



MATILDE

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

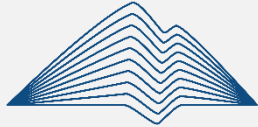
Challenges in and Recommendations for the MATILDE rural regions: Report on the thematic policy roundtables



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funding from the European
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Deliverable 6.5 – Report of the thematic round tables with relevant policy makers

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Summary

The D6.5 Report of the thematic round tables with relevant policy makers is part of the task 6.2 “policy recommendations based on stakeholders’ consultations” (MATILDE Grant Agreement No. 870831, 2019, 119). Based on the MATILDE results of qualitative and quantitative research in WP 3 and WP 4 as well as of the participatory action research with stakeholder involvement, an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, chances and threats was conducted to prepare the policy recommendations and solutions. Those were presented and further discussed, adapted, supplemented and validated during the roundtables. At least one roundtable was organised by every research partner at regional level, involving also local and/or national stakeholders from political and public authorities, civil society, academia and research as well as businesses were invited. In total, 26 roundtables were organised in 10 MATILDE countries and 13 MATILDE regions, where a total of 329 stakeholders participated. The details about the participants, the thematic frames and the main outcomes and observations per country are going to be presented in this report.

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Introduction

The aim of the report on the thematic round tables with relevant policy makers is to “gather the outcomes and observations shared by practitioners and organizations, public service providers as well as policy makers at regional level” (MATILDE Grant Agreement No. 870831, 2019, 122). Additionally, the results serve to complement and validate the policy recommendations and solutions provided in the multi-dimensional policy-recommendations matrix (Deliverable 6.4), which are also and are the basis of the policy briefs (Deliverable 6.3). In this sense, the conducted policy round tables are of high importance in the evaluation, elaboration and validation process of the policy recommendations and solutions.

The MATILDE partners used different approaches to organise the roundtables, as some of them used a SWOT analysis as a basis. However, the aim of all roundtables was to validate and complement challenges and policy recommendations together with practitioners and policy makers. During the thematic round tables, they were jointly co-designed, complemented, adapted and validated. In order to offer a standard structure for the elaboration of policy recommendations, a guideline and i. a. templates for a SWOT-analysis and the matrix were provided by the WP 6 coordination team. Nevertheless, the actual elaboration and organisation of the thematic round tables was individually done by each MATILDE research partner.

Following, the single reports on the thematic round tables with relevant policy makers consist of an overview with main information about the methodological background and the organisational frame of the roundtables, a chapter about the participants of the roundtables following the MATILDE Stakeholder Involvement Plan, a chapter about the main outcomes and observations with the most important discussed topics and reactions as well as a conclusion chapter with a methodological reflection, the learnings and an outlook. The reports are going to be presented collectively below.

Austria, Carinthia

Authors: Marika Gruber, Jessica Pöcher, Kathrin Zupan

1. Overview

The policy roundtable of the MATILDE case study region Villach took place in person on **25th April 2022, 14:00-18:00 pm**, in an **historic event hall of the City of Villach**, aiming to discuss and validate the MATILDE policy recommendations.

The roundtable took place in the execution of the five following steps:

- **Step 1: Welcome & introduction**

The local partners of the City of Villach and the CUAS Team welcomed the participants. Marika Gruber was the moderator of the introduction and presentation.

- **Step 2: Presentation of the SWOT-analysis**

As a basis for the discussions, the MATILDE project background and the main research results elaborated in the SWOT-analysis (based on literature review and the analysis of the existing MATILDE findings) at the governance levels from local to EU, were presented. In addition, posters focusing on the different fields of actions according to Ager & Strang (2008) were developed, presenting challenges, negative consequences, policy recommendations, possible solutions and positive impacts per each field.

- **Step 3: 1st and 2nd discussion round of fields of action**

However, in the frame of this **single, specially organized policy roundtable** eight fields of action (“asylum” and the following topic pairs “economy and education”, “health and mobility”, “housing and social connection” as well as “politics and public administration”) in the context

of rural development were discussed at five different roundtables. They are based on a SWOT-analysis and derived pre-validated policy recommendations. The selection of these fields of action can be explained by the focus of the case study objectives. Each topic pair, mentioned in the brackets above, except for asylum, were allocated to one roundtable. Each roundtable was moderated by a moderator-tandem from CUAS and/or the City of Villach. The discussion took place in two rounds á 45 minutes. Therefore, the stakeholders split up in smaller groups at the tables. Due to the organized discussions which focused on the different aforementioned topic pairs, each participant got the chance to discuss from one up to four different fields of action. For example, after participating in the discussion about “economy and education”, the participants had the chance to switch to “politics and public administration”. The policy recommendations and solutions on the posters build the frame for the discussions, aiming to validate, supplement and revise the pre-validated policy recommendations and solutions.

- **Step 4: Presentation of policy recommendations by facilitators and evaluation round**

After the second discussion round, the results of all roundtables and both discussion rounds were presented by the moderator-tandems. As a final step, each participating stakeholder ranked the three most important policy recommendations of all discussed areas of action. Thus, the policy recommendations were validated and prioritised.

- **Step 5: Open exchange and buffet**

Based on “Arnstein’s ladder of citizen participation” (Arnstein 1969) and on the derivation for MATILDE, the policy roundtables aimed different stages of involvement. The joint development of policy recommendations during the round table corresponds to the joint creation as highest stage of involvement. During and after the roundtable, the participants had time to network. In the preparation phase and after the roundtable, the research team asked for consultation. So, the policy roundtable is in line with the MATILDE basis of

participatory research and stakeholder involvement and involved different levels of participation, including the highest one (Gruber 2020).

2. Participants of the roundtable

All MATILDE interviewees, action research and focus group participants, which included 76 people with contact data, were invited as well as further stakeholders mainly from the categories: associations and clubs, asylum and refugee care, education institutions, research/university representatives, NGOs, political decision makers, private businesses, public administrations, public welfare service providers, trade and labour unions and organised representative groups as well as individual migrants. Finally, **46 people (including the roundtable moderators)** joined in the policy roundtable. **34 were female and at least 10 were TCNs.** According to the Stakeholder Involvement Plan (Gruber et. al. 2020), the participants belonged to the following stakeholder categories:

Stakeholder Category	Number of Participants	Governmental level		
		local	regional	national
Associations & Clubs	6	4	2	
Asylum & Refugee Care	3			3
Education & Training	2		2	
Research facilities	1		1	
NGOs ¹	10	4	6	
Trade & Labour Union ²	3		3	

¹ In the fields of integration, social connection, rural development, migrant's support, trainings, network & consultation

² Including organised representative groups

Private Business	2	1	1	
Public Administration	10	6	3	1
Public Welfare Service Provider	1		1	
Political Decision Makers	1	1		

Table 1: Overview of all MATILDE interviewees, action research and focus group participants in Austria (Carinthia)

During the welcoming, the participants were asked to answer, where (NGOs, public administration, associations, private business or schools/universities), and in what area of integration (Ager & Strang 2008) they work. The final question about the importance of the topic in their daily business, 10 participants committed more than 50% of importance and another 10 are highly committed to the topic with 100%³.

3. Outcomes and observations/results

The MATILDE policy roundtable in Villach was designed and conducted as **a theme-structured participatory process**, with the **SWOT-analyses presented as an introduction**. As explained above, the pre-validated policy recommendations were divided into **eight main topics** and discussed at five tables.

The themes were visualised in the field of action posters and were structured into **five areas (challenges, impacts, recommended actions, solutions and positive impact)**. These were pre-filled by the research team with the pre-validated policy recommendations and served as a basis for the discussion. The aim was to complement, expand and, if necessary, revise the challenges, policy recommendations and solutions in the respective field of action with the input of the participants. After the roundtable, the results were sent first to all moderators, in order to confirm or change them. Secondly, the results were sent to all participants and

³ Not all stakeholders participated in the short survey.

further stakeholders for additions and objections, which was the final consultation and validation step.

The main results of the roundtable discussions in the different fields of actions are outlined below.

Field of action “Asylum”

On the roundtable related to “**asylum**”, the discussions about the preliminary policy recommendations focused on German language courses, location and quality of care in the asylum shelters, duration of asylum procedures, access to labour market and the changes due to the centralisation processes of the Federal Government. While these topics were already included in the pre-validated policy recommendations and were confirmed during the roundtable, the challenges related to the time after being granted asylum was mentioned for the first time. Those, who were granted asylum, are in the need of information about housing, labour market, social assistance, etc. Therefore, the network of the Federal State and the municipalities, in this case the City of Villach, should be improved, in order to provide an information package for newly recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. Besides, some additional challenges and accordingly policy recommendations were discussed and added in the frame of asylum: the increase of the earning limit for asylum seekers, improvement of social care in the asylum shelters, availability of medical staff, evaluation of the entry restrictions to asylum shelters and regularly roundtables with stakeholders in the context of asylum in Carinthia. **It was obvious, that there is a high demand for exchange between all governmental levels.**

Field of action “Economy & Employment”

On this roundtable the labour shortage in Carinthia and Austria was discussed, focusing on the challenge of finding qualified employees and the differences of qualification between (high-)skilled migrants and low-educated migrants (which was also important in the discussions about education). In addition, the importance of thinking ahead in economic development was mentioned. Finally, some policy recommendations were added to the

preliminary ones: implementation of a one-stop-shop for the recognition process of qualifications, training offers at all educational levels, increased attractiveness of jobs in e.g. care, health or child care, improved framework conditions for family reunion (e.g. job perspectives for relatives, training offers, child care) and structural child care.

Field of action “Education”

Child care leads over to the results of the second discussion round about **education**. To the pre-validated challenges, the lack of afternoon and/or full-day care for children as well as lacking child care resources in rural areas were added. Especially, small, rural municipalities do not have experiences in interculturality and integration. Hence, the expansion of (afternoon and full-day) child care was highly recommended. In addition, multilingualism should be recognised as competence and e.g. global citizenship and ethics should become a teaching topic. Besides these structural changes, schools and kindergartens should become places of intercultural encounter not only for children, but also for parents.

Field of action “Health”

Unfortunately, there were no direct experts for the health sector present and only 4 stakeholders in total took part in the discussion round because of self-interest or the overlapping with their professional field. Nevertheless, there was a lot of discussion and exchange. The research team had already mentioned the challenges of the lack of mental health care and prevention of TCNs. The negative effects of this are the worsening of physical and mental health due to untreated traumatic (flight)-experiences and the unpredictable consequences for the success of integration and for the health system.

The research team’s policy recommendations were to strengthen mental health promotion services and to explore appropriate responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. This was also seen by the participants, who also added empowerment, especially of women, and health promotion with a focus on war-trauma. The solution noted was to move away from the pathogenesis approach towards salutogenesis and to call for mental health promotion for all to promote overall well-being. There was a general consensus that mentally stable people

are happy people. Therefore, they are more resilient and adapt more easily to new environments.

Field of action “Housing”

The discussion around **”housing”** was provided with input from many participants. Again, challenges of the research team were discussed as a starting point. Restrictions in public housing allocation to TCNs, discriminatory tendencies in the private housing market, reservations of local people and migrants’ unawareness of customs (e.g. waste separation, quiet hours etc.) were mentioned. These challenges would lead to segregation and concentration of migrants and migrant children in certain areas and schools, and ghettoisation, which in turn would further fuel the reservations.

The participants supported the proposal to lift restrictions on public housing and suggested a central Carinthian contact point for housing seekers. To counteract the reservations, neighbourhood meetings and help should be initiated, which would be responsible for welcoming migrants and giving information as well as introductions to local customs. Another point would be to establish more social housing projects (e.g. generations, communal living, etc.) in Carinthia. In addition, the participants demanded the abolition of legal unequal treatment in housing subsidies and housing assistance, which mainly affects third-country nationals. The positive effects of implementing these recommendations would be equal access for all and a better distribution of migrants in different areas of the city, which would, in addition, counteract segregation and ghettoization.

Field of action “Mobility”

The challenges of the insufficient public transport (supply of the city districts, Sunday journeys, connection to the surrounding rural communities) and the limited affordability of mobility were mentioned in advance, which were unanimously confirmed and agreed by the discussants.

The topics of "mobility" and "housing" often overlapped in the discussions, as they are interrelated and have an influence on many other areas of life. (In-) mobility also influences, where migrants want to live and often leads to a concentration of migrants in the inner city of Villach or more accessible parts of the city. It also has an impact on employment and education. Many migrants do not have a driving licence and certain jobs (e.g. in tourist holiday regions) can hardly or not at all be reached by people without their own car. As a result, German language and other courses may not be attended and voluntary work hardly can be taken up. This circumstance also makes it difficult for locals and immigrants to meet.

The discussion group clearly recommended to expand public transport services (frequency, connection to the Austrian railway etc.) in order to facilitate connections in and to rural areas and to improve transport connections to asylum shelters. Certain groups of people (e.g. people at risk of poverty and exclusion, asylum seekers) should also receive financial support for the use of public transport. In addition, the cycle path infrastructure should not be neglected and should be expanded. This improved offer would be a benefit for the entire population in Carinthia and would also promote the independence of asylum seekers. Through the possibility of a better distribution of the immigrant population, there are also more opportunities for the urban-rural nexus as well as the encounter of natives and immigrants.

Field of action "Social Connection"

In this field of action, the lack of contact between migrants and locals and the reservations and negative attitudes of politicians and the local population towards migrants were discussed. Volunteering is seen as a way for migrants to integrate socially and to learn the German language quickly, but it is sometimes associated with high demands and hurdles.

These circumstances bear the danger of segregation/isolation and through the lack of exchange, the persistence of reservations and the tendency to withdraw and radicalise.

It was discussed that diverse groups should be taken into account in all political areas and that there is a need for sensitisation for intercultural settings. The migrant associations should be more involved in events and premises for these associations should be created.

Successful examples and projects of integration and intercultural encounter should be made visible through various channels (e.g. in the media, on websites, in social media channels, at events).

In addition, information about education, health, the labour market, housing, women's rights, together with improved information about associations, social organisations and volunteering is needed. The implementation of integration guides as well as well-prepared welcome brochures including an online information collection was mentioned as a solution for this. The goal is to develop an intercultural, and even a transcultural and post-migrant understanding with the creation of an all including "we-society". This goes hand in hand with an increased civic engagement, in which migrants also participate.

Field of action "Politics & public administration"

On this roundtable three leading points were discussed: the need for networking and exchange at all governmental levels and with all stakeholders in the context of migration, the need for raising awareness for interculturality in public administrations, for mayors and in the society, and the problems migrants face when getting in contact with public administrations, such as language barriers or lack of transparency of responsibilities. Besides, the current situation with Ukraine refugees and the danger of a 2-class asylum system was discussed. There was a fundamental consensus among the discussants about the discussed topics on this table. Just the need to involve representatives of the Federal Government to exchange meetings and the idea to offer intercultural education for political stakeholders in the academy of public administration were added as new policy recommendations. The aim should be to educate the local population in terms of interculturality and diversity, in order to improve the social connection with migrants.

In general, the discussions clarified that the participants are highly committed to the topics discussed. There was a general consensus among the stakeholders and the discussions were really fruitful at all tables. Once again, the recommendation was to organise regularly exchange meetings with all political stakeholders at all governmental levels. After the presentation of the discussed topics, there was one dispute concerning the organization of

the asylum shelters in Villach. A manager of an asylum shelter did not agree with the critics mentioned in the discussions. After the official end, his points of view and arguments were discussed separately with CUAS and city officials to learn more about his perspective.

The vice-mayor as direct responsible for the topic of social affairs and integration was participating in the roundtable and is highly interested in further exchange in the context of migration at all governmental levels. So, she will try her best to put this recommendation into practice and is especially aware of the need of expansion of child care. However, the City of Villach already informed about a planned expansion (Gehrke 2022). In addition, CUAS will be invited to the networking meetings organised by the City of Villach and in this context, further present and disseminate the validated policy recommendations.

4. Conclusions and reflections

To sum up, changes in asylum, economy and employment, education, politics and public administration, and social connection are of high interest to the City of Villach and the stakeholders in the context of migration and integration in Carinthia. The demand for further exchange and network is high, especially because individual motivation exists. Unfortunately, the motivation is restricted due to the limited freedom of action due to the low legal competencies of NGOs, municipalities and Federal States related to migration and integration in Austria.

In total, the feedback on the organisation, the content and the methodical implementation of the roundtable was positive and the wish for regular stakeholder meetings or roundtables focusing on different aspects of migration arose. It was perceived as an entertaining, exciting, interactive event, and the participants visibly enjoyed the discussions and the research team also received a lot of positive feedback after the event. Three of the moderators came directly from the city administration (integration office and youth affairs). Afterwards, they were extremely positive about the fact that they had experienced for the first time in their long professional careers that integration can be discussed in an intertwined way with the most

diverse areas of life. The research team itself was also very satisfied with the realization of the roundtable. The discussions with the field of action posters worked very well. Initially (when a lower number of participants was assumed), only one moderator was planned for each discussion table, who would have been responsible for taking notes and moderating. The CUAS-team then decided to organise more table-moderators. The decision to assign two moderators per discussion table turned out to be the right one, as it would not have been possible to adequately moderate and at the same time document and record all the participants' inputs. As already mentioned, three facilitators were representatives of the municipality. This circumstance, in addition to the personnel support, also had the great advantage that they were directly informed about the discussion with the stakeholders and their wishes and needs, and thus also received direct input for their daily work.

One suggestion for improvement from the participants was to make the presentation of the SWOT-analysis shorter, in order to have more time for the discussions, which the participants really enjoyed. The research team also felt that the discussion rounds could have lasted a little longer (about one hour instead of 45 minutes).

In the future, the research team would also pay more attention to the presence of experts in all areas discussed, as there were few discussants on the topics of "health" and "mobility", as many understandably want to discuss and contribute to "their" area. Although some were willing to discuss these topics, no expert perspective could be brought in. This fact can be explained by the strategy of invitation, which were addressed to all MATILDE interview partners and connected stakeholders. It based on the idea of the Open Space Technology, those, who come, are the right ones to come (Owen 1997). In the future, the aim is to identify knowledge gaps early enough, in order to be able to react and close these gaps.

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Austria, Vorarlberg

Authors: Ingrid Machold and Lisa Bauchinger

1. Overview

The first roundtable took place on 17th March 2022 at the premises of a parish in Bludenz. It lasted 2.5 hours and was moderated jointly by the scientific and the local MATILDE project partner. The roundtable was organized as a meeting of the local Case Study Working Group including two representatives of each of the three CS municipalities and four regional stakeholders active in integration tasks. This roundtable was designed to firstly, present results of the project with a focus on WP5 activities, secondly, create and discuss a SWOT analysis on local structures of social integration and thirdly, discuss preliminary policy recommendations and solutions at a local and regional level.

The second roundtable took place on 10th June 2022 in the same venue. This roundtable was designed to assemble all types of interview partners from the three municipalities and selected regional stakeholders. In total we invited more than 65 persons via E-Mail, What's App or SMS. This second roundtable was a more formal meeting, aiming at showing the gratitude of researchers to community participation in the project. It was opened by an introduction by the President of the State Parliament of Vorarlberg, a representative of the Integration Committee, and a representative of the partner "okay.zusammen leben". Following to the presentation of project results of the case study, including details of the local structures analysed, an intensive exchange within small working groups took place. Main aspects of the small group discussions were reported back to the plenary and summarized the meeting.

2. Participants of the roundtable

First roundtable on March 17th: According to a stakeholder mapping⁴, six stakeholders from public administration, two from asylum and refugee care organizations and two decision makers were invited, however, due to urgent issues with regard to the latest influx of refugees from Ukraine, six persons cancelled their participation at short-term notice. In total, besides the team of okay and BAB (3 persons) four stakeholder participated at the roundtable: three men, one woman; two from public administration, one from asylum and refugee care and one former mayor (over 65 years).

Second roundtable on June 10th: All interview partners that we have talked to in the three municipalities and further relevant regional stakeholders were invited to this roundtable. Therefore, we had a mix of stakeholders from public administration, from asylum and refugee care, decision makers, volunteers and forced migrants. The event was designed to present our results, to discuss them among all interview partners and to thank everybody for their participation. In total 27 persons have registered for the event; some asked to bring their children (in total 6). Finally, besides the team of okay and BAB (5 persons), 23 persons (including 1 teenager and 1 interpreter) participated at the roundtable; nine men and 14 women. The youngest participant was the daughter of a forced migrant with 14 years and the oldest was a volunteer over 75 years. All in all, one regional decision maker, one mayor and one former mayor, four from public administration, one from asylum and refugee care, two from regional support structures for municipalities, two former local volunteer coordinators, one headmaster of a school, four volunteers active on individual basis and in associations, volunteer networks and communal offers as well as five forced migrants and one interpreter participated in the event.

⁴ A stakeholder mapping was done in August 2020, which served as a basis for all conducted interviews and the roundtable discussions.

3. Outcomes and observations/results

During the first regional roundtable a dedicated discussion with regard to the SWOT analysis of local structures of social integration took place. Three different approaches (associations, volunteer networks and communal offers), their possibilities and pitfalls, were presented, jointly discussed and complemented with the participants. All of the participants were actively involved in the discussion but the former mayor of a small mountain village particularly shared his extensive experience of different aspects of social integration.

Main aspects of the SWOT with regard to **voluntary work**:

Strengths

- Rapid and unbureaucratic establishment of support services by volunteers, in situation of immediate pressure;
- Mayors or other recognized persons in a municipality are important "icebreakers", acting as multipliers for engagement in voluntary work (for forced migrants)
- Private networks of volunteers often serve as support for refugees
- Informal exchange and encounter with forced migrants strengthen locals' perception of safety
- Forced migrants may volunteer themselves

Weaknesses

- No comprehensive support structures for counseling or guidance of volunteers;
- Overstrain and frustration as danger when professional accompaniment is missing;
- Cooperation with "standard regulatory systems" is not self-evident, unclear roles between volunteers and full-time employees;
- Question of continuity and further development of volunteer services.

Opportunities

- In case of acute need: short-term reactivation of voluntary commitment;
- Low-threshold offerings may also be made available for a broader target group;
- Encouragement of voluntary work by forced migrants.

Threats

- Duplicity with standard structures leads to conflicts
- High expectations of volunteers may yield disappointment

Main aspects of SWOT with regard to **associations / clubs**:

Strengths

- Associations exist in all municipalities;
- If forced migrants participate in associations they profit from benefits in other areas (job search, asylum procedure);
- Forced migrants may take over responsibilities (trainer, equipment manager ...)
- A broader contact (not necessarily membership) is also valuable, associations are "opinion leaders".

Weaknesses

- Potential of associations not yet fully exploited;
- Associations tend to be "male domains".

Opportunities

- Address locals who can build "bridges" to associations for forced migrants;
- Establishment of low-threshold opportunities to join/get started (less binding, free of charge, without membership ...)
- Include also voluntary activities outside associations;
- Establish contact person in the municipality for involvement

Threats

- Requires additional time/resources of club members for accompaniment
- Participation in “traditional” associations may not correspond to the interest of forced migrants

Main aspects of the SWOT with regard to **communal offers**:

Strengths

- Actively shaping encounters between different “population groups”;
- Adaptation and further development of offers according to demand;
- Continuity is more likely to be guaranteed;

Weaknesses

- Provision of human resources and professional expertise is difficult, particularly for small municipalities
- Less flexibility than volunteers

Opportunities

- Expansion of target group
- “Bridge” to other standard systems (German courses, employment service, etc.)
- Enhance visibility of immigration and diversity in rural municipalities

Threats

- Funding is timely limited
- Offers with forced migrants and the locals need patience and persistence.

The discussion on policy recommendations focused on the question how to tap the potential for social integration in rural municipalities. The main recommendation to establish a contact person for integration issues in each municipality was strongly supported by the participants.

As (social) integration is an important issue to be tackled in each municipality also in the future, it is crucial to have personal and reliable linkages between different actors (including volunteers), stakeholders and initiatives, who know about the specificities of the local circumstances and frameworks. It was added that regional coordinators for refugee care are a great endorsement, which are particularly important in building up awareness, know-how, knowledge exchange, networking, and support as well as accompaniment, particularly for the smaller municipalities in rural areas. Furthermore, social encounters and meetings between immigrants including forced migrants and locals should be actively designed. As the CS analyses show, social encounters between immigrants and locals need framework conditions, it is recommended that local as well as regional actors and stakeholders should think about additional adequate social meeting formats to be implemented according to their specific background and needs. This aspect was discussed further in the second roundtable.

While the first part of the second regional roundtable was meant for presenting the results of our case study and the status of policy recommendations and solutions elaborated so far, the second part was designed to discuss two specific questions in smaller groups:

- How to promote further encounter possibilities and meeting opportunities at a local level (between forced migrants and the local population)? How to strengthen volunteer activities?
- With the backdrop of many refugees leaving rural communities after recognition: What are the benefits for forced migrants and for the rural municipality if they stayed? What does a rural municipality have to offer that forced migrants want to stay or that they are able to stay?

All registered people were divided into 4 discussion groups before the event. Some of them had to leave before the discussion in the small groups started. Therefore, the participants of one group were divided among the others so there were only 3 groups in the end.

Before starting the discussion on these two questions, we asked all participants what they found surprising from the results presented. Many participants mentioned that they didn't

know about the engagement in refugee care in other municipalities and they appreciated the exchange with actors from other areas. For some it was particularly surprising to learn from the successful integration of refugees into a soccer club, which led to the fact that they are now volunteers themselves (junior coaches). Some, especially volunteers, who have many stories to tell, have seized the opportunity to share their experiences, which served as a transition to the next question about promoting encounters between forced migrants and locals. The main results are documented in the following list:

- Social and integration policy is a responsibility of municipalities
- Knowledge exchange about different approaches in integration offers can be motivating and fruitful for volunteers
- Successful integration needs a dialogue at ‘eye level’ and based on trust
- Encounter formats that enable a dialogue are necessary
- The program “neighborhood aid”, where asylum seekers could earn some money through carrying out temporary jobs for local individuals enabled many unexpected and useful encounters
- “Third spaces” (low-threshold areas that provide consumption free, open access to all target groups) enable encounters much needed to enhance integration objectives (sewing café, sports field to play soccer or cricket)
- Low-key support for volunteers is needed, such as means of transport and a printer (copy and print learning and drawing materials)
- Covid-19 reduced the engagement of volunteers in refugee integration due to the fact, that many volunteers are vulnerable elderly people. There is a need to think about recruiting new volunteers in the field of asylum and integration

The lively discussion on this question has shown that our policy recommendations are relevant for local actors and raise numerous issues for detailed planning in implementation. Discussing the second question about the benefits for refugees and for municipalities from keeping refugees within local municipalities various insightful aspects were mentioned:
Benefit for municipalities

- Effect on population development: Increase in population numbers (through forced migrants and their children)
- Refugees can take on a “bridging function” between new refugees and the municipality/locals
- Increase in diversity of restaurants, supermarkets, etc. (many forced migrants have opened up a business)

Benefits for refugees

- Beyond above aspects which also might be beneficial to individual refugees, improved well-being due to high quality of living conditions, educational quality, calmness, high air quality, etc.
- In small municipalities there is more flexibility in solving challenges due to closer personal contacts
- Those contacts are also helpful for finding employment
- Educational success can be achieved easier in schools in rural areas with a lower share of migrant kids among students

Anyhow, it was also acknowledged, that it is understandable that refugees are attracted to cities, where family members live and community structures exist.

It was emphasized that the housing market in Vorarlberg is extremely tight and housing cost are so expensive (also in rural municipalities) that many cannot afford to stay and therefore have to migrate to other areas. Restricted mobility due to the dependence of many refugees on public transport was also described as a challenge in rural areas.

Furthermore, the benefit of migration to rural areas might be in the smaller structures, which provides a higher visibility to refugees and locals less opportunities to dissociate from them. It became clear that volunteers can act as opinion leaders and have an impact on the perceptions about newcomers within the local community.

4. Conclusions and reflections

From the roundtable discussions the notion of the local level, i.e. municipalities as the central knots where social encounters take place, is heavily supported.

Volunteers can enhance an environment for accepting in-comers, but it needs public support, official appreciation and recognition and continuous supervision to cope with inherent challenges of social work. Each municipality therefore should have a contact person for integration issues – with small municipalities to be supported in this task by regional coordinators – to support volunteers with organizational and coordinating issues. This can be something as simple as access to a venue, a car for transportation or a possibility to print and copy learning materials or coloring pictures.

Further it is recommended to establish open spaces for all groups of local citizens in order to enhance opportunities of social encounters between forced migrants and locals, which is essential for building a sense of belonging, wellbeing as well as a sense of safety and security. It was strengthened that third spaces, such as the “Naflahus”⁵, an open space with different offers for forced migrants (sewing café, a bicycle workshop, informal child care, etc.) or a sport field where everybody can play without being a member of an association are highly relevant for establishing social contacts. The program of neighborhood aid was highlighted as a great opportunity for social encounters. Several participants stressed the importance of the program to enhance social interactions between forced migrants and locals.

These aspects are particularly important for local development and impact medium- and long-term performance, e.g. through mobility decisions of forced migrants when they decide to stay or leave the rural municipality after receiving their right of abode.

Reflecting on the method used in both roundtables, it has been found to be a good choice, as it allowed all participants to be directly involved in the discussion. However, it was rather

⁵ More information can be found here: <https://www.feldkirch.at/leben/integration/ehrenamt-und-naflahus>

difficult for the participating forced migrants to follow the whole discussion. They only contributed to the discussion when we actively invited them to speak. In one discussion group an interpreter translated, which made it a bit challenging to listen attentively to the participant talking. Overall, this also had the effect of slowing down the discussion. Nevertheless, it was of great importance so that a forced migrant with little knowledge of German could participate. Furthermore, it was highly valued from decision makers or professionals in the field of integration at regional level to have the opportunity to hear first-hand about the experiences from refugees and volunteers at local level.

Bulgaria

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1. Overview

The Bulgarian Regional Roundtable entitled **‘Local development and innovative practices on migration, mobility, integration and inclusion’** was held face-to-face on April 12th 2022 in the Cultural Center in the town of Harmanli. It was an hour and a half long and was moderated by Prof. Anna Kratseva, leader of the Bulgarian MATILDE team. The event was organized in cooperation with the team of Caritas-Bulgaria, who has a local team working in Harmanli. The roundtable was set up as a single, specially organized policy roundtable with **different types of stakeholders such as representatives of regional and local institutions, the business sector, the civic sector and NGOs, the schools and academia, as well as the migrant community**. The discussion was followed by a series of cultural and participatory events.

The method applied during the conduction of the roundtable was structured as follows: Firstly, a **general discussion including various viewpoints in relation to TCNs migration and integration in the region of Harmanli and Haskovo as multilevel and multidimensional processes**. Secondly, exploring in depth certain topics of socio-economic integration of TCNs. Thirdly, deriving policy recommendations based on the preceding discussions. Fourthly, stimulating and deepening the discussion by bringing in the results of the SWOT-analysis/MATRIX and policy recommendations already prepared.

The key points from the agenda of the roundtable were **reterritorialisation and revitalization of remote regions through mobility and migration, intercultural inclusion**

practices and initiatives, reception and integration of migrants and refugees, the link between local development and migration.

2. Participants of the roundtable

According to the Stakeholder Involvement Plan (Gruber, M., Lobnig, C., Scheifflinger, S., Stainer-Hämmerle, K. (2020) Stakeholders Involvement Plan. MATILDE Deliverable 2.8), the following types of stakeholders were invited and participated in the roundtable:

- **Asylum and refugee support providers:** 2 teachers of Bulgarian language from Registration and reception Center (RRC) Harmanli;
- **Education and training institutions:** 4 directors of schools and high schools, 7 teachers, civil society, 1 migrant who is the founder of a language school in Harmanli and provides private tutoring services;
- **International umbrella organizations:** 1 expert from the International Organization for Migration (IOM);
- **Local partner:** 5 representatives of Caritas-Bulgaria;
- **NGO sector:** 1 representative from the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee;
- **Political decision makers:** the Regional Governor of the Haskovo Region and four mayors of villages in the region;
- **4 Businesses sector representatives;**
- **Media representatives:** 5 journalists working in local and regional media;
- **Public administrations:** 1 junior specialist in the municipality of Harmanli, the health mediator of the Municipality of Harmanli, 2 doctors from the hospital in Harmanli and 1 senior expert at Harmanli Cultural Center;
- **5 Representatives of research and sciences institutions** as well as individual researchers: the director of the Historical museum of Harmanli and the Bulgarian research team.

The above-mentioned stakeholders could all be activated to participate in the roundtable due to their preliminary acquaintance with the MATILDE project through the tools of Matilde Toolbox and their interest and commitment to the main topics of the forum.

The total number of participants was 43. In terms of gender balance there were 32 women and 11 men and of age distribution - mostly adults: 19-64 years. There was 1 TCN.

3. Outcomes and observations/results

The aim of the roundtable was to analyze innovative and good practices of inclusion, integration and dynamization of local and regional development through the efforts of citizens, migrants and refugees, as well as returnees from migration, schools, community centers, business and civil society. The event was perceived by representatives of the local community with whom the MATILDE team has actively collaborated in the course of the research as a natural and logical next step on the way to clarifying the main findings of the project and the practical value they are intended to bring being formulated as actionable policy recommendations. **Demonstrated public interest and the active involvement of participants in the round table was due to a large extent to the fact that it was preceded by a successful co-creation process in the implementation of participatory activities in the frame of the action-research conducted within WP5.**

Various topics for the relationship between local development and diverse forms of migration, mobility, and return were addressed during the discussion. **Special attention during the discussions was paid to refugee and migrant children and women in migration.**

Focus was given to the numerous **socio-cultural aspects of integration** - forms of inclusion and participation, activities of local authorities, non-governmental and humanitarian organizations, educational practices for integration of children (school and non-formal), intercultural aspects of local festivities. **Caritas-Harmanli and other NGOs representatives presented some of the organization's humanitarian and intercultural inclusion practices.**

Representatives of the educational institutions developed the topic of the **educational intercultural policies** and practices in the region and shared valuable opinions about children integration in the Bulgarian school. Representatives of the health sector introduced **the topic of health protection and health preventive activities for TCNs**.

Participants engaged in vivid conversation around important talking points addressing the migrants and the mobile citizens in the region as new actors of local development with a **contribution to the revitalization of depopulated villages, with innovative ecological practices, entrepreneurial initiatives**. To emphasize the link between rural development and migration, mayors of four villages shared concrete examples of the intercultural dynamics in Sakar villages - from Finns and English to Ukrainians.

The economic aspects of migration in the region were also introduced and developed in the frame of the discussion with topics such as **social entrepreneurship, the role of the Registration and Reception Center in Harmanli as one of the largest employers in the city, successful business activities run by TNCs as well as the Bulgarian business employing refugees and migrants, returnees from migration (international and domestic)**.

The second part of the roundtable was dedicated to the process of formulation of policy recommendation which was opened by the presentation of some of the results of the **SWOT-analysis and some questions from the pre-validation template of the Policy recommendations and solutions Matrix**. Having in mind some of the most interesting findings the audience felt encouraged to reflect on the topics discussed.

In the third stage of the roundtable all participants were invited to individually rank the final 10 selected recommendations by its level of importance from 1 to 10 (1 being most important and 10 - least important). The valuation of policy recommendations referred to the (relative) social acceptability and importance given to their outcomes.

As outlined by prof. Anna Krasteva **the roundtable gives once again an opportunity to deepen the research “by not only talking about TCNs, but also talking with them”**. In fact, one of the main focuses of the roundtable discussion was namely the identified **need to enhance mutual understanding**. The last relies on the overcoming of language barriers.

Learning the language of the local community is one of the key prerequisites ensuring a successful integration. In this sense, invited representatives of the education sector shared their concerns about the insufficient Bulgarian language classes in school. **For that reason, it was pointed out that additional efforts and funding shall be allocated to meet the need for Bulgarian language classes for TCN children in school. This measure was ranked at 1st place out of 10 policy recommendations.**

In addition, TCNs have expressed their motivation to learn the Bulgarian language as well as to the lack of access to Bulgarian language programs. As a possible solution to this issue several participants pointed out to the recommendation that **state institutions and the business sector shall join forces to meet the need of TCNs to learn Bulgarian by providing language classes for foreigners that would allow them to move along the integration process, especially their access to the labor market.**

A particularly sensitive issue for the Bulgarian context was raised and discussed, namely what is positive and what is negative in the demographic situation of the region. The variety of opinions articulated the conclusion that it is necessary to look at the trends through several prisms. We had the chance to discuss the economic and cultural one. A telling example is the fact shared by mayors of several villages in the region - there are no more houses for sale which is due to the fact that in recent decades the region has become noticeably multicultural with the settlement of many TCNs. **This sign of reterritorialization has in turn provoked revitalisation and revalorisation of the region, as it serves as a motor of local residents' sense of belonging to the region.** Local people's interest in repairing and maintaining their properties has increased.

In terms of culture, a director of a history museum in the region shared a successful **good practice enhancing the integration of migrants and their feeling of acceptance in the region:** "We make efforts to provoke refugees and especially children to visit the museum. We are convinced that **the best way to build a harmonious coexistence is to learn about each other's ethnic culture and that, on an individual level, everyone is able to make a cultural analogy between the country of origin and the country of migration**" It was noted that migrants demonstrate a high interest in the culture of the place and the museum

has a good attendance of children living in the refugee camp in Harmanli. This and other similar **interventions provoked a further discussion on the topic of the impact of participatory cultural practices on enhancing social cohesion and involvement of TCNs in the social life of the community.** Several mayors shared their positive experiences in organizing successful intercultural events related to art, music, sport and ecology in the villages. Taking into consideration the willingness of local community and local authorities **it has been reached a common consensus that there is a need for more systematic efforts in planning intercultural events which shall be published regularly on the website of Haskovo District in Bulgarian and English.**

The roundtable opened a space for involving the local community in the MATILDE project, a chance for co-production of knowledge and co-suggesting future improvements of the region. In addition, local people were encouraged to formulate and imagine policy recommendations in a way that they can be implemented on a EU level. Thus, they could perceive their needs as common for the whole European region. **The realization of the event itself was an effective method of reducing the feeling of distance that residents of rural and remote places might have towards EU institutions.** Scholars have suggested that rural, suburban and peripheral areas are more likely to be influenced by anti-European political rhetoric.¹ **In this regard, such activities could help as they introduce measures to mitigate the trends of euroscepticism in rural areas.**

Furthermore, In the context of the Ukrainian refugee crisis, the roundtable provided an opportunity for local authorities to provide **information about the number of newly arrived Ukrainians in the region of Haskovo and Harmanli.** The Regional Governor addressed the mayors who were present, explaining the need for refugees to be registered with temporary protection, which enables **various social services, easier realization on the labor market and health protection.** The round-table also served as **an occasion to refute false rumors that have been circulating about the temporary protection Ukrainian refugees seek in Bulgaria.**

A promising sign in terms of the implementation of defined policy recommendations during the roundtable was **the active participation and the demonstrated strong interest in**

topics of the MATILDE project of the Regional Governor of the Haskovo Region. The latter expressed her personal convictions that **the region of Haskovo and Harmanli has always been a place that welcomes and helps newcomers** and that positive change through policy recommendations can be achieved by a **strong cooperation between different actors** who shall work as “interconnected vessels” to face all challenges regarding the local development through mobility and inclusion. **Verbal engagement of representatives of local and regional authorities as well as vivid discussions between participants have allowed the regional community on the one hand to critically co-assess current situation and on the other hand to realize the immense intercultural experience that local people and authorities have gained throughout last years and finally to send a strong common message indicating an imperative for future action.**

4. Conclusions and reflections

In conclusion, the regional roundtable on “Local Development and Innovative Practices of Migration, Mobility, Integration and Inclusion” held in Harmanli was a **great occasion to present viewpoints and talk openly about TCNs migration and integration in the region as multilevel and multidimensional processes.** The conduction of the roundtable was of crucial importance for the Bulgarian case study in terms of gathering together a variety of stakeholders to reflect on the topics of migration and its impact on the local development and on the different experiences with refugee and migrant integration the local community has. **The chosen method of both individual and common reflection and evaluation of policy recommendations enabled participants to get acquainted with different perspectives** in relation to TCNs and **contribute to a rich discussion**, first of its kind, aimed at bringing positive change as to the optimization of the contribution and the role of intercultural factors for local development.

The roundtable was planned and held as a part of a two-day local event, including various intercultural participatory events such the opening of the photo exhibition ‘Faces

of diversity', poetry recitals, the continuation of the initiative 'Intercultural gardens as green bridges and a guided tour on the intercultural history of the architectural pearl of Harmanli – the newly restored historic bridge. The two-day local event has been **widely reported in numerous media at local, regional, and national levels, including the Bulgarian News Agency and 6-7 minutes' reportage at the regional TV.** The idea of combining the roundtable with cultural activities resulted in more interest, higher level of diverse participation and stronger publicity of the whole event.

The process of drafting policy recommendations is followed by **actions of disseminating the results of the roundtable and informing relevant institutions about its outcomes.** The Bulgarian MATILDE team is fully committed to popularize the results of the roundtable and to assist political representatives in understanding logics of policy recommendations and implementing them.

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Finland, North Karelia

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1. Overview

In North Karelia, we held two roundtables, in both of our case study municipalities of Kitee and Lieksa. Both were held in early May 2022 (5th in Kitee and 9th in Lieksa) and lasted for about two hours. The roundtables were held in the premises of our local partners: folk high school in Kitee and Metka community house in Lieksa. We had invited representatives from all our partners in the municipalities, representatives from the administration of these two municipalities as well as local immigrants. We had much more success in Lieksa than in Kitee in attracting people to join us.

Both roundtables started with our (Lauri Havukainen and Pirjo Pöllänen) presentation about the main results from the case studies, especially focusing on the municipality specific conclusions. After that we had a discussion based on our SWOT-analysis and few themes we had made. We also filled up our SWOT-analyses (at local, regional and national level) more based on the discussion and feedback we received.

Overall, we are happy with the roundtables as the discussion seemed necessary both for us and the local actors. While there were cases, where we would have liked more of the participants to take part in the discussion, we were pleased with the events overall. The best result was in Lieksa, where we finally got the different actors, who had previously had some friction and miscommunication between them, together on the same table to discuss future cooperation.

2. Participants of the roundtable

In the roundtable, we held in Kitee, we had in total seven participants: three teachers from the folk high school, a representative from Aljans ry (local association of Russian speakers), a representative from the early childhood education services of Kitee and two immigrants of Russian origin. One of the folk high school teachers and the representative from the early childhood education services were also of immigrant background. Six of the participants were women and all were working aged, between about 25 to 60 years old. While we were happy with the overall roundtable, we would have liked to get more participation from the municipality, Aljans ry and the Lutheran church, which we tried to get to participate in our research on multiple occasions to no avail. The gender gap is mostly to do with the fact that almost all the workers in our local partners are women and thus we were not expecting higher representation of men.

In Lieksa, we had in total 15 participants in our roundtable. Four were from Metka house (operated by the Somali Family association of Lieksa, although none of the participants were Somali), two from the Lutheran church and one representative from both the municipality (youth services) and the folk high school. We also had a diverse set of immigrant participants, numbering seven in total. The only men in the roundtable were four immigrants from three different African origins. This also highlights the fact that most of the personnel working with migrant issues both in public and third sector are women. In our roundtable meeting, we also had three immigrant women join us: one from Somalia and two from Russia. The age distribution was similar to that of Kitee with all being between about 20 to 60 years old. All in all, we were happy with the participation rate, especially as we had a representative from the municipality. We had tried to get a participant from the municipality earlier in our research, but we did not have any success then.

3. Outcomes and observations/results

While from a technical point of view the roundtables went similarly there was a clear difference in the open discussion phase in Lieksa, caused mainly by the larger attendance. While in both there were those participants who were more talkative and opinionated, in Lieksa the interest to the topic was broader. Both roundtables were concentrating on discussion of languages, language learning and language teaching. Other topics in the discussions ranged from the roles and cooperation of the municipalities, different institutions and NGOs to the current geopolitical situation. Especially in Kitee, the war in Ukraine was topical, as it has affected the transnational everyday life in border region between Finland and Russia.

3.1 Kitee

The main points of discussion in our case study and thus in the roundtables was language learning and teaching, language hierarchies and use of different languages. In Kitee, however, where the context of border and issues related to it are pivotal as most of the migrants are Russian speakers from Russia. The discussion inevitably concentrated on the changes of geopolitical situation after February 2022. The participants made it clear that since Russia started the war in Ukraine the transnational life have become even more vulnerable and for example travelling and crossing the border to the Russian side has become tense. Some participants noted that in current circumstances, they avoid crossing the border to Russia. This has happened in a time, when the crossing activities have not even had the time to normalise after the Covid-19 pandemic. According to a recent news report (Saukkonen, 2022), the border crossings in the border crossing point near Kitee has been about one fifth of what it was before the war and the pandemic.

In SWOT-analysis, the main challenges (threats) were concerning the insecure situation in border region and how this is going to influence the future in Kitee region. Nobody had any solutions for this, and people were worried about how to keep up their family and friendship contacts in future in Finland and in Russia. It must be noted that most of the Russians were unwilling to discuss about war and the atmosphere during the roundtable was somewhat tense. While some of this might have to do with the language barrier, most of the Russian speaking participants were not very talkative during the roundtable and often had to be asked something directly to get them to participate in the discussion. As researchers, we had decided beforehand that we are not going to intentionally lead the discussion towards the on-going war. This, however, could not be completely avoided, especially in the discussion with the language teachers after the official roundtable had ended.

One of the policy recommendations, we were suggesting, was the integration of training periods into language learning. It had been brought up several times during focus groups that immigrants would benefit, if part of their language learning would happen in actual workplaces. The language teachers told us that new integration education curricula, which comes to effect in August 2022, will address this by including a workplace practice to the course. This was seen as beneficial in principle, but the teachers were hesitating, if there will be enough workplaces and opportunities in small rural localities such as Kitee and Lieksa to put the curriculum into practice. The lack of employers is a real problem in small municipalities such as Kitee and Lieksa and the fact that many immigrants do not have the means of commuting into the regional centre of Joensuu should be taken into account.

The language teaching and its' challenges were discussed in the roundtable discussions. Our case study indicates that when immigrant starts language learning from zero level, it is important to have teachers, who can communicate in a language familiar to the migrants themselves. In Kitee, this is quite easy to realize as most students in the language course groups were Russian speakers and there were also teachers fluent in it. The homogeneity of immigrants in Kitee was seen both as a strength and a weakness for the region. Most of the Finnish as second language teachers in Kitee folk high school could use Russian language as a tool of teaching. According to the teachers, the results from language courses indicate

that those who could use their native language as tool of learning in first beginner courses, learn Finnish quicker. Still, the homogeneity was also seen as a problem when operating with non-Russian speaking immigrants.

In Kitee the participants agreed with the researchers' observation that the interaction between different stakeholders (third sector, municipality, and different public institutions) should be more efficient. The role of municipality and public sector in general was noticed but the bureaucracy was seen as complicated and not flexible enough. In the current situation, the local stakeholders were also worried about the good population relations among Russian speakers as they have become internecine along political lines. For example, some Russian speakers do not want to take part in the activities of our local partner Aljans because of this split and personal disputes. A new layer of friction has arrived after the municipality of Kitee has quite recently received a group of Ukrainian asylum seekers. It is not necessarily easy to set up good population relations between them and Russian speakers from Russia, even if the Russians support Ukraine. These are some of the future challenges of Kitee border region that need be addressed.

We also suggested in our policy recommendations that at local level it would be beneficial for language learning, integration, and public perception if the activities organized by third sector (NGOs) would include the Finnish speakers. They might also be able to help with the possible hurdles with Finnish bureaucracy. In addition to immigrants, Finnish speaking participants, involving in activities, the interactions between locals and newcomers would make the everyday life more vivid and help migrants learn Finnish language faster. This suggestion was welcomed, however the practical issues such as how to gain the interest of Finnish speakers was considered as a challenge.

Considering the current geopolitical situation and the tensions it is creating, the atmosphere in the Kitee roundtable meeting was calm and relaxed. While the different actors did not participate evenly, we got participation from everyone. We also managed to present our results and managed also to get feedback and new insights for language teaching and language learning. The main concerns centred around the new integration education curriculum, precariousness of life in the border region after Covid-19 and the war.

3.2 Lieksa

In Lieksa, the roundtable discussion was interactive and many participants from different perspectives and various positions were taking part in the discussion. The main topic in Lieksa was similar to that in Kitee: languages, how to use languages, how to learn languages and how to teach languages. This is where the differences in the municipal demographics come to play as the immigrant community in Lieksa is much more diverse than in Kitee. While in Kitee, it is possible to use Russian language as a tool for language learning with those immigrants, who have no or little knowledge on Finnish, in Lieksa, this is much more difficult because of the variety of spoken languages. In Lieksa, there simply are not teachers who are proficient in other languages such as Somali and Tigrinya.

In Lieksa, the Metka community house is a popular surrounding, where people of different origins gather and the common language there is Finnish. We were giving our presentation in Finnish and after the formal roundtable discussion, immigrants were asking if our presentation could be translated to their languages. We later decided that our power point presentation will be translated in Arabic, Somali, Tigrinya and Russian so that also those migrants, who could not follow the Finnish presentation can read it. It turned out that our presentation is also useful for local partners and if it is translated to other languages the third sector personnel and maybe even municipality workers can use the presentation for their purposes.

The main outcome from Lieksa roundtable was, that two main third sector actors in Lieksa, the Lutheran church and Metka community house, realised that they offer similar activities in overlapping times. After the roundtable, they ended up swapping contact information and rearranging their activities so to prevent future overlapping and create some cooperation. It must be said that for researchers, this was definitely- a good practical result, and we were happy with ourselves that we could help the local actors to reformulate their activities and work better together to integrate migrants into the Lieksa region.

The topic about language learning in workplaces was discussed like in Kitee. The language teachers were worried, if they can find out enough training places for their students. Even if the training periods do not demand any financial efforts from employers, it is still not easy to find the places for training periods in rural locations. In Lieksa, the teachers were telling, that they are afraid about competing the training places with the local vocational school, and they would like to avoid any competition between the local actors.

The SWOT-analysis were also discussed in the Lieksa roundtable. Lieksa was seen as a multicultural region and the future challenges are seen as possible to overcome with good and flexible cooperation between different actors. The role of municipality as one of the main actors to strengthen the integration of immigrants to Lieksa region was seen as important. Concurrently, it was however noted that there is a need for cultural training and translation within the municipal services. It was also discussed that the on-going post- Covid-19 labour Shortage in certain sectors, such as industry and services, is good news for migrants, giving them better opportunities to gain jobs. We also noticed this, when trying to organise the roundtables as many of the people, who had taken part in our data collection, had to refuse, because they had found work and we were organising the meeting during daytime. As suggested in our presentation, the current labour market situation gives opportunities even for immigrants, whose knowledge in Finnish language is rudimentary.

In Lieksa, the local actors informed us about the importance of research-based information of their activities and they said that they appreciate our work and the cooperation with us, which they would like to continue in future. To sum up, the atmosphere during the roundtable in Lieksa was excited, positive and friendly, and many participants were sharing their thoughts, ideas and opinions.

4. Conclusions and reflections

According to our observations of roundtable discussions, it seems that our recommendations of more synchronized cooperation between different local actors is going to be developed in the future. The local multicultural association in Lieksa (Metka house) is willing to cooperate with other third sector and public sector organisations. In Kitee, the situation is maybe more demanding, because the local multicultural association is run by Russian speakers and not all Russian speakers feel comfortable participating their activities. Much is dependent on contemporary geopolitical situation and the good population relations among Russian speakers themselves and between Russian speakers and other members of the local community.

In the future, the good population relations and the influence of the on-going geopolitical situation need to be followed up and studied carefully. The war in Ukraine definitely had an effect on transnational life of immigrants, especially in the border regions. The research-based analyses of on-going situations are important, and they need to circulate to local actors and migrants so that they can use in their work and in everyday life.

The roundtable meetings in Lieksa and Kitee were successful in terms of methodology and in terms of contents. We were able to discuss freely with people, whom we had been working with in our case study, and we managed to share the results and even some recommendations with them. Some of the non-native speakers in Lieksa even suggested to translate our presentation into Arabic and Somali language. The only problem, we noticed during the two roundtables, was that participants of public sector actors (municipalities) were difficult to motivate to take part in our roundtables. There are many issues, which need cooperation between public sector and third sector actors. The chosen method of SWOT-analysis turned out to be desirable choice of going through the results and how the research results can benefit the everyday work in local surroundings.

From the personal and professional learning point of view the main result was the functionality of two researchers (Lauri Havukainen and Pirjo Pöllänen). We have different

experiences of doing research and different levels of knowledge of local communities, but the way we complement each other made the case study process and finally also the roundtable meetings as successful as they were. The roundtable continued our learning process, and the final result was that the local partners were willing to continue cooperation with us in future as well.

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Germany

Authors: Tobias Weidinger, David Spenger and Stefan Kordel

1. Overview

The **first regional roundtable** took place in a classroom of the Centre for Care Professions in the small town of Scheinfeld in the rural district of Neustadt a.d. Aisch-Bad Windsheim (NEA) on March 17th, 2022. The 2.5 hours face-to-face-event was moderated by FAU researcher Stefan Kordel and organized by the local contact person Bettina Handschuh-Kiesel, who is a project coordinator within the health region plus (*Gesundheitsregion plus*) network at the rural district administration of NEA and deals with the recruiting, onboarding and integration of international (health)care apprentices. The onetime event focused on the labour market integration of third-country nationals (TCNs) in the (health)care sector from the perspective of employers and was embedded in the on-going activities of NEA's health region plus network. The event consisted of two parts: in the first part, Tobias Weidinger presented the most important results of WP3, WP4 and WP5 with regard to the recruiting and onboarding of TCNs, which was followed by a discussion about good recruiting and onboarding practices. The second part included another short presentation by Stefan Kordel about the most important results with regard to the retention of TCNs within the companies and the region and draft policy recommendations based on the findings. Similar to the first part, a discussion about potential recommendations followed.

The **second regional roundtable** with stakeholders from the rural district Berchtesgadener Land (BGL) was implemented by means of a 1.5 hours zoom video call on May 18th, 2022. The onetime event was organized by FAU and focused on the labour market integration of third-country nationals (TCNs) in the hospitality industry and was embedded in the on-going activities of the local chapter of the German Hotel & Catering Association (DEHOGA). The

event consisted of two parts: in the first part, David Spenger and Tobias Weidinger presented the most important results of WP3, WP4 and WP5 with regard to the recruiting, onboarding and retention of TCNs, which was followed by a discussion about good practices. The second part included another short presentation by Tobias Weidinger about the draft policy recommendations based on the findings. Similar to the first part, a discussion about potential recommendations followed.

2. Participants of the roundtable

The invitation to the **first regional roundtable** was shared by the above mentioned local contact person among her network, which includes CEOs and facility managers of (day) hospitals, day-care centres, old age homes and mobile nursing services as well as the headmistress of the Centre for Care Professions. In total, four participants could be welcomed: one participant from public administration, two participants from, private businesses/NGOs and one participant from an education and training institution. Unfortunately, further participants had to cancel their participation at short notice due to quarantine and isolation or urgent deadline work. Participants were at working age, most of whom identified as women (three). For safety reasons and to comply with applicable regulations at that time, participants and the project team wore FFP2-face masks for the entire duration of the event.

For the **second regional roundtable**, FAU invited the executive board of the local branch of DEHOGA, the municipal special-purpose association Berchtesgaden that aims at promoting tourism, as well as members of the rural district administration, including the local contact person Astrid Kaeswurm. In total, four stakeholders took part in the online meeting, who fall under the category public administrations (three participants) and private businesses/NGOs (one). However, due to other obligations, the only business owner had to leave the meeting earlier. All participants were at working age, whereby two each identified as men and women.

3. Outcomes and observations/results

The **mood at the roundtables** was very friendly and cooperative. The participants were already known to each other due to the existing networks. At the face-to-face event, participants used the opportunity to discuss other matters with each other during the break and at the end of the meeting. Five of the eight discussants were also known to the FAU team from previous encounters.

The **most important topics of the discussion at the first regional roundtable** revolved around various aspects that foster (or hinder) the recruiting and onboarding of TCNs in the company and the region⁶. Participants highlighted the role of private recruiting agencies and social networks in the country where one aims to recruit from and pointed to the significance of intercultural competencies, e.g. with regard to knowledge about the school(ing) system in the countries of origin. Based on experts' previous experiences in the rural context, individuals who are recruited from abroad should ideally have a driving license to foster mobility at work (e.g. for mobile nursing services) as well as to ease commuting to the workplace and the vocational school. According to the discussants, the entry of apprentices to Germany should also happen as early as possible, in order to solve administrative issues and allow TCNs to get to know the region prior to the start of the vocational training every September. In addition, the provision of housing close to the workplace and a contact person, who acts as mediator between the landlord and the TCN tenant, are considered core. A contact person at the work place, who is also in the same age as the TCN, was also regarded as fruitful for the onboarding process. Furthermore, discussants pointed towards the significant role of German language competencies, both at school and at the work place and noted that an increasing social network among fellow country-people may result in a lack of necessity to speak and continue to foster one's German. For those TCNs, who already live in

⁶ The topics described below were taken up unanimously by all participants. The FAU team did not notice any differences between the discussants. If there were, they are clearly highlighted in the text.

Germany, one employer also addressed the issue of lacking knowledge about their legal status and their work permits, which would impede the recruiting process. The same person also perceived a competition between companies to recruit staff in general and between hospitals and old age homes in particular. Another participant, however, stressed that every field has its advantages and disadvantages and highlighted that the increasing competition is not related to TCNs specifically, but reflects a general trend instead.

In addition to the topics mentioned, the discussants also raised the issue about the social integration of TCNs recruited from abroad, in order to increase their staying orientation. Therefore, measures should target family members, of TCNs e.g. by means of family reunification, and social networks, e.g. by means of a foundation of migrant associations. However, the participants also witnessed the phenomenon of onward mobility, i.e. TCNs, who already moved away (or aimed to do so) from the rural district to big cities as well as from rural municipalities to the small towns of the district. Due to the venue of the event, the Centre of Care Professions, a focus was put on education and training.

The **most important topics of the discussion at the second regional roundtable** were, firstly, the shortage both in terms of unskilled and skilled labour, which is surprisingly not yet recognized by all tourism entrepreneurs in the region, and, secondly, the role of acknowledgement and well-being at the workplace. With regard to the latter aspect, the participants not only pointed to the significance of remuneration and further training opportunities, but also highlighted the role of tandems and social interaction for a welcoming atmosphere in the short-run and a staying orientation of the TCN in the company in the long-run. They concluded that it is 'relatively easy' for small and big companies to pursue this due to social proximity on the hand or professionalization on the other hand. However, for medium-sized companies this would be rather difficult.

The **reaction to the draft policy recommendations** was very positive and sympathetic. In the course of the regional roundtables, it became clear that in comparison to many other companies and facilities in the rural district, the participants' ones are already sensitized for many issues with regard to sustainable recruiting, onboarding and retention of TCNs. Their attention to this topic and their intention to improve the situation even more, is also

underlined by the participants' presence at the regional roundtables. In the course of the first regional roundtable, concretely, the discussants questioned the significance of the importance of the rural origin of TCNs for a sustainable labour market integration in rural areas. The suggestion to take into account family members and foster family reunification was also conditioned by participants due to the fact that daycare slots for potential children would lack in the rural district, or would not match the terms of service in the (health)care sector. With regard to the second regional roundtable, participants underlined the importance of faster decision-making processes with regard to visa applications and recognition procedures of foreign credentials. Again, they also highlighted the role of a good atmosphere at and beyond the workplace. The stakeholders redeveloped the recommendation of a buddy system and suggested one shared buddy for TCNs for a small number of companies, if companies are too small to establish such a system themselves. Finally, they reaffirmed the importance of an intercultural opening of clubs and associations. The **implementation potential of the drafted policy recommendations** can be considered very high in the case of the (health)care sector, not least due to the fact that there is a strong need for action in light of the shortage of workers in general and in the rural districts in particular. With regard to the hospitality industry, we see the implementation potential more restrained. This is related to the competitive situation between the entrepreneurs in particular. To increase the likelihood of implementation, however, during the discussion, participants of the regional round tables were explicitly asked to name appropriate persons or institutions that should ideally be responsible.

The **further procedure** is as follows: in order to disseminate outcomes of the local roundtable and policy recommendations, two policy briefs in local language are prepared. They encompass the most important outcomes of the WP3, WP4 and WP5 research with a focus on the (health)care sector respectively the hospitality industry. The policy briefs target all relevant actors in the rural districts, including policy makers, administration, employers and facility managers and the respective HR departments. Moreover, to date, FAU researches are continuously asked for advice and incorporated in events. A trustful and cooperative basis, which was stimulated by MATILDE, promises a sustainable cooperation in the future.

4. Conclusions and reflections

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 network in NEA and the activities in BGL, which aim at fostering the recruiting, onboarding and retention of (health)care workers and workers in the hospitality industry. The impact of the action-research activities, however, cannot be fully estimated, but needs to be evaluated in the long-run. Therefore, selected **future research gaps** could be:

- an evaluation of the implementation process of policy recommendations;
- an improved understanding of ‘good’ conditions for labour market integration, professional development and social participation of employees in the (health)care sector (including home nursing) as well as the hospitality industry; and
- an identification of valuable strategies and instruments for stakeholders in companies, facilities, private households, administration and politics to foster the staying of employees in the (health)care sector, the hospitality industry and in rural regions.

Regarding the **setting and approach chosen** for the regional roundtables, we are very satisfied with the output generated, given the difficult circumstances in which we had to conduct the empirical fieldwork, i.e. the heavy workload of local stakeholders and the on-going COVID-19 pandemic and regulations regarding isolation, contact tracing and quarantine. Despite the obstacles, we followed the advice of the local contact persons and planned and implemented the roundtable as a face-to-face respectively an online event even with the risk of a potential decline of certain stakeholders. However, we could have indeed offered a hybrid version of the event to foster participation of those in isolation or quarantine, those who feared the risk of infection or those who had to come to Scheinfeld from peripheral parts of the district to spare travel time and costs. In addition, the room provided

as well as the applicable distancing rules at that time negatively impacted the interactive designing of the evaluation of the most important policy recommendations, e.g. prevented the use of a scoring exercise.

What we as researchers learned from the regional roundtables is that the rural regions, companies and facilities need to be reaffirmed and supported to better pool their resources in the field of recruiting, onboarding and retention of international newcomers. The retention of immigrants is still seen as too isolated from the structures that have been established, e.g. in the context of refugee relief work. However, we really hope that the regional roundtables and other WP5 activities may have had an impact to sensitize local stakeholders about the necessity to strengthen their efforts.

Italy

Author: Mia Scotti in collaboration with Monica Gilli and Andrea Membretti

1. Overview

Under the WP6 task “Policy recommendations based on stakeholders’ consultations”, the Italian MATILDE team organized three roundtables (RT), two local-regional roundtables and a national one. Due to COVID – 19 restrictions at that time, roundtables have been organized online through the WebEx and Zoom platforms with a duration of one hour and a half each. The first roundtable took place on the 1st of March 2022, with a number of stakeholders from the area of the Metropolitan City of Turin, one of the two MATILDE regions present in Italy. The second roundtable was held on the 10th of March 2022, with a focus on policy recommendations to improve the TCNs inclusion at national level, and has involved only national stakeholders. The national roundtable was broadcast online via Facebook. And the last roundtable took place on the 22nd of March 2022 with local and regional stakeholders from the area of South Tyrol, the second MATILDE region in Italy. The MATILDE Italian team organized three roundtables. Each roundtable involved different stakeholders depending on the dimension to be investigated (national, regional, local). In the two local-regional roundtables, the actors involved were from WP5.3 Action Research Activities” (e.g. NGOs representatives, voluntary associations, entrepreneurs, mayors and political leaders). In the national roundtable, the actor involved were politicians and representatives from national research institutes and institutions have been involved.

The MATILDE Italian research group moderated each meeting using slides. A more structured approach was used in the local-regional roundtables whilst a more discursive line applied to the national one. This to improve the event communicative effectiveness that was broadcast online and reach a wider audience. UNI – TO researchers moderated all

roundtables with the support of PowerPoint slides to highlight the main points to be stressed in the debate (e.g. proposed policy recommendations).

Method/approach:

- First step: presentation of the research results through a SWOT analysis that highlights, for each investigation level (national, local or regional): opportunities, challenges, strengths and weaknesses of the reception system and the inclusion policies in Italy;
- Second step: description and debate on the policy recommendations and actions suggested.

2. Participants of the roundtable

The national roundtable involved public policy experts, representatives of National Research Centers, politicians, local development and welfare policy experts. The local-regional roundtables involved representatives of local institutions (e.g. mayors), representatives of voluntary associations and ecclesiastic bodies active in the reception system, representatives of businesses, and representatives of reception projects of the national SAI system (the national reception system). The most difficult actors to involve were the politicians. This was due to the Ukraine crisis and the Russian invasion, which engaged the agenda of many of the ones working on immigration.

The roundtables involved 24 people in total. The national roundtables involved six people, while the local-regional ones involved nine people each. The participants were gender mixed with a predominance of women, who numbered fifteen out of twenty-four. The participants were all adults with an age range between 19 and 64 years old. Only one was older than 65. TCNs did not participate in the roundtables.

3. Outcomes and observations/results

A high participation and constructive debate characterized all three meetings. Participants interacted easily with an open attitude. The SWOT-analysis and the MATRIX tools served to frame the debate and its objectives. The results from the SWOT-analysis were preliminary shared with the participants, in order to frame the local, regional and national context. The SWOT-analysis served to highlight strengths and weaknesses of Italy's reception system and inclusion patterns at local, regional and national level. The MATRIX supported the drafting of concrete policy recommendations for each critical element detected. The involved stakeholders mostly agreed with the suggestions proposed by the research group while a few criticisms emerged. The debate contributed to sort out a ranking order of the proposed solutions and to better target and validate the proposed policies.

The roundtables were organized according to the territorial dimensions of interest (national, local, regional): this approach favoured a more in-depth validation of the recommendations with respect to the real situations and cases. However, this choice reduced the potential vertical comparison and knowledge exchange between stakeholders from different analysis levels.

The results from preparatory analysis and research were summarized in the MATRIX and three main policy recommendations highlighted to be presented and discussed with stakeholders in the rounds. For each policy recommendation, the research group proposed actions and solutions to overcome challenges and constraints to TCNs inclusion in local societies, communities and the work market. On average, participants mainly agreed with the proposed recommendations. More suggestions and specifications emerged from the local regional tables that brought to light some unique specificities of each territorial context initially not captured.

Following the roundtables main results and messages emerged:

National roundtable:

- Migration flows should be approached as an economic and social opportunity and this vision should be promoted and shared on a national scale;
- Long-term inclusive path and strategies are needed to go beyond a superficial, emergency and first aid exclusive approach, especially in relation to refugees and asylum seekers;
- Migration flows and patterns are complex phenomenon and need to be handled accordingly. A multidimensional approach is required to understand and to propose appropriate responses to the demands it brings (from an economic, social, anthropological point of view);
- To tackle migration and its impact at local, regional, national and European level with a scientific approach, providing an objective assessment of its impact, is crucial;
- In Italy's inland and mountainous areas there are several effective opportunities in terms of inclusion of new inhabitants, including foreigners;
- The global and local dimensions are two inseparable elements that need to be linked to successfully address the challenges related to migration and breaking out of the dynamics of fear and hatred. Reciprocity and a win-win strategy are the means to overturn the way the migration issue is negatively perceived;
- Migration should be conceived as a flow between flows of mobility;

Local/Regional roundtables:

- An emergency and sectoral approach damages both migrants and hosting communities;
- Fears should not be isolated but rather be relocated in a national debate;
- Small municipalities must be seen as key players in a balanced growth process. Each of them must be part of a broader vision of development and inclusion. Municipalities must be recognized as active players in these processes. National policies must accompany local processes in this direction. Municipalities and communities must be

considered as an essential counterpart of the reception pacts. They must be seen as key players in the strategies that must be found to foster inclusion and a mutual benefit approach;

- Every actor, formal and informal, must feel agent of a broader process to build an effective response to the reception and inclusion needs of the TCNs;
- Everyone has to feel a sense of belonging to a process to make it his own;
- In order to promote effective inclusion processes at all territorial levels, it is essential to consider both the rights of those, who are welcomed, and those, who welcome. Find a recognition of both, a common ground and meeting points between them is essential;
- Within mobility flows, there are many different people and needs. Assessing the characteristics of these people and understanding, how they can relate to the local contexts, guiding them towards adequate and specific training and support, is an essential aspect;
- Local experiences and good practices should be shared to promote a positive narrative of reception practices with the idea of building a "welcoming Europe" perspective;
- Constraints to welfare services and essential services access (e.g. school, health and transport) affect the entire citizenry without distinction between TCNs and Italians;
- It is necessary to move away from the exclusive planning of services for migrants in favour of services for the whole communities, in order to revitalize them, promote the cohesion of their inhabitants, and encourage the establishment of new actors. Policies should be imagined for the community in its global dimension;
- When it comes to training, it is necessary to remember that learning is first and foremost an exchange, a collective process of exchange. Those, who come from outside, have a lot to teach;
- Cultural mediators are essential figures in many situations. The service is two-way, both for the migrant and for the community;

- When it comes to inclusion, schools play a crucial role. Educational institutions should be more involved in the design and debate on the topic;
- It is not possible to apply the same approach to urban, mountainous and inland areas. To be effective, projects must take into account the territorial dimension of their application;
- Building a culture of exchange based on recognising the value of others is a long and difficult process. A lot of work must be done in this direction, in addition to cultural mediation and welfare policies;
- Welcoming and inclusion are processes that require time, resources and targeted investments;
- In order to enter the labour market and especially to have perspectives for professional growth, prerequisites as language proficiency are essential;
- Inclusion needs for single individuals compared to families are different, and are more consistent for the second ones especially if they include children;
- TCNs, which settle down locally, should be inserted in a system of continuous training. This would allow a strong involvement of local communities as it would create opportunities for locals and newcomers to meet;
- Despite some good attempts, the reception systems lack coordination among its players; a better coordination would help in being more effective and support the institutionalization of good practices. Excellent experiences and projects existed at local level, but they ended without having been institutionalized;
- Cultural aspects and diversity should be promoted to foster interventions and actions effectiveness.

Major differences between roundtables

The roundtables differed mainly by scale of analysis: two roundtables focused locally/regionally and one nationally. Participants in the three roundtables had different professional backgrounds: in the local roundtables, heads of non-profit organizations, local political leaders, business representatives, social service and care workers participated. In

the national roundtable, policymakers and representatives of national institutions and associations participated. The national roundtable addressed national issues concerning policies and actions implementable to overcome the key critical issues related to integration on a national scale (e.g. problems related to policy planning as disconnection between the policy pursued and the real needs of TCNs on territories).

The local/regional roundtables had a more microscopic characterization focused on issues related to policy implementation and to projects and actions realization.

Differences between roundtables emerged also in the proposed solutions/inputs consistent with the survey dimension (local, regional, national).

4. Conclusions and reflections

A roundtable proved to be a helpful method to explore different topics in depth. It allows for a reasoned discussion between different stakeholders. It can be conducted online or in person and involves a moderator/coordinator of the discussion. The roundtable tool was used during In the WP6 MATILDE research activities to define some “policy recommendations”.

Discussing on “*how to improve new TCNs inclusion in rural and mountainous contexts*” was complex and involved different types of stakeholders at different levels of political involvement. A SWOT-analysis and a matrix to synthesise the policy recommendations served to prepare the discussion.

Both tools helped in “*TCNs inclusion and migration topic*” analysis in respect to the various dimensions and drivers characterizing it (e.g. challenges to inclusion). Both facilitated an effective restitution of the research results to participants. Three roundtables have been organized with the support of local partners to reach and engage local stakeholders to participate in the rounds. The target group was constituted by national, regional and local associations, NGOs, Institutions, stakeholders and private companies’ representatives. Politicians at all three levels of investigation were difficult to reach. Roundtables have been

realized online due to the pandemic restrictions, even if the quite complex arguments and topics would have probably required in presence, face to face roundtables.

The theme “*policy recommendations to improve TCNs inclusion in rural and mountainous contexts*” was too complex to explore it within the timeframe of a single roundtable. More time and resources would have allowed further progress, especially with regard to the preparation of the first draft of recommendations. In fact, stakeholders could have been involved in this step as well. The possibility to conduct the meetings in person could have brought added value in this direction as well.

Few critics emerged on the perspectives and suggestions offered by the research group in all three roundtables. Participants agreed with the problems and issues highlighted finding them correspondent to reality. More insights were given in respect to implementable solutions. Nevertheless, the participation was high and active in all three roundtables. The main obstacle for people to participate to the events was exogenous. The roundtables were organized during the recent Ukrainian crisis that impacted directly on a lot of stakeholders involved in the debate (e.g. Extraordinary Reception Centers and Prefecture representatives). From a personal point of view, roundtables confirmed the opinion that research is an essential vehicle for building and promoting informal networks between stakeholders with the chance to share knowledge.

Through encounters, stakeholders can gain a broader perspective on the issues by appreciating dimensions out of their working space.

Norway

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1. Overview

Three roundtables form the basis for this report: one in the Nord-Østerdal case region, one in the Midt-Gudbrandsdal case region and one national-level roundtable.

Regional Roundtables

The Nord-Østerdal roundtable was organized on January 21st, 2022, from 12:30-13:30 (duration 1 hour) as an online MS Teams meeting. The meeting was organised by the International Board in Tynset municipality. MATILDE partners were invited in to use a slot in their regular meeting schedule. The International Board has an advisory role for local policymakers and consists of representatives from the resettlement office, local police, kindergarten, local businesses, the immigrant community, and politicians. The chair of the International Board is also the head of Innlandet County Council's Board of Integration and Diversity.

The Midt-Gudbrandsdal roundtable was organised on 22nd March 2022, 09:15-09:45 (duration 30 minutes) as an online MS Teams meeting. The meeting was organized by the collaborative forum for refugees (a collaboration between the three municipalities in Midt-Gudbrandsdal). MATILDE partners were invited in with a slot as part of their regular meeting schedule.

Both regional roundtables followed the same structure where the research partner representative presented the main findings from the participatory World Café workshop in Midt-Gudbrandsdal. The ideas that came up during the workshop had been grouped into three categories. Afterward, the roundtable participants were then asked to give input to these ideas – including both opportunities and challenges related to realizing these ideas. In

both cases, the participants had been informed about these ideas before the roundtable as the report containing the results from the respective World Café workshops organized in each region had already been shared with them and other relevant partners in the region prior to the roundtable.

Agenda of the roundtables

- Presentation of results/ideas developed during the participatory World Café workshop
- Discussion on possibilities and challenges related to implementing the ideas/suggested tasks
- Dialogue on political recommendations based on MATILDE research in Innlandet

National-level Roundtable

The national-level roundtable was organized on March 9th 2022, 14:00-15:30 (duration 1,5 hours) as an online MS Teams meeting. The roundtable was a specially organised policy roundtable with mixed stakeholder types that mainly included national level representatives, but also included regional representation. The roundtable started with an introduction round and a short introduction to MATILDE and the local research activities on which the presented preliminary policy recommendations were built. Two research partner representatives then presented a summary of the findings from the participatory workshops (World Cafés) as well as policy recommendations based on a culmination of the Norwegian MATILDE findings. Due to the limited time available for the roundtable, we decided to prioritize time for discussion, rather than the SWOT-analysis and therefore did not present the results of the SWOT-analysis. The participants were provided with a draft of the policy recommendation one week prior to the roundtable to allow time for the participants to prepare for the roundtable discussion.

Agenda of the roundtable:

- Introduction to MATILDE
- Presentation of suggestions and ideas from participatory World Café workshops in the two case regions

- Presentation of policy recommendations based on remaining MATILDE research activity in the two case regions
- Dialog and discussion on presented suggestions, ideas, and recommendations.

2. Roundtable participants

2.1 Nord-Østerdal Roundtable

The participants at this roundtable consisted of representatives from Tynset International board as well as a selection of relevant stakeholder representatives:

- Public welfare representative x 4
- Asylum and refugee care x 3
- Organized representative group representative
- Political decisionmaker
- Public administration representative

Invited candidates, who declined to participate, included a local business representative, two TCN representatives, a political decision-maker, and a public welfare representative. A total of 11 people attended the roundtable (in addition to three MATILDE partner representatives). The majority were women. The age distribution was approx. 30-55 years and three participants had an immigrant background.

2.2 Midt-Gudbrandsdal Roundtable

Four participants (three women and one man) attended the roundtable, in addition to three MATILDE partner representatives:

- Public administration representatives x 3
- Asylum and refugee care representative

The age distribution among the participants was approx. 30-50 years. None of the participants had an immigrant background.

2.3 National-level Roundtable

A total of 7 participants partook in the meeting (in addition to three MATILDE partner representatives):

- NGO representative (national level)
- Directorate representative x 3
- Public administration representative
- External researcher
- Welfare service representative (regional level)

The majority were women (5 women and 2 men). The age distribution was approx. 40-60 years. Only one participant had an immigrant background. Invited candidates, who declined to participate included two directorate representatives and one parliament representative.

3. Outcomes and results

In this section, we present the roundtable participants' inputs and reactions to the policy recommendations that were presented during each roundtable (two regional and one national-level roundtable). The recommendations were largely built on ideas and suggestions generated in the participatory World Café workshop organized during WP5. The input from each roundtable is presented during separate headings.

3.1 Nord-Østerdal

The ideas generated through the Nord-Østerdal World Café workshop were grouped into four main headings and the group discussed the ideas under each heading, focusing on concrete possibilities and challenges/ threats relating to the implementation of each idea in their region.

a. **Strengthening opportunities for entering the labour market - establishing a Job Centre**

- *An opportunity for more fair distribution of employment*

One of the participants pointed out, that Tynset is a small community and that i.e., short-term jobs for youth are mostly acquired through existing networks (i.e. through relatives, friends, acquaintances, etc.) rather than being publicly posted and open for anyone to apply. If the Job Centre could build up a pool of vacancies for youth, it could lead to a fairer distribution of employment and offer more opportunities for immigrants, who might lack these types of networks locally. This could also contribute to giving new groups, i.e. youth, the opportunity to gain valuable work experience, access networks, and obtain letters of reference that can be important to future employment. The public administration representative pointed out that the municipality had launched a scheme to assist the local youth with attaining paid

summer jobs last year and that this scheme and the experience from it should be linked to the Job Centre.

Another opportunity brought up by the participants is to expand the function of the Job Centre to also be a generator of employment opportunities, by for example engaging in fuelwood production or by offering small repairs.

- *Cooperation with local businesses and governmental agencies*

Several participants pointed to the importance of local partnerships and there is a consensus in the group on the need for cooperation between different local actors for this idea to succeed. Multiple suggestions for relevant partners representing both local businesses and governmental agencies are brought up by several participants. The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) is considered to be an essential partner.

- *Differentiation and distribution of responsibility*

The group also discussed, who should be responsible for the Job Centre and concluded that there is a need to differentiate the responsibility based on the target group. It is suggested that adults should be NAV's responsibility, while youth should be the responsibility of each municipality. This is also reflected in the discussion of the location of the potential Job Centre, where it is suggested, that a centralized regional centre is feasible for adults, but when it comes to youth, the centre should be based in the individual municipality and could be supplemented by a digital platform/ database.

There is a general consensus in the group that the main challenge for the realization of the Job Centre idea is obtaining the necessary funding.

b. Information and communication about existing local services/activities - creating a joint, comprehensive information platform at the municipal/local level

- *Linking to established projects and platforms*

The main input from the roundtable was, that this type of platform should be linked to existing platforms to make use of the untapped potential these platforms represent. It should

also be linked to existing local projects. Such as the project “Right activity for all”,⁷ which has already translated material about local leisure activities into several languages. It is also pointed out that Tynset sports association already has a functional webpage, which could easily be linked to a municipal webpage. Tynset municipality has a webpage that gives an overview of all associations in the municipality, but the site is not updated. One concrete solution to this could be to provide the individual associations with their own (yet simple) webpage to which the webpage at the municipal level could be linked. The participants furthermore suggest other webpages and apps that can be linked with the platform (e.g. “Nyby”, “VilMer”, “Ung fritid” etc.). It is also cautioned by some of the roundtable participants that there should not be established too many overarching systems – a lot can be organized by local associations and clubs themselves and that a shared platform should not “free” them of their responsibility to share information and offer inclusive activities

c. Create meeting places and possibilities for networking

- *Opportunities and challenges in recruiting “friendship assistants/families”*

One of the ideas from the workshop was to establish different types of integration/friendship “buddies”, and one of the roundtable participants called attention to that Tynset has a network of resourceful families that provide important support and guidance to newly resettled/immigrants, but that recruitment of friendship assistants/families can be a challenge since they already have busy lives. This is especially the case for families with young children. Another participant pointed out that friendship assistants that speak the immigrant’s native language have not been tried out in Tynset. Nevertheless, they have had a few young adults/resourceful families, who often pursued education elsewhere and therefore could not remain as friendship assistants long-term. Pensioners, however, constitute an important pool from which volunteers/friendship

⁷ More information can be found here: https://www.fjellregionen.no/_aurora/media/41a2e66e-d8a9-4c3f-b29c-56f38cadd262?136d2ed1-5d72-411c-8439-fb34bce0e7f9?136d2ed1-5d72-411c-8439-fb34bce0e7f9#:~:text=Styret%20er%20bevisst%20p%C3%A5%20at,alle%20familier%20og%20hele%20familien!%C2%BB

assistants/buddies can be recruited. They have the capacity, more time, and are still vigorous.

Another participant pointed out, that the local upper secondary school has engaged immigrant youth to assist other (immigrant) pupils to find and engage themselves in leisure activities, sports, etc. – could this also be a “job” for other youth as well? The idea of exploring the use of “support contacts” (støttekontakt) – this is where people get paid to support/assist individuals with certain needs/services, is also brought to the table. It is described as another opportunity to provide work experience for youth.

- *Establishing an “International House”*

Another idea that came up during the previously organized workshop was to establish an international House in Tynset. The roundtable participants discussed and suggested several concrete funding sources as well as potential locations for the house. It is concluded that location is important and that it should be centrally located.

An important input that comes out of this discussion is to broaden the target group of the “international house” by opening it up to all inhabitants in the region and calling it something that feels more inclusive such as “Tynes open house” or “Meeting place for the people of Tynset. Highlighting that it should be a place for everyone, especially for youth, who need (and currently lack) a place to hang out.

d. Transport and mobility

- *Carpooling*

Participants discussed the need for a system for mobility, as lack of geographic mobility is a challenge for many immigrants in the region. Participants argued that it is important to systematize things – as “we cannot have a system, were we dependent on enthusiastic individuals”. Another participant however warned that they should be careful not to establish too many overarching systems – a lot can be organized by local associations and clubs themselves. Such overarching systems should not “free” the local teams and associations from their responsibility to include all inhabitants and facilitate their participation, including helping with transport, etc. However, many immigrants feel ashamed to always ask for help

with transport for their children's training and activities. They do not feel comfortable about always being the "needy" part, asking for favours.

- *Assistance in obtaining a driver's license*

One solution to the above-mentioned point, which also came up during the workshop, was to offer assistance in obtaining a driver's license. The idea of offering tuition in various languages for theoretic driver's license exams was described by the participants as being feasible if it is offered as digital courses. The adult education centre in Tynset has purchased various digital courses previously, which they offer to people during school holidays etc. It is suggested that, unless driving schools already offer such courses, this could provide an opportunity to develop and sell such courses to other regions.

One participant suggested that some of the issues related to transport and *mobility* can be linked to the idea of a Job Centre. They proposed that adult volunteers could assist youths, who want to take their driving license in practice driving, as acquiring a driver's license could also lead to jobs such as taxi drivers, bus drivers, etc. Driving schools and the regional bus company would be a natural collaboration partner to facilitate job seekers.

The way forward:

The meeting concluded with a concrete set of actions to follow up on the discussion:

The head of the International board suggested, that they establish a working group to develop an action plan for the ideas that were raised. International Board will invite externals to this group, such as the head of NAV and municipality administration such as the head of culture, head of the service desk, head of adult education, etc. They will also ask the Municipal Director for a mandate to carry out this work. The International Board will soon invite a working group for a start-up meeting.

The roundtable thus contributed, not only to bringing out awareness of connections to ongoing projects and initiatives, highlighting potential opportunities and challenges to the implementation of the ideas generated through the co-working workshops but also functioned as a point of departure for further actions to be taken among the involved participants.

3.2 Midt-Gudbrandsdal

The ideas generated through the Midt-Gudbrandsdal World Café workshop were grouped into three main headings and the roundtable discussed possibilities and challenges/threats to each of the concrete ideas. The main ideas that were presented were:

a. **Transport and mobility**

- *Offer driver's license theory classes (online classes) in different languages to lower the barrier for migrants to obtaining a driver's license*

One roundtable participant stated, that while they consider it to be a good idea to offer online classes in the migrants' native language since it will help more migrants pass the driver's license test, they warn not to forget the importance of practicing and learning Norwegian. For migrants intending to take a driving license soon after resettling, the participant stated, it would, however, be of great help with lessons given in their mother tongue. Transport and mobility are important issues, and many migrants buy a car even before they have passed the test.

A second participant stated that Sør-Fron municipality has had positive experiences with the Norwegian language centre (adult education) providing driver's license theory classes in Norwegian and that conducting theory classes in various languages would be challenging due to a lack of professional interpreters. A digital platform made available at the national level would therefore be the easiest and most realistic alternative. The lessons can be streamed – it doesn't have to be live lessons. It is proposed, that this should be made available as a standard element in the official Norwegian Introduction program for refugees.

- *Engage volunteers that can help with practice driving to lower the number of formal driving lessons needed*

The participants considered it to be a good idea to establish a pool of volunteers that can assist in practice driving. They referred to the need for coordination and quality control to ensure that the lessons are given for free and that students feel safe entering a car with a

stranger. Volunteers should also be offered “refresher” lessons with the driving schools, as some of their knowledge may be outdated. Another challenge relates to the recruitment of volunteers as the participants describe it as challenging to find volunteers that are willing to sign up for repetitive and binding commitments. It might hence be challenging to find people willing to assist with practice driving regularly. The Volunteer Centre is suggested as a potential candidate for the role of coordination and quality control of volunteers assisting in practice driving.

b. More flexible refugee services

- *Consider co-location of municipal refugee services and the Volunteer Center*

The roundtable participants pointed out that co-location between refugee services and the Volunteer Center is not an option, since the refugee services is an inter-municipal service while the Volunteer Center operates at a municipal level. Instead, the participant argued that they have to rely on fruitful mechanisms for collaboration between the two instead.

- *Develop systems with more available and flexible refugee services through more collaboration with the third sector*

On this point, one of the participants argued strongly for the need to differentiate between assisting migrants to manage and cope on their own and doing things *for* them. Stating that we need to teach migrants to be independent and to find their way in Norwegian society – “*walking alongside them*”: “We need to be careful not to help migrants in a way that makes them helpless. If we provide assistance 24/7, migrants may lose out on a lot of knowledge and the sense of independence.” They further argued that migrants should have the possibility to orient themselves in society and be independent and that the municipalities already have support mechanisms in place for help in emergencies and crises, e.g., through the introduction program. From the participants’ point of view, refugees and migrants need to learn to use existing mechanisms and they consequently consider it necessary to separate between official services and volunteer services. As official services can put demands on beneficiaries, which the volunteer sector cannot. Official services aim to assist migrants in

becoming self-dependent., whereas the volunteer sector has an important role in facilitating participation in social life, leisure activities, etc.

c. Different forms of mentorships

- *Welcome coordinator: inter-municipal, funded (full or part-time) position*
- *“Midtdals-guide”: similar to welcome coordinator, but more emphasis on assisting/mentoring both when it comes to working-life and daily social life*
- *Mentor and language buddy: Language buddies and migrants are teamed up and work through a series of agreed themes, which provides both language training and practical information about various topics*

The roundtable participants explained that the region has good experience with using “language buddies” (“Språkvenn”) that works in a structured way (introducing different themes, while practicing Norwegian). As the region is preparing for welcoming refugees from Ukraine, they will engage Ukrainians already living in the region as language buddies. They will be important for guiding newly resettled refugees and helping them familiarise themselves with their new society. Language buddies are volunteers, but the region intends to help coordinate this initiative between the collaborating municipalities.

There was less consensus among the participants in this roundtable compared to the roundtable in Nord-Østerdal. The roundtable did not lead to any conclusions among the participants regarding future actions based on the ideas that were discussed during the roundtable.

3.3 National-level Roundtable

Before the discussion began, the participants at the national-level roundtable were presented with findings from the two regional participatory workshops (World Cafés) as well as policy recommendations based on a culmination of the Norwegian MATILDE findings.

The general sentiment from the group was that most of the presented policy recommendations were familiar and had already been tried and tested. The group was however also clear that since most of the presented policy recommendations had been generated through a bottom-up process involving local stakeholders (the World Café workshops), they considered the recommendations to be relevant and should be taken as a sign that there is still a need for the types of initiatives. That many of the policy recommendations were familiar to the groups was expected, as several of the recommendations were based on feedback from local stakeholders on existing initiatives and actions that they were highly appreciative of and would like to see continued and/or further developed. (i.e., language buddy/mentor systems, activity for all initiatives, etc.). Highlighting such initiatives as part of the policy recommendations were therefore considered important, as including them in the recommendations could potentially contribute to their continued support and more municipalities and regions implementing these tried and tested initiatives.

The roundtable discussion was characterized by involvement and commitment to the issues being discussed as well as a general sense of consensus, although the participants represented different interests and therefore tended to focus on different aspects of the policy recommendations. The three directorate representatives brought the topics of finances and the role of municipalities, the negative reactions refugees have to the prospect of being settled in rural areas and the need to make these rural communities more attractive for this group, and the importance of including initiatives that are directed towards a range of different migrant groups and not just refugees. The NGO representative brought in the topic of cooperation between the volunteer sector and the public sector and how NGOs also need to realise that immigrants can be an important volunteer resource, not just a receiver of volunteer services. The external researcher and the public administration representative supplemented the comments of the other participants, while the welfare service representative brought in the perspective of employers and the importance of facilitating and enabling workforce participation as a path to integration.

As a result of the roundtable discussion, the governance level to which the policy recommendations apply has been specified and the wording of some of the policy recommendations has been changed. The roundtable generally led to a refinement and extension of the drafted policy recommendation, but no major changes, except for the policy recommendation related to access to high school level vocational education, which has been substantially altered and concretized as a result of the roundtable discussion and subsequent discussions within the Norwegian MATILDE partner group. No new policy recommendations were added.

The participants agreed to receive a first draft of the policy recommendations report to provide additional feedback on the developing policy recommendations.

4. Conclusions and reflections

The roundtables were all conducted digitally, which proved to be an effective approach, cutting down both travel costs and time usage. Conducting the roundtables digitally also made the process of taking notes from the roundtable easier, as the note-taker could constantly see the names of the people speaking, making it easier to mark down, which comments came from whom. The digital format furthermore helped make it easier to structure the roundtable and the list of speakers.

We chose to conduct three roundtables. One from each of the two Norwegian case study regions as well as a national level roundtable that included participants that represented different stakeholders at the national level. This combination proved useful as the focus, and consequently, the input obtained from the two types of roundtables differed. The regional level roundtables had a clear practical focus, focusing on the concrete opportunities and challenges relating to the implementation of different ideas that emerged from the World Café workshops in the regions. While also to some extent focusing on the way forward and the concert steps needed to implement these ideas. The discussion at the national level roundtable had a more overarching focus and focused more on the general policy

recommendations. This roundtable also provided insight into more general and national-level opportunities and challenges relating to the different policy recommendations. The value of the different types of input we received from the two levels of roundtables is described in more detail below.

The regional roundtables partially functioned as an arena for local stakeholders to evaluate the feasibility of the ideas and suggestions that emerged from the World Café workshops, and to work out kinks and minor issues with the ideas that needed to be addressed before they could be implemented. The regional roundtables also provided valuable input that enabled us to fine-tune our policy recommendations drafts, as the input forced us to consider some of the challenges involved in the implementation of some of the policy recommendations.

Receiving feedback from relevant actors on proposed solutions and policy recommendations from relevant actors proved useful as it helped refined the wording used to describe the suggested recommendation. The roundtable at the national level especially alerted us to some aspects, which had not been sufficiently incorporated into the policy recommendations and to certain wording choices that needed to be changed to avoid confusion. Hearing, how these representatives interpreted the written policy recommendations, we had sent them before the roundtable, furthermore enabled us to make important adjustments in the wording to make the policy recommendations clearer and more explicit.

Spain

Authors: Raúl Lardiés-Bosque & Nuria del Olmo-Vicén

1. Overview

On a regional scale, two roundtables were conducted in the frame of WP6, in addition to another two on a national scale, all of them online. In this report, we focus on the regional roundtables, so we will not comment on the two national roundtables conducted; nevertheless, they were held, the first one on April 7 2022 (with 16 participants, lasting from 10:30 am to 12:45 pm), and the second one on 05-12-2022 (with 5 participants, lasting from 12 to 2 pm); both were organised online, using the same methodology that described later for the regional ones.

The first regional table was held on April 27, 2022 and lasted one hour and fifty minutes, while the second was on May 5, 2022 and lasted around two hours. The members of the MATILDE research team (Raúl Lardiés, Nuria del Olmo and Sergio Larraz) attended both of them, and Raúl Lardiés acted as presenter and moderator.

The stakeholders were varied and belonged to different sections of the public administration, as well as to associations and private entities.

In each roundtable, the moderator presented a PowerPoint (Figure 1) explaining that after the analysis and diagnosis carried out in Aragón and also at the local level (two counties), problems and difficulties had been identified, related to the arrival and residence of foreign population in rural areas. It was also explained that now, with these roundtables, we try to analyse and assess which aspects/dimensions/problems/policies can be improved in each of the different dimensions and themes considered, with the help of experts. The five dimensions considered were:

- 1) Administrative and bureaucratic aspects

- 2) Social sphere, cohesion and inclusion
- 3) Economic and labour-professional dimension
- 4) Housing issues
- 5) Territorial aspects, transport and communications

With the help of PowerPoint, a SWOT-analysis was presented where the problems and difficulties detected (on the left side of the slides) and the proposals for consensus (on the right side of the slides) were collected. Five rounds of presentations and interventions by the participants were made, one for each of these dimensions. Thanks to this method, the participants gave their opinion on what aspects could be varied, modified, to what level or section of the administration - the measures focused, and whether or not they were feasible

Proyecto H-2020 (01/2020 a 01/2023)

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

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Objetivo de la reunión:

- ✓ Tras el Análisis, Trabajo de campo y el Diagnóstico realizado en Aragón, y a escala local (dos comarcas), hemos identificado **problemas y dificultades** para el asentamiento y la residencia de población extranjera. Ahora tratamos de ver qué **aspectos/dimensiones/problemas se pueden mejorar**, en diferentes temáticas (social, económico-laboral, educación, territorial, vivienda, acceso a

Figure 1 PowerPoint used during the regional roundtables, Spain

2. Participants of the roundtable

We want to highlight the great effort that must be made to bring together the different participants. They are people with high responsibilities in the administration and in their respective organizations, so it is difficult to find a time/day, in which everyone can participate. For this reason, one roundtable had to be postponed to another day, but it has been an advantage to be able to do them online. Sometimes, two people representing the same organisation participated.

The participants have been officials from the Social Services of the 'comarcas' in Aragón, from the Government of Aragón (Departments of Immigration; Education and Training; Depopulation; and Reception Service of Navarra), Trade Unions, NGOs and Associations dedicated to the care of immigrants and intercultural training.

In the first regional roundtable (27 April 2022): 7 people participated (3 men and 4 women; except for the 3 members of MATILDE), representing:

- Department of Immigration and Social Rights, Government of Aragón.
- Coordinator of CEPAIM in Aragón (Consortium of Entities for Integral Action with Migrants): NGO-Third Social Sector, with national representation and by Autonomous Communities.
- Coordinator of the Migration Department, General Union of Workers (UGT-Aragón).
- Head of Studies and Training of the Department of Education, Government of Aragón.
- 2 heads of the Departments of Social Services of 2 'comarcas' of Aragón (Los Monegros, Alto Gállego).

In the second regional roundtable (3 May 2022): 7 people participated (5 men and 2 women):

- 2 representatives of the Departments of Social Services of 2 comarcas of Aragón (La Litera and Bajo Aragón/Caspe).
- Former Director of CAREI (Aragonese Resource Center for Intercultural Education).

- Commissioner for the Fight against Depopulation, Government of Aragón.
- Technician of the reception and accompaniment service, Government of Navarra.
- General Director of Spatial Planning, Government of Aragón.

In total, 8 men and 6 women participated. By age, some people were between 40 and 45, but most have been in the range of 50 to 55, especially those responsible for the Administration. At these tables there have been no immigrants of foreign origin.

3. Outcomes and observations/results

In the two roundtables, a PowerPoint was used that included the SWOT-analysis carried out for the five dimensions considered (1: Administrative and bureaucratic aspects; 2: Social, cohesion and inclusion; 3: Economic and labour-professional; 4) Housing issues; 5): Territory, transport and communications). For each dimension, the problems and difficulties were firstly presented, and after the proposals for possible changes and improvements of aspects/normatives. Some of the participants requested to receive this PowerPoint after the roundtable, in order to discuss it with their colleagues and other representatives.

Following this method, different problems and limitations of each theme and dimension were discussed: aspects that should be changed and modified, related to the settlement and life of foreign immigrants. For this reason, the roundtables did not focus on certain topics, and all the topics were addressed; on some topics there was a lot of discussion and proposals, but on others there was not.

The proposals that we were presenting (previously written in the PowerPoint) did not seem strange or out of place for the participants, but logical and desirable. Some proposals were confirmed and the participants thought, that they would be fine, but on other occasions they affirmed the problems and limitations, that their implementation would have. Normally, the problems and limitations were of an economic nature, but also related to the competencies of each public administration. Thus, one aspect that could have been a limitation of the

roundtables is the administrative and competence division of the different sections of the administration. All the participants have shown great interest in contributing proposals and ideas, but finally, many have recognized this competence limitation. This also implies that there must be political interest to carry out actions, but we must not forget that powers and responsibilities in the field of migration are divided at the state level, by Autonomous Communities, and basically, by counties, and all these levels must be coordinated to develop proposals. On the other hand, those responsible and participants are only a selection - representation- of possible participants, so not all the responsible for all areas have been present.

For both reasons, and to be honest, the ability to influence and change things, we believe is limited, or very difficult. As in other situations, there were participants very involved, that commented, they would involve their managers and other colleagues in these issues. Therefore, the ability to change and modify things is limited. Regarding possible disputes and different points of view, there were -sometimes related to ideological issues-, but finally the point of view of the quality of life and the improvement of the situation of immigrants and the rural areas, where they reside, always prevailed. We must remember that in Aragón, currently, as in all of Spain, there is a big political, technical and academic debate on depopulation and about the situation of rural areas. For this reason, many issues dealt with referred to transport, accessibility, communications, housing, and employment in rural areas; all of these aspects represent an improvement not only for immigrants but for the population as a whole.

Regarding this, there is more freedom for the comarcas and municipalities to introduce modifications or changes than at other levels; at this local scale, for example, discussions were addressing about the convenience of having multicultural mediators, mobile service offices that they travel to different villages, communication campaigns with immigrants, etc.

4. Conclusions and reflections

Previously, it has been commented the perception of the limited capacity that we are having with the completion of this work to reform policies that may favour immigrants. The reason is that legislating and modifying policies is somewhat complicated. In general, the participants have shown interest and the need to change many things, but they recognise, then, there must be a political and institutional consensus between different parts and levels of the administration.

In addition, another limitation to reformulate or modify regulations is, what we have indicated in other reports: in Spain, the policies have a transversal and universal nature, and are not specific for immigrants. This means, that access to subsidies, social assistance, etc., are for the population as a whole, for those, who need it, normally based on their income. Therefore, there are regulations and legislation that could be implemented, but they are intended for the entire population. However, there are other measures that are specific to immigrants (campaigns against xenophobia, measures to promote inter-communication between the immigrant and native population...).

Although all the participants in the roundtables have agreed and shown the need to change things, we have found it very difficult to achieve the commitment of the political leaders, in their isolated and individual participation. So, the next objective would be to achieve greater political commitment, but we recognize that it is very difficult.

Regarding the methodological approach for the debate on these issues, we think that it has been correct, since the participants have been able to see each other, get to know each other and discuss these issues. It has already been said, that it is very difficult to seat different people with high responsibilities at the same table at the same time, but we have done it, and the debates and contributions have been interesting and constructive. Individually, all the participants have had good words and recognise the problems, although it is difficult to promote the change, each one from their sphere of responsibility.

The conclusion of these initiatives is that the changes must come, fundamentally, from the political sphere. An example is that recently, the Spanish Government (June 2022) has modified the Immigration Law to regularise foreigners to occupy jobs not covered by natives (Martín, 2022). It is an example of how reforms are carried out through political means, often by the political party that is in government. Nonetheless, even without knowing the real effect that these roundtables will have, they have been positive as points of meeting and debate, with a view to solving problems related to the way of life of immigrants.

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Sweden

Authors: Ulf Hansson, Zuzana Macuchova

1. Overview

For the roundtables in the case of Dalarna, duration and venues of the roundtables differed somewhat. We decided to arrange four separate roundtables:

- National-Regional (Roundtable 1)
- Regional-Local (Roundtable 2)
- SFI/SVA⁸ teachers/administrators (Roundtable 3)
- SFI students (Roundtable 4)

Regarding how the roundtables were conducted, three of them took place online using Zoom, whereas the roundtable with the SFI students in the municipality of Vansbro took place on-site, in a classroom. For the two 'larger' roundtables – national-regional and regional-local - they were chaired by the senior researcher in the research team. Another member of the research team also attending as well as a member of the local partner, who took notes. For the roundtable involving SFI/SVA teachers in the municipality of Hedemora (roundtable 3) – two members of the research team took part, one as 'chair' of the meeting and the other as note-taker. In the case of roundtable 4 – two members of the research team attended the class, together presenting the research findings and recommendations.

Through the SWOT-analysis, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats at the local, regional and national level were all identified. After the SWOT-analysis we identified the most important areas of action and possible policy recommendations and solutions, that

⁸ SFI indicates 'Svenska för Invandrare' i.e. 'Swedish for Immigrants' and SVA 'Svenska som Andraspråk' i.e. 'Swedish as a Second Language'.

revolved our focus area, education and labour market integration. The research team collaborated with the local partner, Region Dalarna, to create a presentation of the preliminary points of action and recommendations to present during four policy roundtables. The SWOT-analysis was used to identify and establish policies and issues with regards to migration and policies in the county of Dalarna.

The purpose of the roundtable – as introduced to participants – was listed as follows:

- Feedback on strengths and weaknesses: local - regional - national, in terms of work with new arrivals / integration / social cohesion / rural development
- Feedback on the effects of policy (laws, rules, governing documents, instruments)

The agenda – per se – involved introductions, summary of research (as highlighted above) and interchangeable introducing weaknesses and strengths within various areas, followed by recommendations. Throughout the roundtable, participants could interject as well as ask questions and comment. For roundtables 1-3, reactions and comments made by participants in roundtable 4 were also used as a way in which to stimulate the conversation and discussion.

2. Participants of the roundtable

Starting with the first roundtable, at **the regional/local level** (roundtable 1) the intention was to invite the integration coordinator Vansbro municipality, the head of the Activity Center Vansbro municipality, and the head integration Älvdalen municipality, integration coordinator Älvdalen municipality, principal Vuxenutbildningen Hedemora municipality, head AME Hedemora municipality, integration coordinator Dalaidrotten, and Länsstyreslen were contacted. At the end of having sought to establish contact with the various

stakeholders, the attendance at the roundtable consisted of Länsstyrelsen⁹ and Dalaidrotten as well as the director for adult education in the municipality of Hedemora¹⁰. The individuals were a mix of representatives from public administration and Trade and labour unions and organized representative groups (see Gruber, et al, 2020).

Roundtable 1: Total number of participants: 4 Males: 2 Females: 2, Ages: 19-64,
Migrants: 3

At the second roundtable the focus was set on the **national/regional** level (roundtable 2) and with a focus on competence supply and rural development, contacts were established with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions¹¹, the County Administrative Board, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth¹², the Swedish employment Agency and the Church of Sweden. Of these, the Swedish Employment Agency, did not respond to invitations or further contact. The County Administrative Board, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, the Church of Sweden and the Regional Development Administration however expressed an interest in participating. However, at the time of the roundtable, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth as well as Regional Development management with a focus on competence supply and SKR replied that they unfortunately did not have the opportunity to participate. The focus here was on Trade and labour unions and organized representative groups (see Gruber, et al, 2020).

Roundtable 2: Total number of participants: 4, Males: 1 Females: 3, Ages: 19-64,
Migrants: -

⁹ Länsstyrelsen (The County Administrative Board) are charged with a range of tasks, including implementing national objectives, coordinating the different interests of the county, promoting the development of the county, establishing regional objectives and safeguarding the rule of law in every instance

¹⁰ RF-SISU Dalarna is the Swedish Sports Confederation's and the regional organisation in the county of Dalarna with the aim to support, represent and lead the district's sports as well as providing courses.

¹¹ The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) is an employers' organisation that represents and advocates for local government in Sweden

¹² A Swedish government agency organized under the Ministry of Enterprise, tasked to promote entrepreneurship and regional growth, and to implement structural funds programmes

Furthermore, the research team also set up a **roundtable (3) with SFI and SVA teachers and administrators of adult education in the municipality of Hedemora**. The principal of the adult education centre was contacted and in turn notified and contacted the individuals involved. Although similar in set-up as in roundtables 1 and 2 the focus here 'homed' in on language learning and particularly SFI and SVA. The representatives in roundtable 3 can therefore be said to be mainly from public administration and Education and training institutions (see Gruber, et al, 2020).

Roundtable 3: Total number of participants: 4, Males: 1 Females: 3, Ages: 19-64, Migrants: -
The research team also sought to get some feedback on the research findings with migrants, and therefore a short roundtable (**roundtable 4**) was organised with an **SFI-class in the municipality of Vansbro**. The set -up of this roundtable was slightly different in that the two researchers prepared a shorter presentation based on the research findings and with recommendations focused particularly on language learning and employment. Participants can best be described as being non-organized/other interest groups (see Gruber, et al, 2020).

Roundtable 4: Total number of participants: 18, Males: 9 Females: 9, Ages: 19-64 Migrants: 18

3. Outcomes and observations/results

Policy recommendation for the roundtables were presented to the participants in a short PowerPoint presentation. In the presentation was shortly described the background for the policy recommendations, utilizing the SWOT-analysis as well as official statistics. Policy recommendations were focusing on the dimensions of education and labour market/employment, as this is the focus of our case study. Participants received the presentation per mail couple of days in advance, in order to be able to prepare for the discussion. For roundtable 4, the presentation used for roundtables 1-3 was simplified to reflect the language level of the participants and the research findings and recommendations focused particularly on SFI and employment.

Overall, the draft policy recommendations were all received positively by the various roundtables. With regards to presented policy recommendations for the roundtable there was an overall sense that the participants agreed and ‘accepted’ the policy recommendations., this was particularly the case in roundtables 1 and 2. There were good points for discussion and a recognition and acknowledgement of the findings from the research. For example, **the changed situation regarding the Swedish employment agency was a recurrent point of discussion in roundtables 1 and 2.** Similarly, the various recommendations also triggered and provoked further discussion and comments, such as the organisation of SFI at a regional/local level. With regards to roundtables 1 and 2, there was a general positive atmosphere in the virtual room. While there was a little hesitance at first among participants in the two roundtables, but all participants actively partook in the discussion and both roundtables also ‘went over time’. Beyond policy recommendations, the findings from the meeting with SFI-students in Vansbro: the use and strength of placements, expectations of placements, etc. were highlighted. While it was acknowledged, that this could be of importance, participants referred to SFI as falling under municipalities and not Region Dalarna or the state. There was also - overall - a recognition and acknowledgement of the research-findings in all the four roundtables. There was one particular topic - in addition to labour market integration - that came up in conversation - particularly in roundtable 1, and that was the need to acknowledge issues such as health, and in particular mental health.

One of the policy recommendations and points of discussion in the **round table 3**, with the group of SFI and SVA-teachers in the municipality of Hedemora was the link between SFI language classes and work placements. The teachers agreed on that education that connects to the labour market have positive outcome both on the language proficiency of the migrants, as well as their futures chances to acquire job. On the other hand, the teachers also highlighted challenges related to the combination of SFI-classes with work placements, such as a difficulty to control and plan regarding, who in the classroom is currently in work placement and who shall be presented in the class, whole involving more work for individual teachers it also leads to better goal fulfilment. A lengthy discussion was held about

placements and the administration of these as ways to strengthen the link between SFI-classes and employment but that a lot came down to the contact with the employer, and particularly the challenges of establishment of contacts and finding placements but also to make employers understand that in the long run they will benefit from it, to receive trainees. There was a sense, that this might put undue pressure on teachers, who might not have the time to do this, while at the same time it was highlighted, that the teachers know the students. A suggested solution – like the one that is currently being used in in the municipality of Vansbro, i.e. a combination of language classes and placement and where someone is employed working and liaising with both teachers and employers, to administer the combination between work placements and SFI- classes.

Related to policy recommendations focused upon strengthening the adult education in the region was discussion around regional cooperation, picked up by SFI- and SVA-teachers participating at **roundtable 3**. Participants in this roundtable referred to a practice, when guidance counsellors within adult education meets once a month with other counsellors in the municipalities of Dalarna County. Although there is an existing cooperation via Dalawux¹³, teachers felt, that it would be beneficial for teachers in SFI and SVA to share insights and experience for example regarding assessment. A suggested solution here was therefore a possible network of SFI/SVA-teachers and administrators.

The students at the SFI-class in Vansbro (**roundtable 4**) perhaps struggled with some of the presentation of the research findings, however they seemed to take to the findings and there were nods of agreement and acknowledgments. The session also allowed for questions and interactions. The students shared insights about their experiences regarding, for example placements, job-searching, and language classes. Some of the students, while working full-time, also attended the SFI-class to improve their grammar/writing skills. This led to a longer discussion about placements and the benefits of being able to work, while also attending the class and to ‘use the language’ and interacting with Swedish speakers. Vansbro municipality had also introduced a ‘combined’ approach to some of the SFI-classes where

¹³ The association consists of the representatives within Dalarnas 15 responsible for adult education. The association initiates and manages cross-regional projects within adult education.

students could be on placements as part of the SFI-training, something that participants welcomed. Some of the students also referred to placements possibly leading to permanent employment or short-term employment, such as for example holiday cover.

Overall, with regards to the policy recommendations for this roundtable there was an overall feeling that the participants agreed and 'accepted' the policy recommendations and that it was important to acknowledge issues such as health, and in particular mental health. Furthermore, there was also a sense that local issues had to come to forefront. Regarding the mood at the various roundtables and in the various settings and amongst participants that, for example, the research findings came across as relevant and informed.

4. Conclusions and reflections

Overall, the research team felt the roundtables had proven useful and had allowed for important interaction with stakeholders. With regards to methodology – there was a sense after roundtable 1 that the introductory presentation needed to be shortened, and for roundtable 2, the lead researcher utilised a shorter version.

The setting for three of the roundtables were on-line, this worked well in that it allowed for individuals based in different municipalities to meet, however in one of the roundtables there were initial issues with participant's sound. The fourth roundtable – the SFI class in Vansbro – was ideal in that it took place on-site and allowed for individuals to directly ask questions. As highlighted above, one of the areas not really covered in the research had been the issues surrounding health, and in particular mental health, it was felt amongst the research team that this certainly was an area that could be revisited.

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Turkey

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1. Overview

Istanbul Bilgi University, as the MATILDE research partner in Turkey, organised two thematic roundtable meetings in collaboration with the local partner, Support to Life (STL). The first roundtable was a face-to-face meeting on October 27, 2021, which took place in Bursa Karacabey, as a part of WP5 action research. The scale of the thematic roundtable was local/regional, with a specific composition of the representatives of the wider local community as well as immigrants. Despite the roundtable meeting was held under the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was very well attended. The agenda was to assess the socio-economic impact of immigration on the local area and to explore the role of international immigration on local development. The 4-hour roundtable meeting started with a lunch and warm up session, and continued in a rather informal atmosphere with the 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.

Identifying possible opportunities and strategies with proposals through the exchange of ideas among participants was also at stake. In terms of the method, the meeting was composed of four main sections: (1) a brief introduction of the aims of the overall project; (2) depiction of problems and opportunities of agricultural production; (3) depiction of conditions regarding the access to labour market; and (4) the state of discussions on social cohesion and integration. In the end, a wrap-up session took place, through which policy recommendations and innovative proposals were expressed by the locals and immigrants under different themes.

The second roundtable meeting was again held face-to-face on May 12, 2022 at Bilgi University Santral Campus in İstanbul. Having specific expertise in agricultural production, rural development and migration, several scholars (sociologists, economists, lawyers, political scientists), NGO representatives, and municipal actors were present in the meeting. The meeting was entitled "Sustainable Development and Migration in Rural Areas" and proceeded with three separate discussion sessions concentrating on legal, economic and social-political-cultural aspects. In the end of each session, the participants were asked to make policy recommendations at local, regional and national levels. Moderated by different researchers involved in the MATILDE project as team members of İstanbul Bilgi University, each session featured an expert presentation to lay the groundwork for discussion and policy recommendations. The meeting lasted for 5 hours in total together with lunch.

2. Participants of the roundtable

Fifteen people participated in the first roundtable meeting held on October 27, 2021 in Karacabey, including a small group of 10 local stakeholders (composed of non-organized/other interest groups, NGOs, trade and labour unions and organized representative groups, public administrations, and organized regional representative groups). Five members of the MATILDE group were also present in the meeting. Four of the participants were migrants, having Syrian and Afghan origins. An Arabic-Turkish translator, Syrian origin migrant, was also present during the activity to facilitate the communication with the Arabic-speaking participants. The participants were selected in such a way that they exhibit a variety of roles at the local level with respect to either personal or professional background. Some of the participants were selected among the people already involved in the previous 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). Regarding the age distribution, all participants were adults (between 19-64 years). Four of the participants were female; none

of the female participants has the immigrant-origin mainly because of the socio-cultural reasons and occupational challenges in the field resulting from their seasonal migrant status. For the second roundtable meeting conducted in İstanbul on May 12, 2022, a group of 28 people were present consisting of individual researchers and representatives of NGOs, international umbrella organizations, local partner, public administrations and private businesses. To specify, the roundtable meeting was attended by representatives of local governments and non-governmental organizations working on rural development and migration in the field, such as İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality Social Services Department Migration and Integration Unit, UNHCR, *Genç Hayat* (Young Life) Foundation, *Yerküre* (Earth) Cooperative, TABİT Smart Agricultural Technologies (Smart Village), Development Workshop as well as scholars from various related disciplines. Out of all 28 adult participants, 20 of them were female. There was no participant with a migrant background at the meeting. The composition of the roundtable meeting was decided by the MATILDE team, who agreed to bring experts, local municipal actors, and NGOs concentrating on the sustainable rural development in Turkey rather than only organizing an event concentrating on specifically migrant-related matters. This is why the priorities of the two events differed to some extent: the former at local and regional levels, the latter at regional and national levels.

3. Outcomes and observations/results

Problems and Opportunities: Concerning the first local/regional roundtable held in the MATILDE case study region Karacabey, the main discussion topics were related to rural peculiarities and agricultural production, non-agricultural production and informality, and integration of immigrants in socio-economic terms. Depopulation in rural areas with its socio-economic consequences threatens agricultural sustainability in Karacabey. Almost all of the stakeholders agreed on the fact, that there is a pressing need in agricultural workforce in Karacabey, especially in the summer periods, to cultivate the vast lands. The only way to provide this balance in the district is to rely on seasonal agricultural workforce, mostly Syrian

and Afghan migrants. However, the temporariness of seasonal migrants creates problems. Especially the municipal actors and NGOs working in the field raised the temporariness issue, mainly emphasizing the fact that the native population do not consider immigrants as an asset for a long-term local development. Municipal stakeholders also emphasized the temporariness as a reason of the inertia of local authorities in handling social cohesion issue, and offering no local solution to the problem. On the other hand, NGOs brought up the effect of negative language of the local media especially against the newly arrived Syrian refugees. Similarly, the stakeholders emphasised on the perspectives of some social policy implementers and social service providers in the local neighbourhood, and on how their negative stance towards the Syrians poses an obstacle in providing social cohesion. The language barrier was among challenges raised by the immigrants during the meeting. The lack of linguistic competence was expressed to be a barrier before the possibility of creating a sense of territorial belonging as well as integrating them into educational processes and work environments.

In the second meeting held in Istanbul on 12 May 2022, the core discussion revolved around the legal, economic, socio-political and cultural barriers to agricultural production, and sustainable development. Especially the scholars put emphasis on legal and economic dimensions of the issue of land division by inheritance, considerable size of the lands being left idle in agriculture, and their consequences on the productivity of agricultural lands in Turkey. The lack of support by central and local actors in agricultural sector was another issue discussed by different stakeholders. Besides, the NGOs and individual researchers put forward the issues emanating from the lack of knowledge, gendered differences, and competition among vulnerable groups as important challenges in terms of sustainable development and social-cultural integration. The stakeholders in the field of both private businesses and NGOs interested in rural development made a special emphasis on the need to improve the image of agricultural workers and rural jobs. Also, to develop more holistic and sustainable rural and agricultural development goals, the need for a long-term perspective envisaged by the involvement of all relevant local, regional and national actors as well as civil society organisations, was another outcome of the discussion.

Rapport: Concerning the general observation on the roundtables apart from the discussion outcomes, both meetings were organised in a rather informal atmosphere, in order to make the participants feel comfortable and communicative with each other better. The group interaction aimed at involving the representatives of the wider local community, municipal and national actors and scholars worked well. In each meeting, the participants were left free to articulate challenges, opportunities, and policy proposals, that they have already thought about to improve local/regional conditions, or national policies and regulations. The first roundtable meeting with the participation of immigrants working and residing in the local region seemed to leave a positive impression on the participants. The local stakeholders in Karacabey specifically expressed that there had been no similar meeting or any form of gathering as such with the immigrants beforehand. In this regard, the roundtable meeting within the scope of MATILDE action research in Karacabey helped the local actors initiate further communication with different local stakeholders, migrants and community leaders to exchange ideas about the future prospects of local development.

4. Conclusions and reflections

Policy Proposals: Through a comprehensive research covering a range of tools from the communication with the local stakeholders to further qualitative and quantitative analysis, we firstly have had a considerable knowledge of rural peculiarities of the local MATILDE region. Its fertile lands, historically rural background, agricultural products with the local brand, and its logistical location close to the main consumer markets make the district advantageous in terms of local development. An opportunity for ecological agriculture, eco-tourism and agro-tourism seems an asset to be improved while there is a growing demand for remote/rural activities especially following the Covid-19 pandemic. During the field research, our stakeholders often underlined the potential for international labour force due to insufficient local supply, particularly for the agricultural activities 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. Our research also revealed that there is an intermediate and technical staff shortage beside the unskilled workers.

Further, revisiting main policy problems during the research clearly reintroduces the issue of high informality as the main chronic structural problem of the labour market in Turkey. This directly affects the immigrants' situation in local labour market and paves the way for other structural problems such as child labour, low labour force participation rates of women and difficult working conditions.

On the other hand, the topic in need of more attention and/or to be researched further is the perspective of policy implementers at local level, especially considering the centralized migration governance system in Turkey. The local reflections of the decisions taken in the central system and the engagement of local stakeholders are very important.

Methodological reflections: Following the footprints of a participatory action research, we applied different data collection tools/techniques, which are qualitative interviews, focus group meetings, participatory observation and roundtable meetings. Based on our local thematic issue (i.e. the impact of immigration and migrants' integration on the labour markets in rural regions) and considering the specific territorial features, we tried to reach a wide range of stakeholders. All these data collection tools helped us gain an in-depth understanding of social, economic and political issues. However, despite many attempts, the only thing that did not work out, was to reach foreign workers employed in the industrial sector. The issue of informality and therefore hesitance of immigrants to be involved in a research prevented us from having a direct communication with any immigrant worker out of the agricultural sector in the local region. So, the immigrants' participation to the whole action research became limited with seasonal agricultural immigrant workers and migrant-origin health workers in Karacabey, the MATILDE case study region. Still, migrant-origin private business owners in Bursa, the MATILDE region, and a migrant-origin factory owner invested in local Karacabey made us somehow recover the shortcoming in this sense.

Personal/professional/scientific learnings as the conducting researchers: The action research was a task to be embraced by all the research participants including the MATILDE team as well as the local stakeholders. The main scientific learnings for us, the researchers,

was to see that locals in Bursa, a city established by the people with migrants originating from the Balkans and the Caucasus, were not that different from the locals in other regions in Turkey as far as their indifference to the lives of Syrian refugees. Such negative attitudes were observed during the field research. The research team was also informed about the legal aspects of the idle agricultural lands resulting from the limitations of the inheritance law. Generating new networks on smart villages, sustainable development, organic agriculture, and local governance were also other assets for the researchers.

United Kingdom, Scotland

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1. Overview

On May 16th, at the Caladh Inn Hotel in Stornoway, the research team held the **first roundtable “Finding a route for migrant fishermen to the Western Isles”** organised with the support of CNES (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar - Western Isles Council). The meeting lasted 4 hours and saw the presence of a mix of stakeholders – both public and private - and officials from the Scottish Government (complete list in next section). The roundtable was conducted in a hybrid version: Dr Maria Luisa Caputo moderated the roundtable in person, while Dr Michele Bianchi and Prof Simone Baglioni managed the online participation. The recommendation elaborated with local partners and previously discussed in a focus group with local fishermen was debated. This was the agenda:

- Local partners’ introduction – CNES, COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities), WIFA (Western Isles Fishermen Association)
- Presentation of the policy recommendation, UNIPR;
- Discussion;
- Questions and comments from the online participants;
- Conclusions

On May 18th, we had an online (Teams platform) policy roundtable to discuss the recommendation **“Migrants as actors of the Repopulation of Scottish Rural Areas”**. Dr Michele Bianchi was the moderator; the discussion – that lasted 3 hours - moved around the recommendations based on results from our previous research for WP 3, 4 and 5. This was the agenda:

- Overview of the policy recommendation;
- Discussion kick-off: "Place-based visa. Is a review of the Shortage occupation list at local scale sufficient to facilitate in-migration to Scottish rural and remote areas?"
- "How to develop a strategy between actors at different scales and between private and public actors to promote integration in the key areas of housing, social interaction, language acquisition, mobility, access to services?"

2. Participants of the roundtable

Attendances at the first roundtable were local and regional stakeholders from the public and private sectors and representatives from the Scottish Government. Among the local stakeholders: the Western Isles Fishermen Association (WIFA), local officers from the Council - officers from the Economic Development Team and Resettlement Team -, representatives of the local enterprises (fishing companies), a representative of the Hebridean Housing Partnership and of the Tighean Innse Gall, two organisations in charge of housing. Among the national stakeholders: Highlands and Isles Enterprises, Skills Development Scotland, both agencies of the Scottish government and our local partner COSLA. The Scottish Government was represented by officers of the teams: Migration Strategy and Inshore Fisheries Management & Coastal Communities (Gruber et. al. 2020). In total, the participants excluding the researchers were 15, six women and nine men aged between 30 and 65 years old.

The second roundtable was more participated due to the online modality. Among the local stakeholders there were: officers of the local authority CNES (Communities Department and Settlement), representatives of two local housing agency (Hebridean Housing Partnership and of the Tighean Innse Gall), of the think tank CODEL (Community Development Lens) and of the Outer Hebrides Tourism. Furthermore, there were regional and national economic sector representatives (Communities Inshore Fisheries Alliance, Visit Scotland). The Scottish Government was represented by officers of the Free Movement and Citizens' Right team,

Population team, Connected Communities team, Supporting Young People into Jobs and by the agencies Skill Development Scotland and Highlands and Isles Enterprise. The two advisory boards on migration of the Scottish and British Governments were presents: the Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population and the Migration Advisory Committee (Gruber et. al. 2020). The participants were 21, fourteen women and seven men aged between 30 and 60 years old.

No migrants, TCNs, refugees or asylum seekers were invited at the roundtable.

3. Outcomes and observations/results

The topic of the first policy recommendation arose during the fieldwork, as various representatives of the fishing sector brought to our attention it. Due to end of the European Free movement and within the new migration policy, this sector has critical issues in attracting foreign workers challenging the survival of many enterprises. The problem is of complex manner and involves other aspects such as the general scarcity of workforce in the islands, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the recent raising costs of fuel, and difficulties to bring the claims of the fishing sector to the attention of the Central British Government (Caputo et al. 2021, Caputo et al. 2022b).

The recommendation was discussed firstly in a focus group with local fishermen, who confirmed that micro and small enterprises cannot afford the cost of the salary threshold required for the *Skilled workers visa* and of the administrative fees, the companies who obtained the sponsorship licence could not hire as the foreign workers, they want to employ, did not fulfil the requirement of speaking English at intermediary level (B1). They therefore asked for a review of the migration policy, a new system that helps them making more affordable and easier to employ foreign workers, and for a housing strategy, which links accommodation to a job offer.

The roundtable firstly brought one key data, such as that no migrants were recruited under the current migration policy in the fishing sector in the Western Isles. The draft policy

recommendation was welcomed as an opportunity for different actors to meet and discuss a critical situation. Three points were notably discussed: the choice of the Shortage Occupation List (SOL) – such as the list of positions that cannot be filled – as a short-term solution for the fishing sector, the English language proficiency requirement as a major challenge to recruitment, the challenges of recruiting migrants to come and live in a remote region.

Firstly, from different actors emerged the importance of a larger migration strategy that would address not only the occupation shortage but enhance the local economy and support the demographic growth. Secondly, English was presented in the policy draft as an integration achievement and not as a visa requirement. Speaking English was widely seen, by the public actors participating at the roundtable, as a guarantee for reduce the vulnerability of the migrants therefore the need of a requirement. The economic actors, on the other side, described the strategies to facilitate inclusion of EU migrants, who arrived with no English skills and described examples of informal learning processes. Thirdly, key factors of the integration process in a remote region were discussed: the challenges of recruiting someone to come and live on remote islands, where housing and mobility are challenging. The discussion supported the need expressed in the draft to join the migration policy with the integration one. In particular, the possibility of adding a “islands allowance” in the policy was discussed.

The second roundtable was an occasion to discuss a policy that contributes to address the issue of depopulation that affects the Scottish rural areas. This topic clearly emerged from our statistical brief (Caputo et al. 2022a) and has been brought to our attention by various partners into the Case Study Working Group, which collaborated with us for the WP5 (Caputo et al. 2022b). Consequently, we decided to propose to them this policy recommendation as a possible outcome of our work together. Our data and information support the idea of a local-based scheme able to help consistently migrants to settle in these areas. The main point of this recommendation is that local collaborations among public and private sectors can generate integrated solutions to attract migrants there offering not only job positions but also services, accommodations and support to face challenges of living in rural communities.

As concerned the integration proposal, the discussion concerned three main topics. Firstly, the key role of the third sector as a key local partner to design this scheme and implement local initiatives for migrants' settlement. Secondly, the Syrian Vulnerable People Resettlement Program, was presented in the policy draft as a good practice that can present important lessons and know-how for this solution. In the roundtable, it was stressed how the resettlement scheme was a generously funded program by the British Government aimed at a small number of migrants and therefore it is not replicable for large group of migrants. Thirdly, the participants agreed on the need of providing accommodation for workers in economically strategic areas. The representative of the Hebridean Housing Partnership expressed interest in sitting at the table with local economic actors to discuss future investment plans to be more in accordance with their needs. Other participants from the Outer Hebrides suggested to dedicate resources to restore existing properties under the conditions to rent these for long-term in the future.

The second main recommendation discussed during this online meeting was the necessity to review the migration policy and to introduce a new one that considers the needs of rural areas. As research team, we have found useful to begin the drafting of this recommendation from the work of the Expert Advisory Group on Migration and Population, which works for the Scottish Government. Their Pilot for Remote and Rural Migration Scheme (Boswell et al., 2021) presents a strategic mitigation approach that is a focus on recruiting migrants with the occupations, skills and demographic profile that would best contribute to sustaining local businesses and communities. Based upon our findings and in accordance with the local economic partners, we suggest in particular to consider the Pilot proposal for a review and expansion of the Shortage Occupation List that will consider labour shortages at the local scale. From our research, we consider important to add to this proposal the elimination of the English skills (B1) requirement to obtain the visa. English skills in the proposal are acquired in the integration process in the arrival country.

The representative of the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) informed us about the intention of the Central British Government to review the Shortage Occupation List in the next autumn, after the last revision in 2019. Moreover, this committee will bring to the

attention of the UK Home Office the recommendation of a regional-based Shortage Occupation List that can respond more efficiently to local issues. The representative of the Communities Inshore Fisheries Alliance expressed the difficulty for a regional body to understand and participate in the process of providing data to support a revision of the SOL. An expert asked about the compatibility with this Shortage Occupation List and newcomers' diverse migration trajectories (e.g. in the case of circular migrant); how can be this adaptable to this diversity? This appear as an obvious limit of our recommendation: this solution will affect the previous migration paths; it cannot replace the fluidity of the EU Free movement. Regarding the Remote and Rural Migration Scheme pilot, its realisation is still not confirmed. Nevertheless, the officials from the Scottish Government stated their intention to continue their work on it and created a working group of stakeholder at regional level to implement this proposal.

4. Conclusions and reflections

The conclusion of the WP6 has been successful in terms of creating policy recommendations appropriate for the issues examined during the fieldwork and confirmed by our local partners. Furthermore, the relationships with our partner COSLA has allowed us to discuss these recommendations with an adequate audience of experts and stakeholders; this can be considered a second goal achieved for this part of the project.

From a research perspective, it is possible to conclude, firstly, that the migration to rural areas represents a vital answer to address the challenge of a shrinking and ageing population but this has to be supported through a system that facilitates migrants' arrival in those areas, making them attractive, and supports migrants' settling and integrating with the local communities. Secondly, we can conclude that a revision of the Shortage Occupation List that would allow workers in key sector of the local economy in the long term is not sufficient to respond to the need of in-migration for the social and economic development of those regions. Thirdly, that the issue of migrant language skills is complex and need to balance on

the one side the risk of vulnerability of migrating without understanding the local language, and on the other side the acknowledgement that learning the hosting country language is part of the integration process, that passes through work, friendships, etc. and cannot be achieved without those living experiences.

The design of rural migration scheme represents the main topic for future action-research; this project demonstrates that the collaboration between academia and stakeholders can bring to innovative solutions on a solid scientific basis created with partners.

Further topics arisen in the roundtable, that need to be researched in future include: (1) how the migrants' trajectories have changed after Brexit and within the framework of the Skilled Visa, something that we could appreciate only marginally during our fieldwork, notably because the process was on-going at the moment the researchers were on the field; (2) how English skills impact integration in remote areas, the topic has been highly researched but few work has been done in small cohesive communities like that of the studied remote islands of the Western Isles; (3) how to appreciate labour shortage at regional level, such as how to build a set of qualitative and quantitative data that would allow to have a local based perspective on the lack of workforce, in rural and remote regions.

In terms of methodological challenges, it is possible to see how the two versions of the roundtables gave diverse results. We thought it could be impactful to have the first one – about the topic more related to the Outer Hebrides – in person on the islands to show a practical outcome of our work to partners. Nevertheless, this revealed as a less productive solution considering the few attendances from Edinburgh. Contrarily, the one online gathered more participants because of the easier modality of attendance.

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Conclusion

The purpose of the thematic round tables was to involve the relevant policy makers and stakeholders (see also the MATILDE Stakeholder Involvement Plan; Gruber et al. 2020) at regional level, to jointly co-design, complement, and if necessary, adapt the policy recommendations and solutions. The variety and diversity of stakeholders, located at different government levels, representing different groups of migrants and relating to different areas of integration (Ager & Strang 2008), has brought a special added value to the final results. The involvement of the practical experiences and perspectives increased the practical relevance of the policy recommendations and solutions as local and regional needs are considered. In order to foster the social and economic inclusion of TCNs and the rural development through migration processes participatory roundtables with stakeholders, practitioners and societal representatives should be held regularly.