '*awareness*' and '*information*' within the wider municipality particularly amongst departments and actors within the municipality. There was also an attempt to reach out to other actors, such as private employers.

In the case of Hedemora, the working group consisted of: Local partners: Åsa Norman and Nana Heinberg from Region Dalarna, Researcher Tina Mathisen from Uppsala university, Local stakeholders: the principal of the adult education centre in Hedemora, two representatives from the education administration at Hedemora municipality and the head of business administration at Hedemora municipality.

A representative from the recruitment office at the administration of public care in the municipality and a representative from the municipal preschools, as well as the CEO of a local carpenter company and a representative from the Swedish employment service were involved as presenters. In addition, teachers and career advisors at the adult education centre were involved in preparing the students for the online event and they helped during the event by assisting student with their connection to the online platform, and as moderators who had prepared questions to the presenters.

Similarly, in the case of Vansbro the working groups established consisted of the local partner, Region Dalarna, the principal of the adult education centre, the previous principal, Region Dalarna and with input from Högskolan Dalarna. On the day of the event, the speakers involved an integration officer from another municipality in Dalarna, a trainer for Språkombud in a neighbouring municipality and a teacher from within the municipality of Vansbro sharing experiences of the use of tools for language learning. Employees at the adult education centre and the municipality of Vansbro made the last presentation by sharing experiences of working on issues surrounding language and communication.

As highlighted above, the event in Hedemora was an on-line event and approximately 100 students (TCN's) from the adult education centre attended the workshops. The students were enrolled in SFI (Swedish for immigrants), Swedish as second language (first level), the care and nursing program and theoretical studies on upper secondary level. The distribution

of men and woman was approximately even. The majority of the participants have a refugee background and some had come to Sweden through family reunification.

In the case of Vansbro, there was 40 people in attendance from a range of departments within the Vansbro municipality (Schooling, social services and health care), students on the SFI-programme as well as one private employer. There were also attendees from neighbouring municipalities from departments, such as integration units and adult education centres. With regards to gender, there was a slight majority of women.

Local media was invited to the events in Hedemora and Vansbro and there was no attendance 'per se' in the case of Hedemora, while in Vansbro a journalist from the local paper did attend, taking photographs and interviewing the head of the council, the principal as well as Region Dalarna and Högskolan Dalarna. However, no article appeared in the paper, despite repeated attempts to contact the journalist to find out what happened to the feature.

# Description of action research activities and tools in Hedemora and Vansbro

The activity in *Hedemora* was arranged on the 24th of January 2022. It was a half day (13.00 – 16. 15) online seminar with students at the adult education centre as active participants and local employers as presenters. The day started with a welcoming introduction by Åsa Norrman and Nana Heinberg from Region Dalarna who explained Region Dalarnas involvement in the research project MATILDE. Principal at the adult education centre, Mostafa Geha was the master of ceremonies/host who introduced the main speakers and functioned as a moderator during the four workshops. Each workshop lasted for 30 minutes

with 10 minutes brake in-between. Most of the students followed the seminar from home, but the students' classrooms at school were open and teachers were there to assist with computers and accessing the online platform. There were approximately 4-8 students in each of the three classrooms, in addition to 97 participants all together online. Most of the students attended the whole event, while the presenters' attended parts of it. From the researcher's point of view, the atmosphere seemed relaxed and positive, there were no technical or sound disturbances during the workshops. After the presentations the students were given time to ask questions and there was a dialogue between the presenter and the students. Students could either raise their hand and ask questions out loud or write questions in the chat, that was read out loud. There were approximately 3-6 questions from students and teachers in each workshop. Some questions were of a more personal character and was therefore not suited for a large online audience. The presenters advised the students to contact the right instances for further answers regarding these questions. We have not included these questions in the report.

**Workshop 1:**

First speaker was the CEO of the carpenter company Säters snickerifabrik, Malin Hedlund. Hedlund precented the company history, what they produce and their experiences with recruiting and including TCN's in their company. She also spoke about the company's cooperation with the adult education centre and the municipality regarding recruitment of staff, as well as providing work training during education. The company can assist with validating TNC's education from before moving to Sweden through practicing at the company. The CEO's main point during the talk was to encourage the students to focus on their language education. She explained that since the company has employees from six different nationalities it is important that Swedish is the main language that all employees can speak with each other. This, she underscores, was important for security reasons while

operating machines in the factory, but also in relation to social aspects and that everybody should be included in a collegial atmosphere at the workplace. The CEO talked about the kind and level of education needed to be able to be employed in the company.

After the presentation the students were given time to ask questions. Questions that were raised were: do they recruit painters or carpenters at the moment? Do they take in trainees? Is it possible to arrange a study visit?

**Workshop 2:**

Second speaker was Terese Sörbergs, representative from the recruitment office at the administration of public care and for the municipal preschools. Sörbergs explained that the public care sector is the largest employer in the municipality and that they were looking to hire between 300-600 temporary workers before summer. Requirements to become employed is to have a covid-certificate and a driving licence. She informs that it is possible to get a student loan to obtain the driver's licence. Education is important and the administration of public care cooperates with the adult education centre regarding four different educational paths. Sörbergs underscores that it is important that the employees can both read, write and speak proper Swedish in order to communicate satisfactory with the patients, but also to be able to find the right information about the patient in the journal system and to document and write patient journals. She underscored that personal experiences or life-experiences is also important and counted for when applying for jobs, and encouraged the students to talk about experiences with taking care of elderly relatives, children or the like during job interviews. A job interview will include a language test. Sörbergs also went through the public care sectors core values when working with people. She talked about the collaboration with the adult education centre and the development of

a course for recently employed personnel to learn Swedish while working. She also shared the link to the course on the online platform chat.

Questions from the students: What level of qualification in Swedish do we need to have in order to work for you? When can we start applying for summer jobs? Can a temporary job become a permanent job? What educational requirements do you have? Will those who are trainees with you at the moment get a chance at a summer job?

**Workshop 3:**

The head of the municipality's preschool and primary school, Eva Winarve Westerholm orients about the municipal organisation which includes 11 preschools. She explains that the municipality has decided that there should be a majority of trained teachers in the preschools so that approximately 66% should be teachers (demands a university degree) and 34% child carers (high school degree). This is because the preschools have a clear focus on teaching and follows the national curriculum for Swedish preschools. This is why there is a larger demand for preschool teachers than for child carers in the municipality. The adult education centre is now pausing their child carer education as there will be much less children starting preschool next term and the demand for staff is low. However, knowing that many of the students are studying to become child carers, Westerholm underscores that one can start working as a child carer and eventually educate oneself further after having worked in a preschool for a while. It is for example possible to start as a temporary worker and eventually get a permanent position. The minimum demand to work in a preschool, is to show that you have no marks in the police register (obligatory) and you need to know the language to be able to communicate well with children and their guardians.

Questions from the students: What kind of demands do you set on temporary workers? Is there a difference in salary if one is educated as a preschool teacher than if one is a

temporary worker? What is the relation between the municipality preschools and the private preschools?

**Workshop 4:**

Maja Erlbacher represented the Swedish employment service. Her presentation focused on how to navigate the employment service web-page and their digital tools. She explained how also employers can use the employment service as a tool, as they have the possibility to recruit directly from the web-page where they can go through different types of educations and get in contact with suitable employers directly after they graduated from their training. Jobseekers can participate in different courses through the employment service. One can attend the online activities in different languages and without giving notice beforehand. Their aim is to "equip and match" meaning that they provide labor market training and use recruiters to match employers and jobseekers. This type of training is however different from the one given at the adult education center as it does not give high school credits and does hence not give access to higher education on university level. Neither does it give access to a student loan (CSN), however, one does qualify for compensation from the social insurance office.

Questions from the students: I study Swedish, can I register at the Swedish employment service or do I have to wait till I have finished my studies?

Question from teacher: if I have a student who is in the establishment program for the next 24 months ad wants to continue to vocational training, do I need to contact you first or can I make a study plan for this person?

*Presentation from the MATILDE-research project:*

The day was rounded off with a presentation from the MATILDE-research project, *"Social inclusion and the path to education and work in Dalarna"*, presented by Tina Mathisen researcher at Uppsala university.

In the light of ongoing Covid but with a dip in cases, it was decided to host the even on site in *Vansbro*. The date for the event was Wednesday the 30th November, 13.00-16.00. The programme developed (see above) involved four workshops.

The event started with the head of the council (Kommunalråd) inviting everyone and stressed the importance of the event and welcoming everyone. After this introduction, Ulf Hansson from Högskolan Dalarna made a short presentation/overview about the MATILDE-research project. It was felt that it was important to provide a context and background to as to why the event was taking place.

In attendance were some 40 people and the room was set up with clusters of tables and where postcards with information about the Matilde project together with today's programme were distributed. Participants also used the QPR scan on the programme and soma also attempted to do the quiz – however at times there were challenges regarding the use of language.

The atmosphere in the room was rather relaxed and after a few technical challenges with microphones and power points, things were off. Just like in Hedemora participants, were allowed to ask questions and for further interactions. The questions ranged from more focused ones/wanting further information or wanting to hear more examples that are specific. The presenters advised the students to contact the right instances for further answers regarding these questions. We have not included these questions in the report.

Åsa Norrman from region Dalarna together with the previous principal from the adult education centre acted as comperes.

**Workshop 1:**

The first speaker was Birgitta Hägg, integration officer, Avesta municipality, shared her experiences on working on a project that focused on values and was titled 'Vilka är vi' Who are we) and she also referred to an upcoming project in Avesta titled 'Fler på jobbet' (More people at work). The focus here was on how in workplaces and elsewhere and what it means working, for example in a job/workplace where there are people from different backgrounds. What are the challenges? What are the solutions? What about disagreements? The consensus was one that workplaces and societies are changing and there is a need to come to terms with this and find a way forward. The key-message here was one that integration policies is not about one group or the other changes, it is about working out the road ahead together.

**Workshop 2:**

Agnes Godel, språkombudsutbildare in the municipality of Borlänge shared her experiences of working with 'språkombud' ('language representatives') in the workplace. This presentation had created a lot of interest and Agnes provided a contextualisation on what the role of a språkombud involved regarding the role, preparation/training and structure. The role was clearly explained – 'support for colleagues'. Agnes also stressed aspects of awareness and that this was something that involved people within a workplace working together. As the majority of people, attending the questions focuses mainly on the organisational side of things: how does it work? Where is the training carried out? Whom do I speak to obtain further information?

There was also an interval and where the participants were treated to 'a fika' i.e. coffee and cake. This allowed the participants to 'mingle' and exchange ideas and impressions.

**Workshop 3:**

This workshop involved Cissi Nylin, from Vansbro kommun, sharing insights about digital support tools as language support. This was focus on the use of technology and how it help in everyday situations for students an as well as in the working place. Google translate.

**Workshop 4:**

Here Hedyat Momeni, Marie-Louise Olsson and Sherin Ator, all employees within the Vansbro municipality shared their insights and experiences surrounding language and communication.

This was an opportunity for some of the students as well as other employees to share their experiences but also for then m to flag up challenges, they have identified.

After the last workshop there was an opportunity for *round-table discussions* along the lines of *'world café'* approach based on the themes of the workshops above, i.e. 'Who are we', 'Språkombud' and 'Language tools' and where the attendees were free to choose what of the 'tables' they wanted to attend. The organisers also tried to make sure that the groups around each of the tables were 'mixed', i.e. involving actors from a range of departments and sections. At each of the tables were also the presenters from each of the workshops above together with the researcher from Högskolan Dalarna (milled around the tables) who provided each of the table with questions relating to the presentation. This allowed for structured but also free-flowing discussion and where the participants could ask the presenters further questions but also share experiences and impressions of what they had heard during the workshops.

# Outcomes

Here there was a slight difference in approach. As the event in Hedemora was postponed, the event in Vansbro took place as planned on the agreed date.

In the case of *Vansbro*, this involved two stages, and just as in Hedemora, there was a sense that it would be important to hear the voices of the TCN's in this research as well as those of the working group involved.

Starting with Vansbro, a group interview was held with TCN enrolled at Swedish classes at the and their teacher at Adult Learning Centre in Vansbro (4 participants) in the days after the event. The four participants in the focus-group were all Swedish language students at the Learning Centre and consisted of two women and two men. Three were refugees from Syria and the fourth one had arrived in Sweden as an unaccompanied minor from Afghanistan. Of the participants, one was working full-time in a local factory and two at the municipality while also attending Swedish class. They differed with regards to educational and professional background, one participant was a trained electrician in the country of origin. This was followed by interviews with the stakeholders, the participants involved in the organising of the workshop (2 participants).

In the case of *Hedemora*, adjacent to the activity on the 24th of January, we conducted two group interviews, one with the local stakeholders (4 participants, two men and two women) who were involved in the organization of the action research, and one with TNC's from the adult education centre who participated in the online workshops (7 participants). The group of TNC's consisted of 5 women and two men with backgrounds from Somalia, Kenya, Syria, Iran, Palestine and Azerbaijan. One had come to Sweden as an unaccompanied

minor, some as adult refugees and some through family reunification. Their education and work experiences from their former home countries varied from hotel management, blacksmith, pharmacist, nurse and home carer. Some are currently studying at SFI, some are studying to become an assistant nurse and some are studying child care. One of the participants has already finished an education as a CNC operator (operating large machines), but corona has made it difficult to find an adequate job and now he is educating himself in order to become a truck driver instead. Those with long working experiences emphasize that they would have wanted to continue the careers that they had started in their former home countries, but it is difficult to get it validated in Sweden and they are therefore educating themselves within professions that most likely will lead to a job. For example, one of the participants tells us that she has held a permanent position as a nurse for 22 years in her former home country, but in Sweden, she says, *"they only care about grades",* and asks *"why is this so?"*

## Learning Points

The presentation of the main outcomes builds on these focus group interviews and the observations during the activities in both municipalities.

From the focus groups and observations, we can distinguish four main learning points that we consider as *outcomes* from the action research;

- The planning process in itself generates new knowledge and concretises ideas;

- Face-to-face interaction and continuous spread of information is essential;

- Employers can learn from each other regarding "best practice";

- Students (TCN's) seek both variation and specificity with regards to information about education and work opportunities.

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## The planning process:

The local stakeholders in both municipalities particularly underscored the process of planning the business fair and workshops as important for them, as this type of labour orientation and matching is something that is within their mandate to focus on. In the case of *Hedemora*, there had already been discussions about arranging a business fair before the involvement in the MATILDE project. The planning process gave them insights into how they could plan and organize such an event - what is important to think about in terms of timing, what kind of companies to invite, when in the students' educational path (what year) it would be most suitable, and so on. They also emphasised that working with researchers would provide an opportunity to evaluate the activity in order to better understand what the students need in terms of information and knowledge about the local labour market and different educational possibilities.

> *It is connected to the work we do in the school-to-work steering group, where we also collaborate with companies. We have talked about having a business fair. We have not had it yet, but we have plans to arrange it. However, in what format and what structure we have not nailed yet. But this seems to be a suitable arrangement. That's what's exciting now, that it's being researched as well, that we can learn some lessons from this experience.*

The planning process was described as valuable as the stakeholders could see how, what was from the very beginning vague ideas later in the process started to mature and later materialized as the online event. Even during the group interview, the discussion continued regarding how to develop the business fair and workshops further and implement it as a permanent part of the students' labour market orientation.

This was also echoed in the discussions surrounding the event in *Vansbro*, although a different focus and different outlook, the involvement of the MATILDE project provided a 'push' and was a very timely intervention and support in order to increase the awareness of these types of issues within the municipality.

There was also a sense that having a physical event would also add to the importance of the event and would provide an opportunity to meet and to talk to people outside of Teams and Zoom.

There was also a sense that the integration officer from another municipality attended, one of the organisers made the point that this was important to 'learn from other municipalities' and to '*establish what is happening elsewhere*', and that '*what is happening here (Vansbro) is not unique*'.

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## Face-to-face interaction and continuous spread of information

While the general impression from the group interviews is that the participants were satisfied with the outcome of the online event in *Hedemora*, they also underscored that it would have been even better if the activities had been able to happen in real life, where companies and students would have been able to meet face-to-face. The students lifted this

as important as they seldom get the chance to meet potential employers face-to-face as their applications often get rejected before they get to meet anyone at the company. They seek a chance to meet potential employers in person in order to be able to present themselves and give a face to the application.

This was also lifted as important by the group of local stakeholders. In their point of view, particularly the outcome of the workshops was seen as important and something to continue with.

*The direct contact between students and employers - it is something that I strongly believe in -it is really needed. The workshop part was a successful part, business fairs are important, but I think that workshops where there is a dialogue between employers and student is really important (Civil servant, WP5SW04)*

A problem with just arranging a business fair, as the local stakeholders saw it, might be to get the students to actually stop and talk to the company representatives. In some cases they might not feel comfortable asking questions or they might not ask the "right" questions, for example regarding how to qualify for the job. In the workshops on the other hand, companies had already prepared presentations including essential information about these issues and the students had also prepared themselves together with teachers and career advisors and had to some extent prepared questions beforehand. From one of the presenter's point of view, this was also what she saw as positive about the activity being online.

*It was good because when you are at a physical fair, then applicants usually come to you and leave a CV, they do not have time to introduce themselves. You lose this dialogue where one gets to know what this job actually entails... when it was online, it became more... as everyone was listening... the questions were not as many, but they*

*were well thought through. I thought that was good and it became more personal (WP4SW021).*

A negative side was that if the students would ask something personal about why they did not get an answer on their application for example, it would be very difficult to answer and it could leave a negative impression of the employer to the audience.

In the case of *Vansbro*, there was a feeling amongst the stakeholders that the event had been successful and it was possible for them to identify a rage of factors that had helped to make the event to work well. One was particularly interesting and not necessarily the content of the workshops and the event itself. It focused on the attendance of the head of the council of the municipality and the fact that she had stayed on throughout the event, rather than just declare it open and then leaving:

*This was hugely important and for this to be taken seriously…important to have the municipality behind us, supporting us (WP5SW02)*

This was something that stakeholders seemed to return to, the possibility and potential of the workshops to make issues surrounding language, communication and work to reach a wider audience.

As highlighted above, the event in Hedemora took place on-line whereas the event in Vansbro took place 'on-site' and there was a sense that it had been *'successful'* as so many had actually attended the event and as such there was a feeling that there had been a 'buy-in' with regards to attendance and interaction.

With regards to the individual workshop stakeholders agreed that some had worked better than others and stakeholders particularly returned to the concept of *'bathing in Swedish'* and exposing students of Swedish to the Swedish language but also to hear and

find out more about 'språkombud' and the possibility to possible implement such a role within the municipality.

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## Employers learning exchange

In the case of *Hedemora*, another important learning point that came from the action research was that workshops also function as a learning exchange between different companies/employers. One issue that was raised by the representatives from the local stakeholders was that in order to arrange a business fair that is going to be informative for the students and worth the companies while, it is important to give good guidance to the companies. How can the companies present their workplace and what they expect and demand from their employees in an easy and accessible way? Reflecting on this question, the participants in the group discussion realized that they have much knowledge about this internally in the municipality, pointing to the presentation by the representative from the recruitment office at the administration of public care, who work with these questions on a daily basis. She, on the other hand wanted to give praise to the CEO of the company Säters Snickerifabrik, for giving straight and clear examples of why they put a strong emphasis on learning and knowing the Swedish language:

> *She was incredibly... I have a bit to learn about how I can reformulate and actually explain why it is so incredibly important with language... why we have made these demands. To be able to say that the job requires this and legitimize it in a neutral way. She was incredibly professional at that; I was super impressed! (WP4SW021)*

One interesting point to make here is the possibilities that the workshops opened up for regarding knowledge exchange between the private and public sector, who might not

have many common platforms nor the time for such knowledge exchange in other circumstances. While the carpenter company is a relatively small private company, the public care sector is the municipality's largest employer.

In the case of *Vansbro* the 'learning points' highlighted by the students and teacher from the Swedish class, particularly the involvement and role of students.

> *They talked to fast...and it was difficult to keep up*

> *The workshops/roundtables were good...it felt good...but at times it was hard to understand and follow what was going on.*

Amongst the stakeholders the overall impression was a positive one and it was felt that the event and its workshops hade provided the necessary catalyst for further interactions and discussions within the municipality.

### Variation ad specificity regarding information and opportunities

In the case of *Hedemora,* it was possible to identify two possible issue that needs to be taken into further consideration; *variation and specificity with regards to information about work opportunities.* And that the *TNC´s former work experience, education and interests need to be considered and validated to a higher degree in order to secure a good job match.*

In the focus group with TNC´s, students called for a larger variation among the presenters and a larger business fair where they would have the opportunity to meet employers from different sectors of the local labour market. In some ways students felt like they were always encouraged to educate themselves for future work in the care sector, as there is a large demand for workers within this sector. However, not everyone is interested in this line of work and they would like to see what other, not so apparent, options might be available for them. Several of the students emphasized that it is important to recognize what kind of skills, educational background and work experiences TNC´s have obtained in other

countries before moving to Sweden and to see these as resources and try to match them with employers on the basis of this. While there are systems for validation of earlier education and work practice in place in Sweden, these validation processes often take time (van Riemsdijk & Axelsson 2021). There is also a strong political focus on getting migrants self-supported as fast as possible, however, as both TNC's and employers emphasize, without regarding the job seekers educational or work background there is a risk for mismatch.

There seems to be a myriad of possibilities to get advice both from the adult education, the Swedish employment service and from local recruitment offices in the public sector. However, the bureaucracy and the bureaucratic language that is used by these organizations, particularly in online web applications and matching systems, seem to be confusing and somewhat of an obstacle for the participants to find and apply for work. One of the participants for example said the following:

> *I got a possibility to work within the municipality and I came there for the introduction and everything was fine, but after that I did not hear anything from them about work so I don't know what has happened. I have called them several times, but they just say that I need to register myself as available on their website, but I thought I had already done that, and I haven't heard anything so…*

This indicates that also when it comes to information about job opportunities and coaching, face-to-face interaction is important in order to decrease potential misunderstandings and increase the possibilities for smooth application procedures.

Several interviewees also refer to having work experience from Sweden, but only in temporary positions. This is however described as difficult especially by the participants who have small children and need to plan for child-care in order to be able to say yes to the work possibility that is offered.

In the focus group with local stakeholders, it was discussed how business fairs and workshops could be organized to target different education programmes rather than 'one

big fair' covering all programmes. This was seen as a way to get the student's attention. Another idea was to adapt the activity so that part of the event had a more general approach followed by more specialized events when the students have reached further in their education and chosen their specific line of work.

While this was the case in Hedemora, there was a sense in *Vansbro* that the workshops and the event in November had led to a feeling of 'optimism' and where there now a sense of increased possibilities generated by the workshops and event. One example thereof had been a sense that the surrounding environment, i.e., private enterprises and departments within the municipality regarding employment and language. It was also possible for the stakeholders to refer to particular developments based on the win workshop. One was the possibility to create a post at the adult education centre for helping to facilitate placements for SFI-students in workplaces.

> *...we have a person, a project employee, who works towards creating opportunities and conditions for our SFI students to be "language bathed" in a workplace but also to gain insight into working life. This is part of the intentions in SFI's course plans, so we are developing it and it feels great. The companies we have had start-up talks with have been very positive.* (WP5SW02)

This also echoes the comments felt by the students in the Swedish class who strongly felt that they wanted further interaction with Swedish speakers as well as Swedish employers and referred to 'language café's' and places where they could interact and speak to Swedish speakers. There was a sense that knowing Swedish and being able to use it was important.

This was also something highlighted by stakeholders, the possibility to create spaces for interaction between Swedish and non-Swedish speakers, such as language-cafés and other events. There was also a sense that there was a role here to play for civil society. This was also something emphasised by stakeholders during the event. Resulting from these discussions there had been a clubs and societies fair in the municipality, organised by

Föreningarnas Hus in Vansbro, with support from the municipality and the adult education centre.

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# Turkey: Karacabey

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## Summary

This report elaborates on the processes of participatory action research held in Karacabey (the MATILDE local region in Turkey), and explains the thematic research, its objectives, the approach applied, the tools used for the research activities as well as the main outcomes of the action research. Participatory action research made it possible for the research team to communicate with a range of local actors and immigrants about their experiences, perceptions, reflections and expectations with regard to local development. The research has verified the negligence of the remote agricultural and rural places in the Turkish context. Agricultural sustainability, depopulation problem and environmental issues caused by the uncontrolled industrialisation are among the problems challenging rural development in Karacabey. However, the strengths rooted in Karacabey's rural places as well as the opportunities offered by immigration to meet labour-shortages and transfer know-how and knowledge to the district are also essential assets to be considered in local development processes.

# Introduction: Case study objectives and specification of thematic research

This report elaborates on the process of participatory action research with a focus on explaining the thematic research, its objectives, the approach applied, and the tools used for the research activities as well as the main outcomes of the action research. As a part of the MATILDE 's general aim at exploring and understanding the impact of immigration on rural and mountain regions, the overall action research held in Karacabey, Bursa (the MATILDE local region for Turkey) has an objective to make a tangible assessment of the effective and potential contribution of immigration to local and regional development.

The main working research question asked during the whole participatory action research activities is as follows: "What are the effects of "refugee-ization" of the labour market on the local communities and social cohesion of immigrants/refugees?". The question of "which factors enable migrants' entry into the labour market?" is an additional question for which we tried to find an answer during the research. In doing so, the action research activities revolved around the main objective to unleash the challenges, needs and opportunities related to the employability of migrants, seasonal workers and refugees in the MATILDE region. To do so, the research initially dealt with the demographic, social, cultural and territorial peculiarities of the local region as well as the coexistence of migrant and native communities.

| Table 1. Work Permits Granted to the Syrians under Temporary Protection | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
| Number of Work Permits | 13.290 | 20.966 | 34.573 | 63.789 | 62.369 |

## Peculiarities of the local area and sampling

Karacabey, the rural MATILDE region, is a district that economically stands out with its agricultural production as well as with other sectors such as trade, industry, transportation and service. However, vast and fertile soils of Karacabey plain offer great opportunities for the agricultural sector to have a great weight in Karacabey's economic landscape. Most of its population is therefore engaged in agricultural production. Besides, animal husbandry is a highly developed sector, popular with breeding and raising Turkey's best race horses. As the agriculture and animal husbandry have an important place in production, the agriculture-based industry has considerably developed and, this makes the district the centre of attraction for investment. Leading factories operating in the food industry are located in the district as well as the import-export industry in the fields of feed, poultry, livestock and dairy products (Ak, 2015). In terms of employment, those working in industry and agriculture sectors mostly work as seasonal workers.

In terms of land use, the province covers an area of 1,088,638 hectares. Bursa's lands are covered with 35% mountains and uplands, 48% plateaus and 17% plains (Bursa, 2019). Compared to 2006, there is a decrease in agricultural land by around 17%, mostly due to a

decrease in soil fertility (Bursa, 2019). Nevertheless, there has been observed an increase in vegetable, fruit and olive fields where higher value-added products are grown (Özkan and Kadagan, 2019). Bursa's proximity to Istanbul makes it an important hub for production of raw agricultural material for the factories located around Karacabey.

In terms of the demographic structure, Karacabey is one of Bursa's 17 municipalities, with a population of 84,666 as of 2021. Karacabey includes 64 villages in its district. Based on their proportion among foreign nationals in Bursa and Karacabey, Syrian migrants under temporary protection as well as Afghans are the particular focus of the case study. Syrians represent a specific subgroup whose population corresponds to more than 5% of Bursa's current population (3.1 million in 2021). The ratio of foreigners to the total population in Karacabey is 3.65 percent (around 3.000). The foreign population figures include the Syrians (2,828 in numbers) under temporary protection (as of July 2021). Agricultural lands of Karacabey are also attracting thousands of seasonal workers, including Syrians, from Turkey's southern parts between April and September (Sönmez, 2017).

The urban-rural linkages have been in focus during the whole action research activities conducted in Karacabey during the summer and autumn of 2021. Considering the spatial distribution and socio-demographic characteristics of immigrants in Karacabey, the main focus of the research was to try to understand the role of migrants in the labour market, especially in agricultural sector, as well as the ways in which natives interact with migrants. To that effect, issues of welcoming, housing, and access to services of migrants were also scrutinized. The current and long-term dynamics of integration also came under the spot.

# Actors involved during the action research

The local level assessment of the impact of immigration in the case study was realized by the participation of our MATILDE local partner (Support to Life, STL) and other local stakeholders, whose active and facilitating role in gathering information from the field and reaching out to local communities and local media was essential. In this sense, a variety of target groups and individuals with different backgrounds was included in the action research activities in order to observe the ways in which native members of the district interacted with the migrants.

We reached a considerable number of stakeholders affiliated with public administrations, international organizations, education/training institutions, trade and/or labour union and small/big private business actors. Individual researchers (e.g. faculty members, project coordinators) and individuals from non-organized groups (i.e. seasonal agricultural migrant workers) were also the actors involved in our research activities. As regards to their working positions, migrant employees, seasonal migrant workers, small-scale migrant entrepreneurs, public administrative officers, and migration experts took part during the action research. In parallel to the spatial distribution and socio-demographic characteristics of immigrants, the profile of local migrant stakeholders includes Syrian, Afghan and Jordanian nationalities. Eventually, 27 immigrants (out of which 9 women, 4 youngsters) involved in our research activities. 3 of the male participants involved in our different activities more than once (for a detailed profile, see Table 2 and Table 3).

# Action-Research Activities: Description, Timing and Main Points

A mixed-methods approach was exploited for data collection and impact assessment as mostly applied in MATILDE project. With an intention to adopt an insider perspective and an aim to include all relevant actors in research and development processes, five set of activities were realized: (1) preparatory activity in form of a field visit to become more familiar with the locality, (2) engagement activity with 15 interviews aiming at collection of qualitative data, (3) quali-quantitative briefing addressing a preliminary analysis and discussion of the main dimension of the case study, (4) focus group meetings involving local stakeholders, (5) informal roundtable meeting as thematic participatory activity.

## Preparatory Activity: Field visit

In order to become more familiar with the locality, first we paid a field visit to Karacabey district on June 15, 2021. The knowledge and contacts we accumulated during the previous research of WP3 and WP4 had a facilitating role in organizing the field visit. Karacabey District Health Directorate and Karacabey Migrant Health Centre (MHC) were the institutions we visited at the first place. This was mainly because healthcare services seem to be the most important field to be socially engaged with migrants in the district where the locals and immigrants do not normally interact to a great extent. The health system in Turkey guarantees primary healthcare services for all foreign residents, including the

undocumented, asylum-seekers and persons under international protection status. Besides, MHCs are additional units to public health centres staffed by immigrant-background health workers, mostly Syrians. The healthcare personnel especially in rural areas play an important role in guiding the immigrants to show the formal, procedural or social ways to follow in their adaptation to the everyday life. Rural areas have their own specific challenges for migrants in terms of having access to proper health and other social services, an impediment that becomes even harder for the seasonal agricultural workers on the move. Health mediators who provide mobile healthcare services to seasonal agricultural workers, with the coordination of Ministry of Health and international umbrella organizations, play an important role to overcome these challenges. Against this background, immigrants particularly rely on the MHCs and mobile health services to meet their primary healthcare needs. More importantly, this makes healthcare personnel be a facilitator in confidence building between immigrants residing and working in the district and any other actors willing to reach out them.
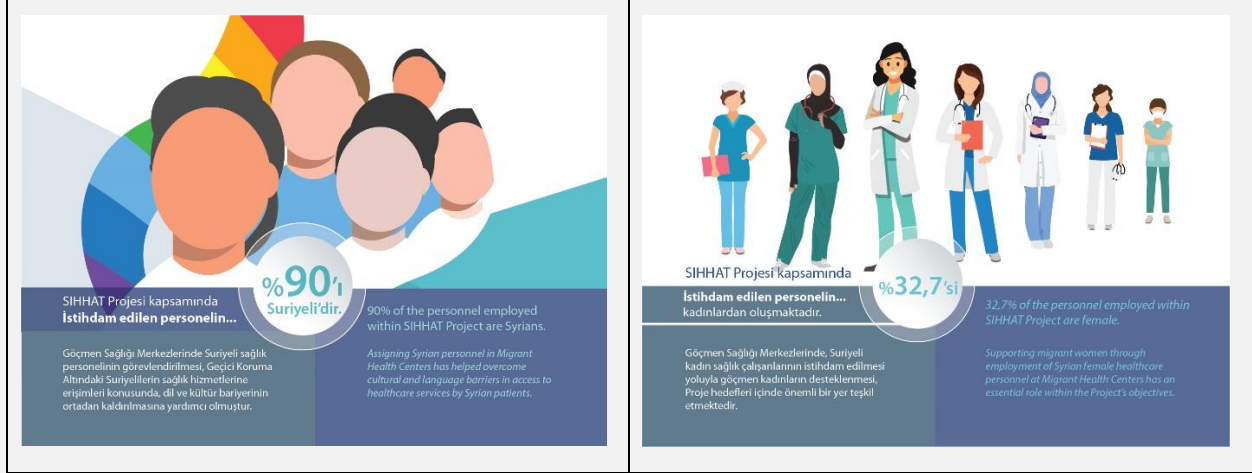
**Figure 1: Some images from the SIHHAT Project, Source: https://eng.sihhatproject.org/**

Having such a background and facilitating role, our contacts from Karacabey District Health Directorate and MHC shared the data about the demographic and socio-economic situation of immigrants during our field visit. Moreover, they accompanied us for a field visit to see immigrants' locations where they live and work, and also initiated the first contact with seasonal agricultural migrant workers and their families. To identify the interaction between local citizens living in rural areas and seasonal agricultural immigrants, mostly Syrians, we visited the tent cities in Karacabey. We had the opportunity to communicate with some groups of migrants, including men, women and children, to find out more about their living conditions. The small groups we met were not only the immigrants working as seasonal agricultural workers, but also the seasonal workers having Turkish-Kurdish origin, who seasonally come from the eastern parts of Turkey for the harvest of the agricultural lands. This helped us identify the vulnerability of seasonal workers, and make a comparison between the two groups in terms of their employability and interactions with the locals.

**Photo: Seasonal Agricultural Migrants' Tents, Karacabey, June 15 and August 4, 2021**

## Engagement at Local Level: Qualitative Interviews

We conducted qualitative interviews in Karacabey and Bursa in the summer of 2021, following the footprints of a participatory action research (Stringer, 2014; Schneider, 2012; McTaggart, 2010; Lewin, 1946). To elaborate on the coexistence of migrant and native communities in Karacabey, depicting the role of central state actors, local municipal actors, civil society actors and migrants themselves, we conducted **15 semi-structured interviews** with migration experts, migrant employees, seasonal migrant workers, small-scale migrant entrepreneurs, employers, and local stakeholders involved in health, employment and education sectors (See Table 2). Three different sets of questions were originally prepared to be asked to the migration experts, migrants and local stakeholders. The research team was composed of the principle investigator, researcher and translator from Arabic to Turkish. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, five of the interviews (mostly the ones conducted at national and regional policy levels) had to be carried out online. After having received the interlocutors' consent, all of the remote interviews were audio-recorded. Afterward, they were transcribed

verbatim and were analysed using thematic analysis. For the remaining face-to-face interviews, the research team took their own personal notes to put them on paper later on.

| ID Study code | Date of Interview | Policy Level | Nationality | Stakeholder type/ Affiliation | Working position |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| WP5TRB001 | June 15, 2021 | Local | Turkish | Public administration | Health worker |
| WP5TR001 | July 1, 2021 | National | Turkish | Research facilities and individual researchers | Faculty Member of the Department of Economics |
| WP5TR002 | July 6, 2021 | National | Turkish | Research facilities and individual researchers | National Project Coordinator |
| WP5TR003 | July 5, 2021 | National | Turkish | International Umbrella Organization | Senior Project Manager |
| WP5TRB002 | July 7, 2021 | Regional | Turkish | Education and training institutions | Courses Department Manager |
| WP5TRB003 | July 28, 2021 | Local | Turkish | Trade and labour unions and organized representative groups | Executive staff |
| WP5TRB004 | August 4, 2021 | Regional | Syrian | Small private business | Owner |
| WP5TRB005 | August 4, 2021 | Regional | Syrian | Small private business | Owner |
| WP5TRB006 | August 4, 2021 | Local | Syrian | Public Administration | Nurse |
| WP5TRB007 | August 4, 2021 | Local | Afghan | Public Administration | Doctor |
| WP5TRB008 | August 4, 2021 | Local | Syrian with Turkish citizenship | Private business | Factory owner |
| WP5TRB009 | August 4, 2021 | Local | Syrian | Non-organized/ other interest groups | Seasonal migrant worker |
| WP5TRB010 | August 4, 2021 | Local | Syrian | Non-organized/ other interest groups | Seasonal migrant worker |
| WP5TRB011 | August 4, 2021 | Local | Syrian | Non-organized/ other interest groups | Seasonal migrant worker |
| WP5TRB012 | August 4, 2021 | Regional | Turkish | Public Administration | Refugee liaison officer |

*Table 2. DATA COLLECTION / PSEUDONIMYZED INTERVIEWEES*

**Table 2 Data collection / pseudonimyzed interviewees**

# Case Study Quali-Quantitative Briefing

Quantitative data collection over primary sources (via direct communication with related local stakeholders) was also a part of our research to deliver our local case-study briefing.

Considering three main clusters (economic, social, and territorial) in which the MATILDE case studies are identified, the impact of international migrants on labour markets in rural-mountain regions was at the centre of our quali-quantitative data collection. In this sense, the available data for our case study mostly refer to the indicators of the economic dimension (share of migrant workers and/or e.g. share of foreign employers) and others (e.g. educational statistics) indicating the labour-market integration. Nevertheless, the lack of data, or unreliable data, is a general problem for Turkey, especially at the local level. The available data may somehow be misleading for a proper analysis on its own. The problem of registration and the high rate of informality in the labour market must be taken into consideration as well, not only for Karacabey district or Bursa region but also for Turkey in general (Akay and Dogan-Yenisey 2021). Our research team tried to overcome this sort of challenge by collecting the local information and figures provided by our interlocutors during the field research and direct correspondence with local stakeholders during the summer of 2021. Accordingly, we submitted our final quali-quantitative briefing in September 2021.

## Focus groups: Migrant Health Workers and Seasonal Agricultural Workers

Focus group discussion is often used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of social, economic and political issues. The method aims to obtain data from a purposely selected group of individuals rather than from a statistically representative sample of a broader population. To that end, we organized **three focus group meetings** in Karacabey. The first focus group meeting was with migrant-origin health personnel working in the MHC on 15 June 2021. There were five participants in the focus groups, 3 doctors and

two nurses with migrant backgrounds. The participants were asked to elaborate on the impediments that migrants, especially Syrians under temporary protection, face in everyday life as well as their own individual perspectives and experiences about life in Karacabey. The meeting was very instrumental for the research team to shape the rest of the action research.

Other two focus groups were conducted with the seasonal migrant agricultural workers, Syrians coming from different regions such as Halep and Afrin. We utilized from our field visit to the tent cities on June 2021 to conduct focus group meetings mainly due to the strict conditions of and the season for the agricultural workers. After the first communications in their places with the help and guidance of healthcare personnel, we asked them to be separated two different groups voluntarily as (1) women and youngsters and (2) men in two different tent areas. The focus group formation in such a way was a necessity because of their working conditions and limited time to allocate a meeting in their working time. Nevertheless, such a meeting in their natural working environment was very helpful to make them raise their views comfortably and this provided a fruitful way to us for the participatory observation. Meanwhile, gender-based simultaneous focus groups made women migrants feel more comfortable to express themselves, considering the cultural and traditional factors.

## Thematic Participatory Activity: Roundtable Meeting

An informal roundtable meeting was organized on October 27, 2021, as a part of the thematic participatory activity in collaboration with the local partner (STL) as well as other local participants from Karacabey. The scale of this activity was local, concentrating on the challenges, opportunities, policy proposals at Karacabey municipal level. The main goal was

to assess the socio-economic impact of immigration on the local area and to explore the role of international immigration for local development. Identifying possible opportunities and strategies with proposals through the exchange of ideas among participants was also at the centre of the activity.

| Table 3. ROUNDTABLE MEETING PARTICIPANTS (PSEUDONIMYZED)* (October 27, 2021, Karacabey/Bursa) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **ID Study Code** | **Nationality** | **Gender** | **Stakeholder type** | **Working position** |
| WP5TRB13 | Afghan | Male | Non-organized/ other interest groups | Health worker |
| WP5TRB14 | Syrian | Male | Non-organized/ other interest groups | Health worker |
| WP5TRB15 | Syrian | Male | Non-organized/ other interest groups | Health worker |
| WP5TRB16 | Jordanian | Male | Non-organized/ other interest groups | Health worker |
| WP5TRB17 | Turkish | Male | NGO | Director |
| WP5TRB18 | Turkish | Male | NGO | Staff |
| WP5TRB19 | Turkish | Male | Trade and labour unions and organized representative groups | Executive staff |
| WP5TRB20 | Turkish | Male | Public administration | Social assistance director |
| WP5TRB21 | Turkish | Male | Public administration | Social service worker |
| WP5TRB22 | Turkish | Female | Organized regional representative groups | Migration policy expert |
| **Participants of MATILDE research team and the local partner** | | | | |
| Ayhan Kaya | Turkish | Male | Research team | Principal investigator |

| Fatma Yılmaz-Elmas | Turkish | Female | Research team | Researcher |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aslı Arslan | Turkish | Female | Local partner, STL | Communication and fundraising manager |
| Gözde Kazaz | Turkish | Female | Local partner, STL | Communications officer |
| Halil Öz | Turkish | Male | Local partner, STL | Moderator |
|  | Turkish-Syrian | Male | Local partner, STL | Translator (Arabic-Turkish) |

Karacabey Chamber of Commerce and Industry played a considerable role in helping the organization of the roundtable meeting. The Chamber provided the meeting hall, and played a facilitating role in attracting other local stakeholders to participate in the event. The roundtable meeting activity aimed at involving the representatives of the wider local community. Based on the restrictions resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic measures, fifteen people (see Table 3) participated in the roundtable meeting. An Arabic-Turkish translator, Syrian origin migrant, was also present during the activity to facilitate the communication with the Arabic-speaking participants. With an interactive activity, we provided an environment for a friendly space of communication to introduce locals and immigrants to each other. After a brief introduction of the basics and aims of the overall project, the roundtable meeting continued with three different interactive sections focusing on problems and opportunities of agricultural production, having access to labour market, and social cohesion and integration. These headings were all agreed with the participants before the discussion and communication started to talk about the challenges, opportunities, policy recommendations, and innovative proposals that are expressed by the locals and immigrants. Afterwards, two different local newspapers covered the roundtable meeting focusing on the presence of Karacabey in the European public space together with other MATILDE localities.

# Tools and Approach

Scientific knowledge is valuable insofar as it expands opportunities for developing the processes and applications necessary for advancing not only individual wellbeing, but also for society as a whole. The idea of collaboration of scientific community members and researchers working together with local individuals and stakeholders to solve problems is necessary for scientific development and social change. For us, such an approach to knowledge generation is concerned both with changing the lives of individuals and changing the research cultures and institutions (Schneider, 2012). We believe that this is possible with the participatory action research (PAR). This is what we tried to do in our field research despite the limitations caused by the COVID 19 pandemic.

Adopting PAR approach, we applied different data collection tools/techniques, which are (a) qualitative interviews, (b) participatory observation, (c) roundtable meeting, and (d) focus group meetings.

## Qualitative interviews

Firstly, in terms of the qualitative interviews, we designed three different sets of semi-structured questions for different type of interlocutors, i.e. migration experts, migrants and local stakeholders. The qualitative interviews conducted with the migration experts and local stakeholders aimed at revealing their accumulated and interpretational knowledge through their professional practices and/or institutionalized competence. The qualitative interviews with migrants allowed them to portray their lived-experiences and their situation so that we

could understand views and practices of immigrants in everyday life. We conducted 15 semi-structured interviews in total between June 15 and August 4, 2021.

The interlocutors were migration experts, migrant employees, seasonal migrant workers, small-scale migrant entrepreneurs, employers, and local stakeholders involved in health, employment and education sectors (See Table 2). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, five of the interviews were carried out online. After having received the interlocutors' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded. Afterward, they were transcribed verbatim and were analysed using thematic analysis. The engagement of each interlocutors was pretty high. The relevant stakeholders also provided us with available quantitative data they had, ranging from the social to economic indicators, e.g. the number of immigrants receiving health care as well as seasonal migrants and the share of the foreign-capital companies in the region.

To conduct the interviews in the rural area on August 4, 2021, a Syrian-origin translator from Arabic to Turkish accompanied us. The translator played a facilitator role not only for having a proper communication with our Syrian-origin interlocutors but also for providing a considerable margin of advantage in building rapport and trust to have a frank conversation. We did not come across any group of migrants or individuals who refused to co-operate. We conducted an interview with an Afghan-originated migrant as well, for which there was no translation need due to his/her knowledge of Turkish. To conduct the interviews with seasonal workers with migrant background, we visited the tent cities in Karacabey district where they were in rest at the times they did not have to go harvesting. Being aware of their daily schedule and agricultural activities, the timing of the interviews with seasonal immigrants were approximately 30 minutes for each. The interviews with the immigrants were not recorded. The research team took jotted notes to help prompt memory later. After leaving the field, we wrote up the interview notes while they were still fresh in our minds. All

qualitative interviews ended with a fruitful interaction and provided us with insider perspectives.

## Participatory observation

As part of the participatory action research, we also followed participatory observation technique as a method of collecting data through which we had the chance to observe international migrants and refugees in Karacabey in their own habitats. As mentioned earlier, we realized a planned visit to Karacabey district on June 15, 2021. Being aware of the importance of gatekeepers to get access to the field of interest, we first contacted the healthcare personnel working for Karacabey District Health Directorate, who are widely accepted by the migrant groups in Karacabey district. Karacabey MHC was the first stop of our on-site visit, where a free primary health care coverage for registered refugees under temporary protection is provided since 2016. MHCs employ immigrant-origin personnel, mainly Syrian, such as doctors, nurses, support staff, and technicians. Our conversation with immigrant doctors speaking Turkish, Afghan and Jordanians, in their clinics helped us become aware of the realities and complexity of the field as well as the socio-economic conditions of immigrants receive healthcare services.

The second part of the on-site visit was carried out to the tent cities where the seasonal agricultural immigrants reside. A well-known Turkish nurse among the immigrants, who is involved in the healthcare team providing mobile health services to the seasonal migrants, accompanied us during our on-site visit. We visited two different neighbourhoods, Yenisarıbey and Akhisar, within the Karacabey district. By a semi-structured observation method, we documented activities, behaviours, and physical living conditions of seasonal

agricultural migrants as they naturally exist. Our semi-structured observation was based on some planning and agenda that would prioritize the coverage of everyday life of the seasonal agricultural migrants as well as the interaction between migrants and natives. We were also engaged in conversation with migrant women, men and children as well as with local people residing in the rural and urban sites of the district to better understand economic, social and territorial impact of migration in Karacabey as prescribed in MATILDE research. We also took pictures to document the state of migrants in the agricultural lands during the on-site visit. After the access to the research field was completed, we compiled our notes on the basis of our observations.

## Roundtable Meeting

To collect data through group interaction at the local level on our thematic research, we organised roundtable meeting. A thematic roundtable was carried out on November 27, 2021, organized with the collaboration of the local partner STL, with a specific aim to communicate with local actors and to introduce migrant-origin and local community leaders with each other, who would not get together otherwise. The roundtable was organized in a rather informal atmosphere in order to make the participants feel comfortable and communicative with each other. The technic used in the meeting was rather different from the one used in focus group, since the participants were left free to articulate challenges, opportunities, and policy proposals that they have already thought about to improve the local conditions.

The participants were selected in such a way that they exhibit a variety of roles in the local level with respect to either background or professional. Some of the participants were selected among the people already involved in the first round of qualitative interviews, and

in the field visit. Others were selected to make up for the absent stakeholders that we could not reach for the previous research activities (e.g. association for solidarity for refugees and/or migrants). With regard to the characteristics of the meeting, a small group of 10 participants (See Table 3), apart from five members of the MATILDE research team and local partner, attended the roundtable. The meeting lasted for 4 hours in total together with the lunch. The meeting hall of Karacabey Chamber of Commerce and Industry was selected as a neutral location with easy-access to deter any cost for the participants. Since the focus of the activity and thematic research was to document the impact of international migration on labour markets in rural-mountain regions, selecting the Chamber hall as the event location played a facilitating role in attracting the local stakeholders.

The meeting was composed of four main sections: the lunch and warm-up, explanation of the research, the core discussion section, and the wrap-up. A researcher from STL acted as the moderator for during the entire meeting. At the warm-up section, with an objective of creating an atmosphere in which all participants can express themselves comfortably and breaking down the initial bashfulness, we used such a technique which divided them into pairs and exchange simple facts about each other. Each of them was then asked to introduce their partner to the rest of the group.

At the second phase, with reference to the main research, the research partner summarized the main outcomes of the MATILDE research in Bursa and Karacabey so far, and the discussion moved on the participants' questions, opinions and experiences on the research topic. The discussion revolved around three main themes, i.e. agricultural production, access to labour market, and social cohesion and integration. The research team tried to gather the participants' perceptions on challenges, opportunities, and policy recommendations or innovative proposals for the local development. The moderator facilitated the discussion, and the members of the research team and the local partner

institution communicated with the participants bringing their experiences from other relevant research sites. All viewpoints were noted down on a big paper board, through which a wider range of information was produced. At the wrap-up section, the responses under different themes were summarized, and allowed participants to reflect upon previous discussion and to add any extra views maybe forgotten.

Overall, the group interaction aimed at involving the representatives of the wider local community, both locals and immigrants. Dissemination of the activity through the local media was a fruitful output of the activity to take the attention of the local community about such an interaction as well. Lately, the research team opened up a special Twitter social media account (@MATILDEBursa) to engage the locals with the research and to share the project outputs in local language in order to enable local people and stakeholders to be informed and to raise awareness on migration-local development nexus.

## Focus group meetings

Three focus group meetings were organized during the action research in Karacabey. The first focus group meeting was held with migrant-origin health personnel from Karacabey MHC on 15 June 2021. Five participants joined the focus group, three Turkish speaking doctors (a Syrian and two Jordanian men) and two nurses (Syrian women) with migrant background. Their insight about the problems that migrants encounter in their everyday life as well as their own individual perspectives and experiences about their own life in Karacabey was very instrumental for the research team to shape the rest of the action research.

Secondly, two separate meetings with seasonal migrant agricultural workers were conducted. The meetings took place in the tent cities in Karacabey on June 15, 2021. Since harvesting time in Karacabey is between April and September, we combined our field visit to Karacabey with the focus group meetings. One group was composed of women and youngsters (5 female, 4 youngsters), the other one was a meeting with male adults (4 male). Due to the nature of the seasonal agricultural activity, the focus group formations was like randomly-gatherings. The size of male participants were less than women focus group size, because migrant men were mostly away for looking for daily jobs in the village. The group interaction was high and their own natural environment allowed participants a free, informal correspondence to respond one another. The focus group discussions were used to gain an in-depth understanding of working conditions, social and economic challenges they face in everyday life and the level of interaction with the locals.

We could not realize fourth focus group meeting despite many attempts. The first reason was the informality among foreigners working for the industrial sector. Neither had we got positive response from the leading industrial producers and factory owners for requests to reach their foreign workers, nor any of foreign workers in this sector wanted to involve our research. Second, the migrant employer with which conducted a qualitative interview beforehand did not respond our second request to have a focus group with their migrant employees. Third, we tried to reach another group of migrants residing in Karacabey via the help of migrant health personnel from MHC. Although the participants were affirmative at first for a focus group meeting, they then hesitated to participate in such meeting, so we cancelled the meeting. Lastly, we tried to have a focus group with local governors/mukhtars of the neighbourhood as social policy implementers and social service providers in the district. In the end we could not reach the meeting size; they did not also participate in our roundtable meeting, although two mukhtars confirmed their attendance.

# Interactions between different researches and local activities

Participatory action research held in Karacabey made it possible for the research team to communicate with several local actors about personal experiences, perceptions, reflections and expectations with regard to local agricultural development opportunities in the region. The focus of MATILDE project is on the remote agricultural, mountainous and rural places, that have been neglected over the last few decades. In this regard, MATILDE action research in Karacabey initiated further communication among different local stakeholders, migrants and community leaders to exchange ideas about the future prospects of agricultural production, possible environmental problems to be caused by the ongoing TECHNOSAB construction, the problems of depopulation, migration to the neighbouring cities, and the opportunities resulting from migration to the district. The research has also already created some further collaboration with the Association of Marmara Municipalities in terms of creating an awareness about the growing importance of agricultural production in the Marmara region, which hosts more than 30 million citizens in Turkey.[21]

The research team and local actor continue to make an impact in local region underlining the importance of migrant individuals on agricultural production in remote places. Social media is a tool that is exploited to create such an awareness. The Principle Investigator (PI) and the researcher also continue to focus on the growing importance on agricultural production and remote places in the lectures, seminars, and interviews that they

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[21] See the following link which demonstrates the dedication of the Association of Marmara Municipalities to create an awareness about the importance of agricultural production in the age of pandemic. The original version of this report was written by some of the MATILDE research team members in English, https://marmara.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Matilde-Raporu-TR.pdf (accessed 19 December 2021).

deliver in Turkey. Furthermore, the PI's relations with the Bursa Metropolitan Municipality facilitated the composition of a protocol about living together in Bursa. The protocol welcomes the migrants and refugees and offers venues of social cohesion for both natives and migrant-origin individuals.

# Results of the Action Research: Challenges and Needs

Action research in Karacabey, Bursa, resulted in the depiction of some major challenges and needs by the local participants who expressed their willingness to see more agricultural-based and environmentally sensitive policies and practices in their region. This section mainly demonstrates the local challenges and needs as reiterated by the local participants who tremendously contributed to the participatory action research with their critical, reflexive and objective agencies.

## Depopulation as a Challenge to Agricultural Sustainability

Depopulation in rural areas is a worldwide problem with its socio-economic and ecological consequences (Tenza-Peral et al., 2022; Camarero and Oliva, 2019). This problem constitutes

an important challenge for Karacabey as well. The lack of structural measures for boosting rural development and providing self-sustaining enterprises that would help rural producers stand on their own feet has resulted in the shrinking of agricultural-based businesses, especially in the face of global competition (Arıcı and Kirmikil, 2017: 39). This general process in Turkey as well as the effects of globalization has also dispersed young locals in Karacabey and made them either migrate to the urban centre (Bursa), or to the big cities, especially neighbouring Istanbul. This demographic pressure coupled with the fragmentation of inheritances have made the agricultural lands idle for the last two decades. As stated in the results of previous local SWOT analysis (Ak, 2017: 235), **our participatory action research has revealed that migration of young generation to the urban centres threatens agricultural sustainability in Karacabey.**

Considering its vast agricultural lands, there is a pressing need in agricultural workforce in Karacabey, especially in the summer periods. Agricultural lands in Karacabey and its neighbour Mustafakemalpaşa are attracting thousands of seasonal workers coming from the south eastern and southern parts of Turkey each year between April and September, some of whom are Turkish citizens and some of whom are Syrians, particularly for the last ten years. Both seasonal and permanent migrants and refugees meet an urgent need that is the continuation of harvesting fertile agricultural lands, an activity that seems to be neglected by the locals due to the reluctance of young people in agriculture, its concomitant growing emigration pattern and the fragmentation of inheritances.

Besides, the lack of support by the central state actors and the municipal actors does not help this process to revert. Especially the regulation changing the status of the villages and the boundaries of metropolitan municipalities has made the issue of allocating enough resources for rural development worse. Law No. 6360 of 2012 re-scaled the urban areas by absorbing rural areas. Towns and villages have been eliminated along with their legal

personality within the boundaries of metropolitan areas and villages have been transformed to neighborhoods and common goods have been transferred to metropolitan municipalities.[22] In addition to the depopulation already generating territorial imbalances, this regulation is criticized as it posed hindrance for the municipalities to support and develop rural areas (Arıcı and Kirmikil, 2017: 42-44). **The interlocutors and local stakeholders during our research activities raised this issue, an issue that does not help preventing depopulation and balancing local supply and demand in agricultural production as well as animal husbandry.** The only way to provide this balance is to rely on seasonal agricultural workforce, mostly Syrian and Afghan migrants. However, this problem of temporariness of seasonal migrants creates another problem. **The native population do not consider immigrants as an asset for a long-term local development.** This is why, the local municipal and public administration actors do not implement any policies to handle seasonal migrants' problems in the long term. This also puts the social cohesion aside, out of local consideration.

## Uncontrolled Industrialization and its Challenges to Rural Life

Karacabey, with its 776,744 decares of agricultural land and 316,434 decares of forestland, economically stands out with its agricultural production capacity. Animal husbandry is a highly developed in the district, popular with breeding and raising Turkey's best racehorses. As a result, agriculture-based industry using agri-products as raw material has considerably

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[22] Due to the regulation, 47% of villages and 54% of municipalities has been eliminated from the local government system and considerable part of rural area is being limited in favor of urban land (Dik, 2014).

developed as well. As a very important opportunity for the local development, the uncontrolled industrialization and urbanization process towards Karacabey (Karaer and Başkaya, 2017) nevertheless creates concerns among the natives. **The local interlocutors during our research specifically articulated their concerns and the already felt consequences of environmental over-loading, particularly in terms of industrial pollution poisoning the farmlands, due to uncontrolled-concentration of industry in the region.**

Over-industrialization seems to be the main challenge creating further impediments for agricultural production. **Our field visits and interviews with the local stakeholders revealed that the locals are very concerned with the preparations made by the state actors to introduce the Hightech Industrial Site (YTSB, *Yüksek Teknoloji Sanayi Bölgesi*) near Karacabey.** Although the construction in the area has already started, none of the local stakeholders, including local Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has upto-date information on what is going on. **The locals expressed their anger and anxiety over the fact that they were not consulted by the state actors about the industrialization plans in the region.** There are rumours that some of the heavy industry in Gebze [an industrial district of Kocaeli, a city neigbouring Bursa in the North] will be moved to the district of Karacabey in order to ease the industrial and urban pressure in Gebze. **The locals are very concerned that such a move will heavily pollute the agricultural lands, the wild life and the lakes, which are located in the birds' migration routes.** These kinds of ambiguities and the lack of perspective for the future make local youngsters be hesitant to stay in Karacabey. This puts the immigrant workforce to the forefront of the agricultural and industrial production.

**Photos:** **Bursa, Karacabey, the plans of TEKNOSAB**

Many studies show that the principles of sustainable development at the local level are unknown, and therefore the weakest link in the local planning is the implementation (Karaer and Baskaya, 2017: 158). The planned YTSB in Karacabey seems to pose an important challenge on agricultural sustainability. Dysfunctional local cooperatives/associations also seem to be disappointed by the process. **During the action research activities, malinvestments, or investments that are wrongly allocated by the local unconscious farmers, were also emphasized as an important impediment in front of the rural and agricultural sustainability.**

# Temporary Protection Status and Informality in Labour Market

**The action-research data demonstrate that international migrants particularly prefer Karacabey due to the availability of job opportunities.** Rural Karacabey hosts Syrians who come to the region to work as seasonal agricultural workers. The district also hosts permanent migrants who work in factories and workshops. Some immigrants also work in jobs that locals do not want to be engaged in. In addition, there are those who are assigned

to work in international projects funded by the EU such as immigrant health workers employed in MHCs within the framework of SIHHAT project.

However, in Turkey where labour market has its ongoing chronic structural problems such as high informality, the immigrants' situation in local labour market in Karacabey is an outcome of the structural problems of the national labour markets. **Our interviews and observations also affirm that there is high informality among foreigners working in Karacabey.** The informal sector generally comprises of jobs that are not much attractive to the local population, including the seasonal agricultural jobs. Actually, neither Turkish citizens nor other international migrants are registered workers in the case of seasonal agricultural workers. Regarding their nationality, Syrian workers mostly work informally as cheap labour force. The majority of them find themselves working in dirty, dangerous and demeaning jobs in highly precarious and unsafe work environments. Because of this informality, **during our research, we did not get positive response from the leading industrial producers and factory owners to our interview requests about their foreign workers.**

Considering the access to the labour market, it is very difficult to secure formality for Syrians under Temporary Protection Status (TPS) as well. According to the Regulation in 2016 providing work permit for the foreigners under TPS (Table 1), to access the labour market, temporary protection status beneficiaries need to obtain either a work permit or a work permit exemption. The work permit stipulates a multilayer restriction mechanism: (1) spatial restrictions: the requirement of registration in the province of residence and (2) quota system: the number of temporary status beneficiaries cannot exceed ten per cent of the number of Turkish citizens working at the workplace. These restrictions have a direct effect on the scope and extensity of informal migrant labour, although the immigrants are crucial to close this existing gap in the labour market, e.g. Afghan shepherds and Syrian agricultural workers in Karacabey. The difficulties to get work permit seem to remain same for those even making

a considerable amount of investments in production in Karacabey. **The difficulties encountered in naturalization and having work permit are two common impediments expressed by our interlocutors.**

Besides, the ways in which migrants under TPS are legally treated in Turkey have made informality remain to be the norm for them. More than 1.6 million Syrians in Turkey rely on the financial assistance provided by the EU financial assistance, shortly called ESSN. The ESSN aid is given to each member of the migrant family provided that none has a formal employment. This is believed to prevent many Syrian refugees who are eligible for ESSN aid from applying to jobs in the formal sector, in order not to make this aid end.[23]

The data also show that gendered dynamics, intersectional discrimination, low salaries, and instrumentalization of migrant labour remain to be the major problems to be solved. Considering seasonal agricultural migrants, **it was specifically stated that the system of _dayıbasılık_ (intermediary person between landlords and seasonal workers) is wide open to abuse and it is an example of instrumentalization of international labour force.** "Dayıbası" organizes fairly large group of migrant workers. Groups could have more than 100 workers. In the summer of 2021, each seasonal worker would be paid 100 TL/per day, and Dayıbası was taking his commission, which was worth of 20 TL out of 100 TL (In August 2021, 100 TL was approximately worth of 10 Euro).

The state of temporariness leads to the lack of interaction between locals and migrant communities as well. This negative correlation makes it difficult for the migrants to contribute better to the local setting that they are in. This issue brings us to the challenges on social cohesion.

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[23] For detailed information about the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN), see http://www.essncard.com/tr/ (accessed on 28 December 2021).

# Challenges to Social Cohesion in Local Dimension

One of the most stated challenges during the action research was the lack of Turkish language skills among migrants. The language barrier is among serious challenges to prompt immigrants, particularly the Syrians, generate a sense of territorial belonging as well as to integrate them into education and work environments. The emphasis on how Syrians are living in a closed circle, with limited or no contact to locals demonstrate the lack of social cohesion. However, it is a fact that their vulnerability because of being forced to migrate and suffering extreme trauma and impoverishment, as well as inability to communicate with locals because of language barrier tends to make Syrians introverted (Kaya, 2020; Erdoğan, 2015).

Schools are crucial for current and future social cohesion, however, the hard conditions such as income and education levels of Syrian families, employment status of parents and language ability play a role in immigrant children's school participation. Particularly, schooling becomes an issue that is more challenging for the immigrant children of agricultural seasonal workers.

The prolonged temporary protection status of Syrians is key to understand the main cause of the difficulties one faces with respect to social cohesion. This is obvious in terms of a growing stream of ghettoisation for Bursa region as far as its strong tradition of incoming migration over the past centuries is concerned. Both in the city centre of Bursa and rural Karacabey, the locals and immigrants do not interact to a great extent and live as two separate groups. The temporariness in seasonal jobs also plays a crucial role in the lack of interaction between the locals and migrant communities in Karacabey. **The field research reveals this temporariness is a reason of the inertia of local authorities in handling social cohesion issue, and makes no local solution generated.**

The negative language of the media about newly arrived Syrian refugees seems to be effective on the construction of judgement of locals towards the newcomers during the past ten years. **The interlocutors also emphasized on the perspectives of some social policy implementers and social service providers such as the local governor/mukhtar of the neighbourhood, and on how their negative stance towards the Syrians poses an obstacle in providing social cohesion.**

# Results of the Action Research: Strengths and Opportunities

**From the communication with the locals, and through further analysis, the following conclusions can be drawn in regard to Karacabey's rural peculiarities.** The fertile lands, agricultural products with Karacabey brand, and its logistical location close to the main consumer markets make the district advantageous in terms of local development. There is also an opportunity for ecological agriculture, ecotourism and rural tourism (Ak, 2017) as there is a growing demand for remote/rural activities especially following the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the field research, **it was often underlined by our interlocutors that the district has a great potential for international labour force due to insufficient local supply for employees, particularly during the summer period.** The idle lands waiting to be cultivated makes the need for foreign labour force more obvious for a sustainable local development. The labour shortage is not a case just for the unskilled labour but also for the skilled ones. **Especially in Bursa, the MATILDE region, the employers in textile sector reported their content with the growing number of the Syrian migrants. Our research**

**also reveals that there is intermediate and technical staff shortage beside the agricultural and textile sectors.**

In this sense, the vocational training seems to be an opportunity to consider. Vocational training courses offer important opportunities to everyone including immigrants. At the local level, Karacabey Chamber of Commerce and Industry Vocational Training Center (VTC) has recently provided an opportunity for foreigners. **Our interlocutor stated that the VTC (established in 2020) was asked by the Ministry of National Education for recruiting foreigners for the year 2021 for the first time.** It provides training services for the ones in need. The programs include theoretical training at school 1-2 days a week and skills training in business 4-5 days a week. Those graduating from the program obtain both mastery certificate and vocational high school diploma.[24] Nevertheless, the VTC needs improving in terms of application procedures for foreigners to be more effectively. Having to document secondary school graduation seems the biggest challenge for foreigners. If the terms of conditions are improved, vocational training can be one of the important ways to close the labour shortage in Karacabey. Besides, vocational education can be used as a meaningful way of increasing schooling rate, overcoming school dropouts, and preventing child labour to some extent.

In some sectors where production advantage is lost, the Syrian migrants carry the opportunity to close the gap with their know-how and knowledge. The revival of idle production provides new employment not only for migrants but also for the local people. The entrepreneurial capacity of the Syrian migrants, particularly in trade, have a comparative advantage of having access to Middle Eastern network. **Our interlocutors emphasized the**

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[24] For more information on the vocational training programs run by the Karacabey Chamber of Commerce and Industry see https://www.karacabeytso.org.tr/projelerimiz/69/karacabey-ticaret-ve-sanayi-odasi-mesleki-egitim-merkezi.html accessed 20 December 2022.

**opportunity of migrants' own networks that brings along bigger investment potential to the local production and an increase in export.** One of the interlocutors we had an interview with was the factory owner in Karacabey, who has a considerable network in foreign markets.

Considering the opportunity to transfer of know-how and knowledge of immigrants to the local level, seed production that has attracted attention and investments recently in Karacabey is worth to mention. **The research displays that Karacabey has a convenient climate to grow seedbed (*tohumluk* in Turkish) (Ak, 2017).** Our interlocutors confirmed this and emphasized the existence of some international companies recently investing in this field in Karacabey. It seems a promising field of investment.

# Conclusion and Recommendations

This report has revealed the challenges, opportunities and proposals in Karacabey as they were stated by local participants who contributed to the action research held in the Summer and Autumn of 2021. Despite the limitations posed by the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic, local participants and migrants were very collaborative in sharing their insight with the research team. Based on the findings of the participatory action research, one could conclude that locals are very well aware of the challenges and opportunities in terms of the socio-economic impact of migration on rural development and agricultural production in particular. However, the lack of rural-based approach at the central state level makes it difficult for the local stakeholders in Karacabey to generate stronger models of co-existence between local citizens and migrant-origin individuals engaged in agricultural production processes. Accordingly, several recommendations were made by the local interlocutors and foreign

migrants during the action research. **The following policy recommendations were synthesized by our research team based on the outcome of action research held in Karacabey.**

- **Social Cohesion**: In order to achieve social cohesion of immigrants with the native populations, local municipality can organise get-together meetings at the local level in different neighbourhoods where there is a critical mass of migrants.

- **Sustainable Accommodation**: It is often the case that the same seasonal agricultural workers visit Karacabey every year. However, their living conditions and habitats are not sustainable in the tents. The local municipality should organise sustainable accommodation facilities for seasonal migrant workers with the support of local stakeholders and civil society organisations.

- **Preventing Child Labour**: The Ministry of National Education should collaborate with the relevant local actors, land owners and producers should be informed and trained about the negative consequences of child labour. Local actors and international institutions should collaborate to offer educational and child-care services to the migrant communities.

- **Revision of the Law 6360**: The law, which removed the legal entity of the special provincial administrations, town municipalities and villages, needs to be revised in order to prompt the inhabitants of villages to invest in agricultural production.

- **Labour Unions:** Labour Unions should be more engaged in supporting and organising agricultural and seasonal workers.

- **Agro-Tourism and Eco-Tourism:** Locals should be given financial opportunities to develop and pursue new projects in agro-tourism and eco-tourism.

- **Organic agriculture:** Locals should be given the opportunity to learn the technics of organic agricultural production.

- **Cooperatives:** Local business associations and local municipalities should work together with the agricultural producers to form cooperatives that can organise the sale and transportation of products to outside markets around Bursa.

- **Rights-based approach**: All local actors should embrace a rights-based approach in communicating with the migrants. Ensuring the equal and fair access to labour market procedures and the facilitation of full access to legal aid should be among the major priorities.

- **Engaging the media:** The role of the media is clearly an integral part of public engagement in migration and integration related agenda items in the public space. The local branch of Directorate Migration Management should work on a communication strategy to appeal to the local media promoting solidarity and human protection values, with biographies and refugee testimonials, and an explanation of how they relate to all of the native population.

- **Ensuring better accommodation:** In most instances, refugees are destitute. Many depend on the solidarity of friends or relatives who may host them temporarily. Even when they can afford rented or hotel accommodation, owing to language difficulties, hostility of landlords or racial prejudices, asylum-seekers often encounter difficulties when trying to find private accommodation. This proves even more difficult when refugees and migrants are not permitted to work or cannot find employment. The local municipality should develop programs of quality control to ensure that all seasonal migrant workers and other migrants' housing meets minimum quality and safety standards.

- **Access to health services:** Most refugees and migrants suffer from health problems, including emotional or mental disorders that require prompt professional treatment. Arabic translators should be available at all hospitals and government offices, and hospital staff should be trained regarding migrant needs.

- **Access to education:** Following the departure from the country of origin, children migrants and refugees suffer from the forced interruption of their education. In order to restore a semblance of normality, it is essential that children benefit from primary and secondary education of a satisfactory quality. The state should also increase childcare access and language course opportunities and incentives so that adults are better able to attend language courses.

- **Improving employment opportunities:** It is widely accepted that dependence on the state is reduced when refugees are working. Migrants and refugees should, preferably, be granted permission to work so that they could generate an independent financial self-sufficiency to maintain an adequate standard of living. The state should simplify and standardize the process of ensuring recognition of qualifications and university degrees earned in the countries of origin.

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# UK: Outer Hebrides (Scotland)

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## Summary

This report presents the participatory action-research carried out in the Outer Hebrides, a group of islands in the West of Scotland, and its main findings. The action-research was performed in the framework of the MATILDE project's Work Package 5 and was co-designed with a group of local stakeholders composing the Case Study Working Group (CSWG).

The theme selected with the CSWG for this research looks at the impact of a small number of migrants on the sustainability of the local community. We developed this theme notably in relation to the continuity of local key economic sectors and therefore focused particularly on the experiences of migrants working in the fishing sector. We looked at their migration trajectories by describing their relations with their countries of origin, their housing and employment paths, their inclusion in the local communities, their experiences of these remote islands and the challenges brought by Brexit.

The research activity was performed in the framework of a Community-Based Participatory Research approach. The tools used were the in-depth interview, notably with migrants; participatory mapping conceptualized as mental maps of migrants' 'living space'; Photovoice, for which we developed photographic workshops aimed at migrants. Finally, two focus groups were organised to assess the participatory action-research and to discuss the results of the fieldwork.

# Introduction

This report presents the participatory action-research carried out in the Outer Hebrides (also referred as Western Isles) between June 2021 and February 2022 and its main findings. The action research was carried in the framework of the MATILDE project's Work Package 5.

## Case study's theme and objectives

The University of Parma research team engaged local actors from previous work packages for the purposes of this action-research and constitute a Case Study Working Group (CSWG). The composition of this group aimed to involve public and private actors who have a stake in this research and in looking for new solutions for migrants' integration and local development.

During the first meetings of the CSWG, the discussion was focused on the definition of the objectives for the participatory research project. The CSWG and the researcher together established that the main theme of this research is that "Small numbers matter". This refers to the impact that even very few migrants can produce at micro scale in communities living in remote places as the Outer Hebrides. This research project considers that socio-economic dynamics and political choices at the meso- and macro-level influence social facts at the micro-level; here is where actors experience their ordinary dimensions of life such as working, housing, education and social interaction conditions. The perspective must encompass the meso- and macro-level. At meso-level it needs to comprehend the social context of Western Isles characterised by small dispersed communities and a shared identity associated to the Gaelic language, as well as the local economy based on the primary and tertiary sector and where the public sector is the largest employer. At macro-level, it has

to include notably the British migration policy, the recent Brexit, and out-fluxes and in-fluxes from the UK mainland.

In the framework of the theme 'Small numbers matter', WP5 action-research explored migrants' trajectories (Schapendonk *et al.*, 2020) and how small numbers of migrants can generate a socio-economic impact in the Western Isles. Through a deep understanding of the factors that can affect those trajectories at micro-, meso- and macro- scale, this action-research aimed at building awareness of the drivers and barriers that can favour or challenge migration and settlement of non-UK migrants. In the context of a demographic trend dominated by depopulation and ageing, and of the related challenge in recruiting workforce, exacerbated by the inability to recruit European workers from the continent after Brexit, it seems necessary and urgent to understand which are those barriers and drivers that can affect migrants' trajectories.

To explore those trajectories, different methods were employed under a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach. The aim was co-building the research with the actors of the social facts under investigation, to enhance awareness about them and to claim for a solution from decision-makers.

## Fieldwork preparation and the challenges of a remote fieldwork

The preparation of the fieldwork included the design of the quali-quantitative research carried out by the Case Study Working Group. The group asked to focus on key aspects of local society and economy that were perceived as barriers for young people – both migrants and natives to come (back) and settle on the Western Isles. This resulted in an analysis in the

following domains: general population structure and migrant population, housing, mobility, economic sector and structure of the local enterprises, Gaelic education, volunteering (see Caputo, Bianchi and Baglioni, 2022). The Case Study Working Group also discussed the tools to employ in the fieldwork (see the methodological section).

Dr Caputo, Dr Bianchi and Prof. Baglioni carried the fieldwork, the latter two members of the team from remote while Dr Caputo physically in the islands.

The Western Isles are the most western inhabited islands of Scotland. The fieldwork took place in the main town, Stornoway, on the Isle of Lewis that concentrates most of the population (about 20.000 people out of 27.000) as well as on the isles of Grimsay, Benbecula and South Uist – all linked by a bridge – and on the southern isle of Barra. The fieldwork sites are spread over 250 km and in good weather conditions it corresponds to a journey of about 8 hours by car, with two ferries links. Scale does matter in an archipelago, and at the different scales of the islands correspond different challenges who notably follow a centre-periphery pattern.

The research team found crucial the trust relationship built with local actors in the previous activities of MATILDE and with the CSWG participants as those actors acted as bridges that allowed the researcher to enter the fieldwork.

# Actors involved in the action-research

As part of the research-action we engaged with 49 people (not including here the Case Study Working Group, see below Stakeholder involvement), with 32 of them the exchange took the form of an interview. Among the interviewees, 22 people were migrants, seven were employers, two people were representative of local economic organisations and one a Member of Parliament. The others were officers of the local council, ESOL teachers, employers, civil servants.

Among the migrants interviewed, ten were woman, twelve were men. Only two people were Third Country Nationals while the majority were EU nationals. The most represented nationality was Latvia, followed by Romania. In many cases the interviewees, while holding an EU nationality, defined themselves as Russians.

The engagement of the actors involved in the action research was mostly mediated by the stakeholders and facilitated by contacts of previous Work Packages. The stakeholder mediation oriented the actors' involvement in the research process. This is notably visible in the high representation of migrants working in the fishing sectors, where we had the strongest support from the local stakeholders. This need to be understood in relation to the fact that the fishing sector is strongly relying on migrants and our research is particularly relevant for them, notably in the context of the important challenges to recruitment they are facing, among those Brexit.

## Stakeholders' Involvement

The stakeholders' involvement was built on the work achieved during the previous WPs and developed to include a wider range of actors. The challenges were represented by the long-lasting and time demanding engagement required by this fieldwork. From June to February, we organised five Case Study Working Group meeting (for a total of more than ten hours), informal meetings that with some stakeholders took place up to five times, exchanged up to 50 emails with each stakeholder. This required an important amount of time from the stakeholders' point of view as this were using their free time and their work time to participate in the project. Their participation evidenced their interest in the project.

The CNES (Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar, in Gaelic), such as the local council was actively involved in the activities of WP5 with its officers who work in close connection to the issues

addressed by this action-research. The research team met with the Directorate for communities. Three staff members participated in the Case Study Working Group: one from Economic Development and Planning department; one from the Housing department; one was an officer working for the Syrian and now Afghani refugees' resettlement program.

The engagement of the Western Isles Fishermen's Association ensues from the research in WP4 of the migrants' economic impact in the fishing sector. It is the local branch of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation; this regional organization represents the sector and lobbies for its interests. At local level, the Outer Hebrides representative has decided to join the CSWG because of the possibility to discuss issues related to the recruitment of migrant workforce for this sector. Limitation of the current migration policy worsened by Brexit, along with the difficulties to maintain the workforce – both local and migrant – on the Western Isles led the local association to invest time in this project. This stakeholder was a key actor for a positive fieldwork outcome.

CODEL (Community Development Lens) is a social enterprise that since 2018 works to analyse dynamics at the micro-level that can booster the revitalization of Western Isles. Moreover, they design projects and initiative to enhance the community development through the engagement with local leaders, organizations and potential new entrepreneurs and dwellers. CODEL was continuously represented in the CSWG and its representatives have brought many and interesting insights about local demographic and social dynamics and the Gaelic language and culture. They also triggered valuable methodological discussion.

Scottish Refugee Council is a charity that operates to provide support and assistance to asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland and played a fundamental role in the design of the New Scots integration strategy. Their interest in the research is related to the shift from the presence of refugees and asylum seeker only in Glasgow to the wide spread of the Syrian refugees across the country by the resettlement program and to the potential of MATILDE to inform the consultation for the revision of the New Scots strategy with a rural perspective..

Highlands and Isles Enterprise is an economic and community development agency that work to provide opportunities to develop projects and enterprises through investment and local assets. HIE actively and continuously participated to the discussion of the CSWG, providing their views notably, but not exclusively, in the economic sphere. They were notably interested in hearing from migrant workers and discuss about strategies to slow down the process of de-population in the Scottish Highlands and Islands.

# Methodology and Tools

The research activity in the Western Isles was performed in the framework of a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach. The researcher on the field carried in-depth interviews with notably migrants. Many migrant interviewees also contributed to the participatory mapping of the islands by drawing a mental map of their 'living space'. Photographic workshops were also organised by the researcher and a photographer was recruited locally to train migrants to take pictures with their smartphones and participate in the research with their voice (Photovoice). Finally, two focus group were organised. One with members of the CSWG to assess the participatory action-research, the other with fishermen to discuss the results of the fieldwork related specifically to migration and fishing.

These different research methods were aimed at different goals. The interviews were aimed at deepening the understanding of the changes and the new challenges occurred since the last fieldwork, notably in relation with Brexit, and at exploring in-depth migrant trajectories. The photographic workshops and mental maps were notably aimed at providing tools and opportunities for the migrants' narratives and perspective to emerge. Finally, the first focus group aimed to discuss methodological aspects of the research and the

stakeholder involvement; the second one aimed at discussing the results of this fieldwork (WP5) toward the policy proposal (WP6).

## Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach

The research activity in the Western Isles was performed in the framework of a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach that aims to generate knowledge on a specific phenomenon through the engagement of members of those communities directly interested by it. For this purpose, a targeted group of stakeholders, the Case Study Working Group, was engaged in each step of the research, from the definition of the objectives to the discussion of the results through the design of methods.

The CSWG meetings represented the core of the decision-making process where all participants could express their opinions, thoughts and suggestions on the process itself. It was both participatory and deliberative. This generated a "Mutual ownership of the processes and products of the research enterprise" (Viswanathan *et al.*, 2004) with important debates on the processes like in the case of the discussion of an online survey to assess the housing needs proposed by the team in December 2021; and the requests from the stakeholders to use the results in different contexts, among those notably the Annual General Meeting of the Western Isles Fishermen's Association and the Scottish Rural Action's statement for the Scottish Government consultation on Fair work. The CSWG participated not only in the discussion of the results but also in building the setting for the discussion – as in the case of the online focus group with local fishermen.

# Interviews

The interviews aimed on the one side to explore in-depth the migrants' trajectories and on the other side to deepen the understanding of the new challenges brought by Brexit and Covid-19 at the time the researcher was on the field. In this sense the group targeted was composed on the one side by migrants and on the other side by those actors, mostly employers, whose activity is tied to the possibility of recruiting migrants.

Interviews, combined with various media formats as in our case the mental maps (see below), has been increasingly used as a first step towards collaborative research and knowledge co-production (Fedyuk and Zentai, 2018). Most of the interviews performed during the WP5 fieldwork were a form of in-depth exploration of the migration experience (ibid.) and can be juxtaposed to informational interviewing used to collect exploratory data in the previous fieldworks (Caputo *et al.*, 2021). They were aimed at deepening the understanding of the migrants' trajectories through their individual narratives and reflections. The interviews were unstructured conversations. The researcher took care that the following key topics were included in the interview while trying to not break the fluidity of the conversation: migration and settlement drivers, labour, housing, relation with the home country and other countries, relation with the local community and with the territory. The researcher took care to build a safe space – e.g. by closing the door at the moment the interview had to start, emphasising that the interview was going to be anonymous, avoid commenting the information shared (in both positive or negative way) and expressing empathy.

The interviewees seemed to perceive themselves in a safe space to different degrees. In some cases, notably with returning migrants whose families were in their home country, this space allowed them to recall painful experiences or thoughts and the interview seemed

to be an opportunity to express sufferance, loneliness and the fear of future. The setting and positionality of actors and power dynamics were also crucial. Many of the interviews with migrants took place in their workplace or with the mediation of their employer. Only once the door was closed, the researcher asked to the interviewees if they wished to participate in the project. In one case, while the interviewee replied positively, the researcher perceived that the interviewee felt 'pushed' to participate by the employer, so she decided to limit the interview to general questions and to rapidly close it.

Another element we had to consider was the performative nature of those interviews. As underlined by Fedyuk and Zentai (2018) performing a narrative of migration often becomes indispensable. "*In case of applications for visas, residence permits or asylum, success can be attained only when the applicant tells a story 'recognizable' to the bureaucratic machine. A simplified narrative needs to be learnt, performed, and embodied*" (ibid. p.182). This was particularly relevant in a moment in which some migrants arrived about up to 17 years ago were formalising their migrant status for the first time – as in the case of EU migrants at the beginning of the post-Brexit era, through the requests for EU settlement and pre-settlement status.

## Mental Maps

The mental maps, a participatory visual method, was chosen as it allowed to explore migrants' geographic knowledge and spatial awareness and therefore their relation with the remote territory of the islands. Mental maps are the functional setting of our everyday life, the always-changing representation of our environment that we use to go from one place to another, to plan our everyday activities.

Since Lynch (1960) and Gould and White (1974) used mental maps to explore spatial representations and spatial preferences, cartographic participation has become an integral part of geographical research. For the purpose of this research, this tool is used to allow migrants to evoke their own experience of the remote region where they migrated. Firstly, by drawing a map and discussing it, migrants were narrating their personal relationship with the territory, e.g. their love and knowledge for the most spectacular landscapes of the islands or their professional knowledge of the sea and its dangerous places. Secondly, those maps and the act of drawing allowed the migrants and the researcher to visualise and discuss the everyday challenges of migrating in a remote area, notably in term of mobility and access to services. Finally, the experiences of places and spaces are structured by broader social power relations, including gender, race, class and age. In this sense, this tool also allows to add complexity to our understanding of migrants' experience of a remote region. Looking at them through an insertional perspective, those maps allow to deconstruct the generalised discourse on migrants' experience of the remote regions and explore the individual dimension where all those categories cross.

A last reflection on this tool concerns its reception by the actors involved. The group targeted was constituted by migrants only. Many of them perceived drawing as a children activity. While some enjoyed to have the chance of taking some time – often working time as the many interviews took place often in their working place – to do some drawing, in other cases using the crayons to create a map was perceived as 'childish' or not a 'serious' activity. In this sense, a few interviewees did not wish to participate. Another challenge met on the field sit in the idea that drawing is reserved to those who are artists. The role of the researcher was to make the actors feeling comfortable with the tool, to challenge their idea of cartography and state clearly why their contribution matters.

# Photographic workshops

Photovoice was chosen as tool as it allows to build knowledge with the actors (Gotschi, Delve and Freyer, 2009) and therefore has the potentiality of empowering migrants, by building a narrative that emerges from their eye, as well as an interpretation of the challenges that encounter that does not depend on outsiders' understandings and solutions (Lòpez *et al.*, 2005). Photographic workshops were organised and aimed to migrants only. The theme of those workshops was "My place" and played on the double sense of the Western Isles as 'my place' and my place in the Western Isles' social and economic structure. A photographer was recruited locally to train migrants to take pictures with their smartphones. The main goals of this Photovoice was: to promote migrants' eye; to provide skills to employ in the job market; to develop a critical understanding of migrants' "place" through pictures; to build awareness about migrants' presence and their contribution.

The main challenge of this tool was the difficulty in recruiting participants. The idea of organising it in a form of workshop to allow migrant to acquire a skill in the process has been an obstacle to the participation as it required a significant amount of time (4-5 hours) to the participants. In order to bypass this issue, we accompanied formal workshops with more informal meetings – in person and from remote – at which we explained the goal of Photovoice, introduced briefly elements of photography techniques and asked migrants to contribute sending pictures.

## Focus groups

Finally, three focus groups were organised. The first one was aimed to the stakeholders who actively participated in the action-research and composed with the researchers the Case Study Working Group, to discuss methodological aspects of the research and the stakeholder involvement. The second one aimed to discuss with actors of the fishing sector the results of this fieldwork (WP5) toward the policy proposal (WP6). A third focus group was organised and aimed to discuss how to favour migrant settlement. Only one person participated, we try to increase the participation by rescheduling it but this did not bring to any positive result.

# Activities

## The co-design of the research with Case Study Working Group

As part of the research-action the Case Study working group was established on 24.05.2021 and met then three more times (at the beginning of September and December 2021 and at the end of January 2022). The meetings took place online.

During the first meeting, on May 24th 2021, we presented the results of the previous research and we introduced the WP5 action-research. We defined the general theme of the research and discussed about the data collection for the quali-quantitative report and we established a calendar. The theme chosen was "Small Numbers Matter", with reference to

the impact that a numerically small number of migrants can still have in small, remote communities. The participants highlighted the need of looking at migration through a holistic perspective that needed to encompass: the cultural dimension, and in particular the role of Gaelic language and culture – and their preservation – in the local communities and for migrants' participation in the local life; housing, that was defined as a key issue to be addressed to attract incomers; the scarcity of labour force and the mismatch between job opportunities and people skills; the challenges to mobility for migrants in a dispersed territory; the "one fits for all" national policy approach and its limits for a place like the Western Isles.

The second meeting took place on September 1st 2021. We had to postpone it a few times because of the summer holidays and the consequent lack of participation. In this meeting, we presented the results of the analysis of the economic impact of migration to the Western Isles (WP4). We then discussed of the next steps of the research "How a small number of migrants contribute to the sustainability of small communities in the OE?". Sustainability referred notably to the sustainability of local economic sectors and availability of work opportunities, the sustainability of a wide range of services, the cultural and linguistic continuity, the potential enrichment in those three sectors brought by migrants' innovative perspectives, cultural background, entrepreneurship potential, etc. We discussed about the quali-quantitative information that the researchers were finalising. Finally, the research team presented a proposal of participatory research methodology, introducing notably Photovoice, world café and the participatory cartography. The feasibility of the world café was challenged in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. The team also informed the participants that a researcher, Dr. Caputo was going to be in the Western Isles for a month from the end of September.

The third meeting took place on December 2nd 2021. During this meeting, the researchers presented the quali-quantitative report achieved in September. It was of

particular interest for the participants the information about the EUSS applications that allowed the researcher to estimate the number of EU nationals living in the Western Isles, the figures related to the *airbnbzation* of the housing market with dwelling changed *"from shelter to asset"* (WP5OH25), to mobility and volunteering. Participants discussed with the researcher the data and this led to a revision of the document. Furthermore, during this meeting we presented and discussed the first findings of the fieldwork.

The last meeting took place on January 31st 2022 in the form of a focus group. The participants were our local partner COSLA, representatives of the Outer Hebrides Council, of the Highlands and Islands Enterprise and of the Scottish Refugees Council. The discussion was built around three question. The meeting aimed to build a future perspective for the group within the research, toward the activities of WP6, and outside the research.

## In-depth interviews

In order to carry the fieldwork, one of the researcher – Dr Caputo – lived in Stornoway for one month and returned to the field three times after. On the one side, considering the dispersion of the field sites and the remoteness of some islands compared to the main town, this provided a centred perspective that the researcher tried to compensate with travels to the other islands: to Uist twice and to Barra once. On the other side, Stornoway and Lewis are the place where most of the migrant population is concentred, so being there allowed the researcher to access this population.

The interviews took place in Stornoway (Lewis) from October 5th 2021 to February 20th 2022; in Uist on October 21st 2021 and February 11th 2022; and in Barra on October 22nd 2021. Many of them (12) took place in factories, four of them took place in the office of a local cooperative. Thee took place in private houses. Four in a public place. The interview lasted

from 30 minutes to more than one hour. No interpreter was used and in one case the interviewee could not speak English enough to participate in the interview and the researcher had to renounce to the interview. The setting of the interviews in the factories was constituted by boardrooms. In the cooperative by an office; in one of the private houses (a shared flat) by the hallway/living room/bedroom, in another by the garden, and in the third one in the living room. It was important for the researcher during the interview to have a table available – as the interviewee was in many cases also drawing a mental map – and a relatively silent place as both the researcher and the interviewee were generally talking in their second or third language. This includes also those locals whose first language is Gaelic.

## Mental maps

Mental maps were drawn by the participants during the interview and discussed together. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher was asking the migrant interviewees to draw a "map of their living space" defined as the space they frequent with daily, weekly and eventually monthly rhythm. No base map was provided to allow the participants to define their own scale and perspective. Sometimes the interviewee had completed the map before the interview, some other times the interviewee felt uncomfortable about drawing the map so the researcher started the interview and re-proposed to draw the map when the interviewee was feeling more comfortable with the exercise. In both cases, the researcher and the interviewee were exchanging thoughts and feelings about the representation. Asking to represent their living space was an opportunity to explore topics not necessary included in the interview as well as discussing about challenges of their migration experiences and their relationship with the territory. The researcher collected 16 mental maps – the scale variated to that of a kitchen to an island.

# Photographic workshops

The researcher together with the photographer held two photographic workshops in person, both in Stornoway, one on December 18th and another on February 19th. An additional photographic workshop was held remotely. The researcher introduced the project and the goal of the workshop, then the photographer introduced some techniques – Rembrandt light; rule of thirds – and accompanied the participants to discover how to best use their smartphone to take pictures. Then we were going for a walk with the participants to take some picture and we were doing other exercises indoor with portraits. Finally, the photographer was explaining the use of a smartphone application of photo-editing called "Snapseed". The photos were then sent to the researcher with a short text.

When the pool of pictures was collected, the researcher ask to each individual to comment the photos and explain the meaning behind the images (Catalani and Minkler, 2010). To examine the material collected and trigger the discussion, researchers used the SHOWeD pneumonic, which consists of a series of questions to make people reflect on their photos.  What do you see here? What is really happening? How does this relate to our lives? Why does this problem or strength exist? What can we do about it? (Wang et al. 2004).

# Focus groups

The focus groups took place remotely, the first one on January 31st 2022 and the second one on February 23rd 2022. In the first one participated seven people, among them the local partners, in the second one eight people. The discussions were chaired by Dr. Bianchi and structured around three questions.

For the focus group about the participatory process and methodology, the questions were the following ones:

*What have been your interests and reasons to take part in this participatory action research?*

*Do you think that this working group can continue in the future? What can be the future goals and activities of this group? What have been the weaknesses and strengths of this participatory action research?*

The focus group about migration policies and the fishing sector was organised with the support of a local stakeholder who planned it according to the weather condition to ensure that all the fishermen would be ashore. The questions were the following ones:

*Which are the challenges in recruiting non-UK fishermen and why it is needed to recruit them? Is the UK visa sponsorship for employers or the Transit visa a viable option for you to recruit non-UK fishermen? If not, why? Did any non-UK fisherman you previously hired arrived to the UK with pre-existing skills and certifications?*

In both cases, the actors participating to the meetings showed a high level of engagement in the research and wished to continue to participate in the next steps of the project.

# Main outcomes of the action-research

## Situating the action-research

This action-research research showed the importance of contextualising the migration to the Western Isles in the general framework the history of the islands and the challenges brought by Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Highland Clearances of the 19th century when "sheep and then deer replaced people" saw the establishment of large, enclosed farms, and the evictions and enforced emigration of the local communities (Mackenzie, 1998). The Clearances are a collective trauma that still presents effects in locals' memory (Rennie, 2020) to the point of being a lens through which reading the current challenges of the islands. "*Despite over 4,000 years of human habitation, dwelling cannot be taken for granted*" in those islands, "*current pressures of depopulation (…) and ever-tighter conservation legislation are perceived as continuous with the tragedies of the Clearances and beyond*" (Corse, 2019, p.51).

To respond to people demands for the return of land lost during the Clearances, the Crofters Holdings Act (1886) legislated that a "fair rent" would be defined by a commission rather than the landlord as well as the right to pass on tenancy to someone of choice. The croft became a key element in the construction of the local identity. "*The croft (…) together with those other signifiers, Sabbath observance and the Gaidhealtachd*[25], *it served to distinguish the 'community' from places outwith the island*" (Mackenzie 1998, p. 1). In 2003, the Scottish Land Reform promoted community ownership of land to support collective

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[25] *Gaeldom* in English. The word refers to the Gaelic regions of Scotland, such as the regions with a strong Gaelic culture, notably the Hebrides (Inner and Outer) and the Highlands.

ownership of local assets and resource. Quite three-fourths of community owned land of Scotland is in the Western Isles (71%). It constitutes about 75% of all the Western Isles land and 85% of its population now live on land, which their community owns. This community land ownership seems the results of the collective process of healing from the trauma of Clearances (Rennie, 2020).

The bond to the islands territory does not stop to the land, also the sea is lived and appropriated. In a territory where the water dominates the landscape, the knowledge of the sea is developed and embedded in the Gaelic language (as widely explored by the exposition *South West by South, An t-Eilean Fada, The Long Island: A Poetic Cartography* by the artist artist Gill Russell[26]) and used to be spread through the radio channels used by the fishermen to communicate (WP4SCOT11).

It is in this framework that the impact of migration to the Western Isles need to be understood, such as in the context of identities strongly enrooted in the territory, and where the ghost of eviction and the end of human dwelling on the islands lie at the bottom of the large conversation on the demographic negative trends.

This negative demographic trend is accompanied by a pyramid of ages that see a large representation of retired people and a constant loss of young actives. In this context, the migrant population arrived in the Western Isles at the beginning of the 2000s to fulfil labour positions in different key sectors of the local economy. The researcher on the field had the opportunity of meeting notably those migrants who work or have worked in the fishing sectors (fishing and processing). Amenity migrants as well as refugees were also represented among the participants of this action-research.

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[26] The exposition was organised by An Lanntair, the researcher was able to see it at Taigh Chearsabhagh, in North Uist, on October 21st 2021.

# Small numbers matter?

The theme selected with the CSWG for this research looked at the impact of a small number of migrants for the sustainability of the local community. We developed this theme notably in relation to the continuity of local key economic sector and contacted enterprises in the fishing and fish transformation sectors that partially rely on migrant workforce. This is the case of four fish factories who employ up to 20 non-UK people each (less than 1/5 of their workforce), and of the vessels who work with one or two migrant fishermen on board.

In WP5 we looked at those migrants' trajectories, how they contribute to the sustainability of the local community, and at the challenges brought by the end of the Free Movement.

## Settled economic migrants' trajectories

In the sector of the fish transformation, migrant workers started to arrive in 2004, at the beginning through agencies, then mostly through personal networks (families and friends) from European countries, among those notably Latvia. Their presence allowed those enterprises to continue and develop their activities. All the interviewed managers are currently looking for employing further migrant workers (both to increase the number of their employees or to replace workers who left) and notably to sponsor their visa through the UK Sponsorship scheme. The migration trajectory of those migrants often see an improvement of their work position and/or their life conditions (e.g. housing) over time as well a tendency toward the settlement of the migrants and their families. Their housing path often included a shared flat with other migrants, a transitory accommodation often pre-

arranged, then often a social rented accommodation and in some case the access to propriety (WP5OH12 to WP5OH18; WP5OH04; WP5OH05; WP5OH22).

Often, they initially seemed to perceive their experience as temporary, as clearly expressed by two interviewees: *"the weather was a shock. Landing I thought I would stay only for a few months"* (WP5OH20) *"Each time I was telling myself I staying only for two more months!"* (WP5OH22). Then a turning point is generally identified that dissolve this sensation of temporariness: being joined by a family member, notably in the case of their children, or a personal event. Among the drivers to remain, the relationships built within the community *"It is a nice community, I have plenty friends, they are nice people"* (WP5OH22); the perception of security *"I like here. I never locked my door since I have been up here"* (WP5OH16); as well as the appreciation for quietness and remoteness (WP5OH17) seemed essential assets for those who decided to stay. Another key element underlined was the relationship with the employer that in some cases acted as a gate opener for the local community (WP5OH21, WP5OH22), a facilitator to overcome the main challenges of finding an accommodation, mobility and child cares (WP5OH21).

Among those economic migrants, some fund in the Western Isles their *"magic place"* (WP5OH22). We called them 'remainers by choice' to underline how their drivers to remain are close to those of the amenity migrants (or migrants by choice) : *"some people don't know the beautiful places that make the islands and make people want to stay here"* (WP5OH21). Those migrants seem to strongly participate in the local community and have a deep knowledge of the local natural landscapes, represented in the mental maps together with landmarks and a high number of toponyms (see maps WP5MAP12; WP5MAP14; WP5MAP16). The elaboration of the map was sometime accompanied by a narration of the beauty or of the history of the places (WP5OH07; WP5OH21).

The need of migrant workers in the fishing sector was determined by the direct competition for those skilled workers of the local ferries, the oil industry, and the fishing tourism, as well as by the mobility to other sectors (WP5OH01) as "people get better jobs ashore" (WP5OH06). Migrant fishermen started to arrive to the Western Isles in 2001 and after 4 or 5 years, they constituted the majority of the crews (WP5OH01). All the fishermen interviewed were European, many came from a same village (see also Caputo et al. 2021) whose lake according to an interviewee was overfished causing a large emigration (WP5OH07). Nevertheless, there were also about 20 Ghanaian fishermen working in the Western Isles at the moment of the fieldwork (WP5OH23, WP5OH24, WP5OH25) currently expulsed from the United Kingdom as their Transit Visa is not considered valid to work within 12 miles (WP5OE40). Their possibility of recruiting migrant workforce is essential and can determinate the survival of the enterprises (WP4SCOT25).

Those migrant fishermen do not live permanently in the Western Isles, they seem to follow this pattern (WP5OH06): they arrive in the live Western Isles from February to April, then they go to their home country and come back from June to August, go back to their home country in September and come back to the Western Isles again to leave just before Christmas. That means that they mostly live in the Western Isles and they spend about 3 months each year in their home country. In this sense, calling those fishermen 'returning migrants' is a way to describe the strong link with their home country and also the tension between the life where they actually live it – such in the Western Isles – and when they place themselves: *"My life is at home"* (WP5OH07); *"I changed 'home' for 'holiday'"* (ibid.). This topic arose in some interviews with sufferance for missing the death of a family member or for the fear of dying alone without their family while being abroad. As stated before, the interviews were sometimes seen as an opportunity to share painful experiences or thoughts.

While in the Western Isles, those fishermen generally live on the boats or in shared flats with other fishermen, sometimes members of the same crew[27] (ibid., WP5OH07, WP5OH08). Usually, the accommodation was arranged already before their arrival. The housing path seems determined by a group of factors: the nature of the work contract (fix salary contract or share of the caught option) and its changes over time (WP5OH07); by the amount of remises that the migrant wishes to send home (WP5OH06); the general scarcity of affordable housing, very variable at local scale with dissimilarities from Stornoway to the smaller islands of Barra and Uist (WP5OH23); the degree of permanence of the experience of migration, such as if the migrant perceives his experience as something permanent or temporary (WP5OH09, WP5OH10); and finally, the type of boat, such as if the boat where the migrant works, is large enough and structured in a way that can allow fishermen to live there permanently (WP5OH06).

The fishermen are paid in different ways, *"some people have salaries, other shares [of the caught], it depends on the boat, on the skipper and on if they [the fishermen] want to keep it safe"* (WP5OH07), such as if the fisherman prefers to have a fix income or if he prefers to have its income depending on the caught. In the case of migrant fishermen, the employers take charge also of the cost of transports from and to the Western Isles that includes the flight to the mainland and then the flight to the fishermen's home country.

The housing path as well as the type of compensation agreement seemed to have an impact on the migration status. All the interviewed migrant fishermen were from an EU country and needed to apply for the Settlement Status or as Frontier Workers. The lack of bills or anything that could prove their address as well as the lack of employment contract

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[27] One fisherman interviewed in May (WP4) was looking to rent a place as his family was planning to come and live in the Western Isles (WP4SCOT12), but the family was still waiting for the Visa at the moment of the second fieldwork (October 2021).

as most interviewees were self-employed, made it more difficult to access the Settlement Status (WP5OH06). Nevertheless, all the European fishermen present in the territory before Brexit have obtained a visa.

In the post-Brexit era, employers are looking for different routes to employ non-UK fishermen. Under the New UK Points-Based Immigration System, the employers can obtain licences to sponsor those workers (WP5OH24) but the salary threshold (£30,000 per year) intended for those 'unskilled workers' cannot be met by all the employers (WP5OH25; WP5OE42). During the action-research we could appreciate how incongruent is the category of 'unskilled workers' with the actual skills of the interviewee. Seaman skills are a key requirement for the fishermen to work in the Western Isles as in the rest of the United Kingdom. An interviewee proudly showed to the researcher all his qualification (WP5OH09) while another emphasised how you need to be skilled to be safe on a boat and this includes not only seaman skills but also being able to deal with the problems that may arise while at sea like dealing a not functioning engine (WP5OH07).

Another route used by some employers is hiring fishermen with Transit visa that allows people to arrive to the UK with confirmed offers of work on a fishing vessel based in the UK but working outside UK territorial waters (WP5OH25). Nevertheless, because of the physical characteristics of the Scottish West coast, a boat in order to commit to work mainly in international water needs to go far at West in the Atlantic, while they are not necessary fit to be there, increasing the risks for the all crew (WP5OH17).

## The impact of the 'small numbers' of the Resettlement Programme

In the Western Isles, the experience of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme that saw the resettlement of few Syrian families – discussed in the previous report (Caputo and Baglioni, 2021) – seems to be seen as a model for a program aiming to

repopulate the islands (WP5OE44) *"Trying to solve the issue of how to hire a fisherman or a factory worker has as only effect to make me richer, what we need is to resettle families"* (WP5OH24). Those accompanied migrations of families seem to be successful in the islands in term of integration, nevertheless all forced migrants accessed social rented houses in Stornoway, and there is no experience of this program in the more remote islands.

During the fieldwork, two Afghani families arrived to Stornoway. They chose the islands because they thought that in a small place like the Western Isles, they would have more support and they would access a social house (WP5OH28). Their English skills were excellent and their story shows how they were able to make informed choices even before arriving. Their arrival to the Western Isles have been highly mediatised as in the previous case of the Syrian refugees (see Caputo et al. 2021). The Afghani and Syrian refugees in the Western Isles have different migration trajectories. The Afghani who arrived to the Western Isles in 2021 had a pre-existing network in the hosting country and possess high cultural capital, they flow from Afghanistan without passing through long experiences of displacement. In the case of the Syrian, the Resettlement scheme that allowed them in the United Kingdom was based on vulnerability and the refugees resettled were previously living in refugee camps.

We think that a discussion about the success and the replicability on a bigger scale of this model should take into account the actors involved, the resources needed, and the scale, both in terms of the number of actors targeted by the program and of the spatial scale.

## A gendered trajectory

Finally, we would like to describe another migration trajectory, the path of women who arrived to the islands to marry a local person. Those interviewed women arrived without any personal network apart of that of their husband, and while being highly educated and proficient in English they did not enter the job market until their separation from the

husbands or when the family faced economic challenges.  In some case, they experienced domestic violence (WP5OH30; WP5OH31). After their separation, they actively decided to remain in the islands. The fear of stigma in their home country and the awareness of the support they could get for their children in the UK – like free health cares and education (WP5OH30) – were among the reasons to remain. Furthermore, the relationship built with the local community as well as their children attachment to the islands – where they were born and raised – were also mentioned as reasons to stay. Mobility is a key challenge for those women, as they may not drive and they may become too old to deal with the challenges of the weather and of the remoteness. Consequently, their maps represent the smallest 'living space' among all the collected maps. For example, one woman describes her walk from her house to her job (WP5MAP15) while another situates herself at the table of the living room, looking outside at the weather (represented) and at the landscape (WP5MAP16). Awareness of the impact of ageing on the possibility of living in the Western Iles arise from those interviews: *"when I will need to care, I will pack everything and go back to [home country]"* (WP5OH29); *"the islands are a place for those who can hike and cycle"* (WP5OH31).

Their contribution to the community is significant, as in the case of one interviewee that founded a charity that supports both migrant and non-migrant women (WP5OH32).

# Conclusion

The action-research in the Western Isles conducted by the University of Parma with the Case Study Working Group was challenging as the communities and the researchers were distant in cultural and spatial terms. Even if some relationships were in place from the previous WPs, those were largely insufficient to develop the action-research in the timeframe of 8 months. Building trust, building a "thick" understanding (Geertz, 1973), being able to define the shared

and meaningful objectives for the action-research, and engaging participants requires far more time. The participation and the engagement need to be first of all that of the researcher who is in our case an outsider in the communities' culture and life.

The support of the local stakeholders has been the key to overcome the challenge of accessing the local communities – including migrant and non-migrant. Their engagement was motivated by the awareness that the research could contribute to their work to respond to the challenges that those remote communities are facing and that were defined with the Case Study Working Group. Migration to the Western Isles constitute a key element for the sustainability of the local community, a goal towards which everyone was in some way aiming at.

Results are consequent to the challenges. This action-research was oriented by the local stakeholders in the sense that they allowed the researcher to enter specific fields and geographical areas. In this sense, the impact of this action-research aimed notably at migrants in the fishing industry in Stornoway, Benbecula and, in a minor way, Barra.

The research showed the key role of migration in the fishing industry, and within this economic sector, we identified two main trajectories: one that describes the path of settled migrants, and the other that describes a circular migration path, such as those migrants who periodically return to their families in their home country (and to the Western Isles). Each trajectory has been described in relationship to the migrants' mobility, their relationship with the home country, the housing path, the opportunity of improving their working position and language. We also could appreciate how those migrants, few in numbers are essential for the continuation and the development of those key economic sectors.

Key challenges have been identified notably in the recruitment since Brexit. This will lead to a proposal for a migration policy that can replace the current regulation about unskilled workers in the fishing sector. This proposal would discuss the category of "skilled"

and emphasize the peculiarity of this territory that makes it requiring a specific policy (e.g. the impossibility of using the 12miles regulation of migrant work as in the East Cost).

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