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MIGRANT INTEGRATION IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

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Immigrant integration in small and medium-sized towns and rural areas: local policies and policymaking relations

in Germany

Country Reports on multilevel dynamics

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REPORT

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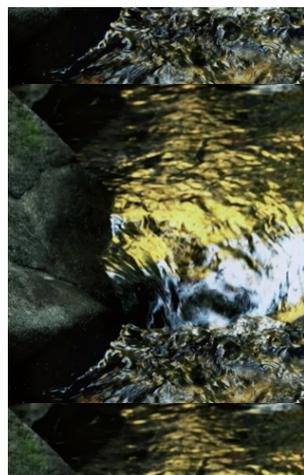
Abstract

This report looks at multi-level governance dynamics and at the integration policies targeting post-2014 migrants developed by six small and medium-sized towns and rural areas in Germany. Primarily based on interviews conducted in each of the selected municipalities, it provides an overview of 1) national and regional integration policies targeting post-2014 migrants in Germany; 2) policymaking relations among the key actors involved in these policy processes in the six localities and key features of policy networks within which these actors interact; 3) how these actors perceive and define integration.

The report finds that across all researched cases, SMsTRAs have actively engaged in post-2014 migrant reception and integration through the development of new and/or the intensification of existing programs. Still, due to the federal system in Germany, this happens in different frames, because of specific funding schemes and varying involvement of higher government levels in local activities. Especially in rural areas, competencies tend to be concentrated at the county level, leaving limited space for political actors to implement their ideas. Still, actors from civil society develop their own support structures regardless of the localities' size and financial and administrative resources. Regarding multi-level governance relations (MLG), the report finds that these are important in terms of funding, on regional (Länder), national as well as EU level. Beyond funding, MLG have decreased after the immediate arrival of migrants in 2014/2015, and localities tend to work on local matters with local actors. The report further shows that social climate and experience with diversity in localities impact integration policies and integration outcomes. Across the six case studies, we find examples of successful policy implementation processes but also cases that fundamentally question the effectiveness of policies if locals in administration and civil society do not respond to them at all. Finally, the report stresses the role of local histories of migration and local narratives on diversity for the development of integration policies – in their focus, their implementation and their effects.

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List of Abbreviations

AfD	Party Alternative for Germany (right-wing)
AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
AufenthG	Residence Law
AsylG	Asylum Law
AsylBLG	Asylum Seeker's Benefits Act
AZR	Law on the Central Register of Foreigners
BA	Federal Labor Office
BAMF	Federal Office for Migration and Refugees
BMAS	Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs
BMI	Federal Ministry for Interior and Homeland
BQFG	Law on acknowledgement of professional qualification
CDU	Christ-democratic party (conservative)
ESF	European Social Fund
FDP	Free democrats party (liberal, economic oriented party)
FIAG	Law on the reception of refugees in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania
IQ	Federal Program "Integration through qualification"
KIM	Local management of integration in North-Rhine Westphalia
LS	Lower Saxony
MV	Mecklenburg- Wester Pomerania
MSO	Migrant Self- Organisation
MLG	Multi-Level Governance
NRW	North Rhine-Westphalia
PEGIDA	Nationalist, far-right movement (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident)
SPD	Socio-democratic party (progressive)
ZUE	Central accommodation unit, first reception center
ZuwandG	Immigration Law

List of Interviewee-Codes

Locality code – 1	Regional Policy Maker
Locality code – 2	Mayor
Locality code – 3	Local official in charge of integration/local coordinator for integration
Locality code – 4	Pro-migrant group
Locality code – 6	Member of opposition in the local council
Locality code – 7	Expert/ journalist
Locality code – 8	Street-level bureaucrat/local *Jobcenter*
Locality code – 9	Street-level bureaucrat
Locality code – 10	Street-level bureaucrat
Locality code – 11	Private company/Business sector
Locality code – 12	Private company/Business sector
Locality code – 13	Employers' Organisation
Locality code – 14	Real Estate Company/ Public Housing Company
Locality code – 15	non-profit service provider (migrant counselling)
Locality code – 16	Trade Union

Localities

G1	small town in Saxony-Anhalt
G2	rural area in Lower-Saxony
G3	medium-sized town in Lower-Saxony
G4	small town in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW)
G5	medium-sized town in Mecklenburg-Wester Pomerania (MV)
G6	rural area in Saxony

Introduction

Over the last few years, Germany has received unprecedented numbers of migrants and asylum seekers, often in an unorderly way. This has led to a **growing immigrant presence** in scarcely prepared small and medium-sized towns and rural areas (SMsTRA). The way in which these local communities are responding to the challenges related to migrants' arrival and settlement in their territory is crucial for the future of immigrant integration in Europe. This is even more true if we consider that in 2022 these localities are again on the front line of refugee reception in Europe following the arrival of thousands of Ukrainians in Germany.

This report aims to explore how six small and medium sized towns and rural areas in Germany have responded to the presence of post-2014 migrants[1]. In particular it aims to assess, first, which **policies** have been developed and implemented in these small and medium sized towns and rural areas, or, in other words: How have SMsTRA mobilized vis-à-vis the new challenge and in relation to the policies and funding schemes put forwards by other levels of government? In doing so, the project looks at the **embeddedness of local actors in multilevel frameworks** in which regional, national and EU policies and stakeholders may play a decisive role in shaping local integration policymaking. Second, the report focuses on the **interactions between the actors** involved in integration policymaking, asking: What different patterns of interaction can we identify between local (policy) actors and regional/national/supranational authorities and stakeholders? Which factors have led to the emergence of collaborations as well as tensions between actors at different government levels? Are new cooperative relationships eventually emerging and, if so, what are the key features of resulting policy networks? Third, the report asks how the actors involved in these policy networks **perceive and frame the integration of post-2014 migrants**, under the assumption that frames can play a key role in influencing policymaking processes.

In these localities – which differ in terms of their size, the political affiliation of their local government, their experience with cultural diversity, their economic and demographic situation and that are located in different regions – **interviews have been conducted with a total number of 98 actors** involved in local integration policymaking, including members of local government, local officials, street-level bureaucrats, local councilors and a wide range of non-governmental actors. Insights derived from the interview material have been complemented with an in-depth analysis of policy and legal documents.

The report finds firstly, that **all six researched SMsTRAs have actively engaged** in post-2014 migrant reception and integration through the development of new and/or the intensification of existing

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[1] The group of migrants that arrived in (Western) Europe after 2014 is very heterogeneous, "but mostly comprises migrants that left from areas of political and humanitarian crises" (Working Paper 1 2021, 1-2). The majority of 'post-2014 migrants' entered thus as asylum-seekers but may have obtained different legal statuses by now (see for more detail Working Paper 1 for the Whole-COMM project).

programs. Policies and programs are often **backed up by funding from higher governance levels** (regional, national and EU level) and only made possible through **intensive support and engagement of civil society actors**. Especially in small towns and rural areas, civil society plays a crucial role to compensate lacking financial and administrative resources. It shows secondly that due to the **federal system in Germany**, integration policy making happens in different frames, because of specific funding schemes in the *Länder* and varying involvement of higher government levels in local activities. Especially in rural areas without or limited local administrative functions, competencies are concentrated at the county level, leaving limited space for political actors to implement their ideas. Thirdly, the research shows that MLG have decreased since the immediate arrival of refugees in 2014/15 and localities tend to **work on local matters with local actors**. Policy relations are most frequent to close governance levels (county level, *Länder* level) and fewest on the supra-national level. Fourth, the analysis of frames of integration reveals differences between actors who conceptually work on integration, and those who use it as a hands-on working term. While the first group (e.g., regional integration plans) most often refer to **integration as a whole-of-community process**, members of the second groups have a pragmatic **understanding** of integration, e.g. social participation of migrants in the majority society. Left-wing NGOs and Mos tend to critically engage with the term, seeking to replace it with inclusion or notions of a diverse society.

The report is organized as follows: After outlining the research methodology and gathered data, the report introduces the national context as well as the six local cases. The main part of the report presents the findings of WP3 on local integration policies and is structured along four topics: (1) the development of local integration policies, (2) frames and discourses on integration in the case studies, (3) MLG relations in integration policy making and (4) decision making processes in the field of local integration policy. The report closes by reflecting on differences and key factors for local approaches to integration policymaking and proposes recommendations for local integration strategies.

This report is a deliverable of the Whole-COMM Project, which focuses on small and medium sized municipalities and rural areas in eight European and two non-European countries that have experienced and dealt with the increased arrival and settlement of migrants after 2014 (for more information about the project see: Caponio and Pettrachin, 2021).

Research methodology and data

Empirical data for this report was collected in the period **October 2021 until April 2022**. Data collection comprised document analysis and semi-structured qualitative interviews with respondents at the local, regional/provincial, and national level. Potential respondents were sampled based on their (professional) positions, e.g., as local official working on integration in a municipality or employee in an NGO offering non-profit services to refugees. Most respondents were contacted through email first (usually in German), occasionally followed by a reminder and a call. After establishing first contacts in a municipality, other respondents were identified using the method of 'snowball sampling' (Bryman 2016). In total, 82 interviews with 98 respondents were conducted.

The six localities on which this report focuses were selected based on several different variables. Three localities are based in the subregion of Western Germany and three in the subregion of Eastern Germany as we expected the experience with migration related diversity as well as structural conditions to differ (see 1.1). All localities hosted a reception centre for asylum-seekers or refugees between 2014 and 2017 and were still hosting some post-2014 migrants in late 2021. Case selection was conducted in the framework of the broader Whole-COMM project (see Caponio and Pettrachin 2021 for more details) in order to maximize variation among a set of variables including: population size , the share of non-EU migrant residents before the arrival of post-2014 migrants, unemployment levels before the arrival of post-2014 migrants, demographic trends before the arrival of post-2014 migrants, the political parties in government (conservative vs progressive). Some of these variables were additionally used to identify four types of localities:

Type	Characteristics	Selected cases in Germany
Type A ("revitalizing/better-off" locality)	Recovering local economy and improving demographic profile, migrants' settlement before 2014	Municipality G5 (medium-sized town in MV, region: East) Municipality G6 (rural area in Saxony, region: East)
Type B (locality "in transition")	Improving economic and demographic situation, no remarkable arrivals of migrants before 2014	Municipality G4 (small town in NRW, region: West)
Type C ("marginal" locality)	Demographic and economic decline, migrants' settlement before 2014	Municipality G3 (Medium-sized town in Lower Saxony, region: West)
Type D ("left-behind" locality)	Economic and demographic decline, no remarkable arrivals of migrants before 2014	Municipality G1 (small town in Saxony-Anhalt, region: East) Municipality G2 (rural area in Lower Saxony, region: West)

Table 1: Typology and case selection.

In Germany, six cases were selected. To ensure regional variation, the six selected communities are distributed across five provinces, namely Saxony-Anhalt, Lower Saxony (two cases), North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), Mecklenburg Western Pomerania (MV) and Saxony.
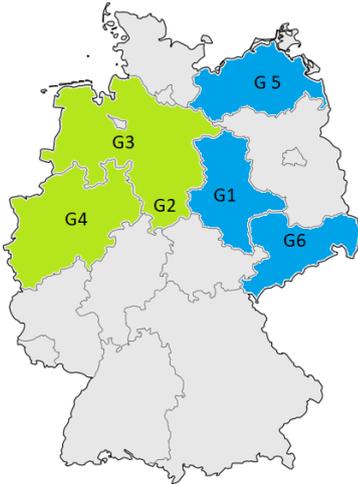
Figure 1: Location of the six German case studies

Introducing THE GERMAN CASES

The following section introduces the national and regional context of the German case studies. It describes important legal frameworks in the field of integration policymaking at the national and *Länder* level, as well as the distribution of responsibilities and competencies between policy scales. The section closes by introducing the six case study localities of this report.

National context

Overview of the legal and policy framework at the national level

The field of integration is foremost regulated by the national level. The content of the relevant legal framework was enacted in 2005 through the immigration law (ZuwandG) which gained wider attention after the arrival of refugees in 2015. This led to the compiled federal integration law in May 2016. Still, integration policy remains a highly decentralized task between the federal level, the *Länder* and municipalities.

Legal framework: National integration law

On the national level, integration law is the cornerstone of integration policy. It is not a comprehensive act but an omnibus law, that consists of changes in different legal acts on asylum regulations, residence regulations and social welfare. Changes were made in asylum law (AsylG), asylum seekers benefits act (AsylBLG), residence law (AufenthG), law on the central register of foreigners (AZR-Gesetz). The sum of these changes was communicated to the public as a single "integration law" in May 2016 (Deutsche Bundesregierung, 2016). Before these changes, immigration law from 2005 (ZuwandG) was the central law dealing with migration. **A legal framework dedicated to integration did not exist before 2016.**

Major policy changes concern (1) intensification of language and integration courses, (2) faster integration into the labor market, (3) introduction of residence regulations after asylum procedure and (4) accelerated process to settlement permit.

(1) **Integration courses** comprise German language classes and cultural orientation courses. The new law aims at migrant's and accepted refugees' early start in these courses by limiting the possibility to participate free of cost to one year after arrival (instead of two). It also opened the courses for asylum seekers with so-called 'good perspectives to stay'[2] (*gute Bleibeperspektive*) that were not included before.

(2) In the field of labor, integration law seeks to **enhance labor market participation among post-2014 migrants**. It creates legal certainty during vocational training for people with tolerated stay, and generally facilitates access to labor market as the priority review of local jobseekers was ceased (*Verzicht auf Vorrangprüfung*). Still, working in a specific position requires **formal acknowledgement of the respective professional qualification**. Decisions are made according to the *Berufsqualifikationsfeststellungsgesetz* (BQFG) by the responsible authority, e.g., Chamber of Crafts, Chamber of Commerce or Chamber of Medicine. Integration law also promotes **participation in vocational training** (*Ausbildungsförderung*) through access to preparation courses (from three months after arrival) and financial support (from 15 months after arrival). Integration law further initiated the program "job opportunities for refugees" that offers asylum seekers (low paid) work during asylum process.

(3) One major change of integration law is the introduction of a **residence regulation** according to § 12a AufenthG. It obliges refugees after the asylum procedure to take residence **for at least three years in the federal state** in which their asylum process has been followed through. The rationale behind this regulation is to better regulate the settlement of refugees away from metropoles and make sure that the initial investment in integration infrastructure is sustainable. It is up to the *Länder* to implement further residence regulations focusing on specific counties or municipalities where refugees have to or may not take residence.

(4) Integration law makes it possible for **refugees with protection status to obtain settlement permit after five years**. This is tied to so-called integration efforts (language knowledge, being able to provide for oneself, community involvement). Temporary resident permit is granted to refugees with their proof of arrival to ensure access to labor market and integration services.

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[2] The rationale of "good/bad perspectives to stay" has been introduced by the Ministry of Interior in 2015 to deal with high numbers of refugees and speed up the asylum procedures. The "perspective to stay" is bound to the country of origin and the median protection rate for asylum seekers from the respective country. Refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea and Somalia for instance fall under the category of good perspectives.

National action plan for integration

Besides the legal framework, integration on the national levels follows the national action plan for integration (*Nationaler Aktionsplan Integration*) that was issued in 2007 (Deutsche Bundesregierung, 2007). This action plan for integration understands **integration as a process of five phases** that range from phase I "Before migration" to phase V "Social cohesion". 24 thematic working groups developed over 100 measures that involve actors from policy and civil society on the national, *Länder* and municipal scale (Integrationsbeauftragte, 2022). The action plan conceives integration along **ten key topics**: language acquisition, labor market integration, gender equality, integration as a local process, culture and integration, integration through sports, media and integration, integration through participation and fostering of research on integration and promotion of open-mindedness.

In 2021, the working groups have issued their proposed measures for each phase of integration (see e.g. (Integrationsbeauftragte, 2020; Integrationsbeauftragte, 2021). Civil society actors as well as public institutions have been involved in the development of programs and measures. This reflects the action plan's understanding of **integration as involving all members of society** (Deutsche Bundesregierung, 2007, p. 14). It is in this understanding of integration that national authorities support applications of local initiatives for EU-funded integration funds (esp. AMIF I, AMIF II).

Legal changes as well as the implementation of a national action plan point to a **rising interest in the topic of integration** in Germany since the 2000s. This is also related to challenges that arise from demographic processes in Germany. As **society is ageing and shrinking**, migration - and the sustainable integration of migrants into society – is understood as a necessity to **cope with the lack of skilled workers** and the social and economic effects of societal ageing: "*Against the backdrop of demographic change and global competition for the brightest minds, we have to strategically use immigration for the economic and social interests of Germany. It is therefore essential that we develop a sustainable integration policy.*" (Deutsche Bundesregierung, 2007, p. 12). The national program "Integration through qualification" (*IQ Netzwerk*) thus specifically supports labor market integration.

While these changes in integration law imply an increasingly progressive policy towards migration, this is not the case for all groups of migrants. **Restrictions in the reception and admission policy** can also be observed. Between 2015 and 2018 two bills for faster deportation and three bills regarding safe countries of origin passed the Bundestag (Beinhorn, et al. 2019, pp. 18–19). In order to ensure faster asylum procedures and, potentially, deportation, the idea of so called AnKER-Centres were established in 2018 (BAMF, 2019) that allow for a fast separation of prospective refugees classified as applicants with "good perspectives to stay" (*guter Bleibeperspektive*) from refugees with "bad perspectives to stay" (*schlechter Bleibeperspektive*). This term has been introduced by the Ministry of Interior in 2015 to deal with high numbers of refugees and speed up the asylum procedures. The "perspectives to stay" is bound to the country of origin and the median protection rate for asylum seekers from the respective country. The principle is highly criticized by refugee advocacy groups as limiting the chance to receive protection and hindering factor for integration (Pro Asyl, 2017). In 2021, the new government coalition (Social Democrats. Greens and Liberals) launched their plan which, however, abandons the AnKER-Centres, softens these aforementioned principles and promises new integration measures for all groups.

Attitudes and discourses

On a societal level, the **arrival of asylum-seeking migrants in 2015 was framed under the so-called "Welcome-culture"**. The prevailing narrative was one of an open-minded country, especially in the media. However, **resentments against immigrants have always been present** in segments of the population and resulted in an increasing popularity in populist thinking since 2015. This was especially noticeable after New Year's Eve 2016, when over 600 women in Cologne reported sexual harassment by "*North African men*". This incident was widely debated in Germany as the failure and the end of welcome culture (Yurdakul & Korteweg, 2021; Deutsche Welle, 2020). The rise of right-wing parties, such as the AfD or enduring local protests (e.g., PEDIGA) mirror the changing social climate (G1-1). Despite this strong politicization, the integration climate index shows that **acceptance for migrants has been stable since several years and that positive attitudes have slightly increased**. Especially in times of pandemic situation as a challenge, the reception of refugees is not as much of a polarizing issue as before (SVR, 2020).

Distribution of responsibilities and funding in the field of integration policymaking

While integration law was issued on the national level, various responsibilities in the field of integration lie at the *Länder* scale and are put into practice by municipalities and independent cities on the local level. Besides practical and financial reasons, this is also rooted in the understanding of integration as a process that happens locally ("vor Ort"), referring to the municipal and the neighbourhood level (Deutsche Bundesregierung, 2007, p. 19).

The tasks of refugee reception and distribution are **core responsibilities of the *Länder***. Municipalities (counties and independent cities) are then in charge to provide reception and accommodation as soon as asylum seekers are registered and have filed for asylum. Reception and distribution involves also the legal handling of the residence regulation according to § 12ª(4) AufenthG. It is the ***Länder*'s responsibility to decide whether the residence regulation applies on *Länder* level, on the county level or on a certain locality**. Due to the federal system, the process of reception and distribution differs between the 16 *Länder.* We shortly introduce the proceeding in the five *Länder* where research for WP3 was conducted below.

In **Saxony-Anhalt**, refugees are assigned to specific counties taking into account the number of inhabitants, the unemployment quota and number of available trainee positions (Ausbildungsplätze) (Land Sachsen-Anhalt, 2017). Counties can decide to further assign people to concrete localities (G1-1). The rationale behind this practice is to allocate refugees close to available "integration resources", such as housing, labour and education (Land Sachsen-Anhalt, 2017) and to keep refugees in the places where they have profited from "integrating resources" (G1-1).

After decision over asylum status, **Lower-Saxony** distributes refugees to the counties according to § 1(3), Niedersächsisches AufnG (Lower-Saxony's residence law). This is based on the ratio of the number of asylum seekers per county to the county's number of inhabitants. In general, Lower-Saxony, does not carry out residence regulation except for three cities that observed outstanding

numbers of post-2014 refugees. Following § 12ª(4) AufenthG, refugees are not allowed to move to these localities until today, except for special reasons such as family reunion. The case study G3 in Lower-Saxony (medium-sized town) is one of these localities (see 2.4).

North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW) exerts a three-step-system according to the NRW AsylG (law on asylum). Asylum seekers are registered in one central registration institution where it is decided if the person stays in NRW or is redistributed to another state. Afterwards, asylum seekers are transferred to one of the five central reception centers for registration and filing asylum (MKFFI NRW, 2020). Subsequently, refugees are sent to Central Accommodation Units (ZUE). Some ZUEs are specifically aimed at people with bad expectations to obtain asylum (in order to fasten the deportation process) (Flüchtlingsrat NRW, 2020). The case study G4 in North Rhine-Westphalia hosts a ZUE for refugees with bad expectations to obtain asylum (see 2.5).

Distribution of refugees with asylum status in **Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania** proceeds according to MV'S refugee reception law, considering the number of inhabitants of the county (Flüchtlingsaufnahmegesetz MV (FIAG), 2005). The refugee reception law also foresees shared accommodation for refugees (§ 4 (1) FIAG).

In **Saxony**, refugees are registered in main reception centres, and are then transferred to one of the 13 counties. Counties can decide how they distribute refugees within the counties, and if this implies a residence regulation on county or locality level. The county of the rural area G6 in Saxony contains 56 municipalities, and the county administration decided to implement a centralized distribution mechanism. This means that currently has no reception centre but only five rental flats for reception of asylum seekers (before asylum decision) implying that the place has not taken a major role in refugee reception. Most refugees in the rural area in Saxony came to the town after the asylum procedure, when they were allowed to search for an own flat (G6-2, G6-4).

Besides reception and distribution, the *Länder* included in this research put their focus on three fields of action: (1) language programs, (2) access to the labor market and vocational training, and (3) funding for integration work and social cohesion, e.g., local integration coordinators or funding for civil society initiatives. Programs on the *Länder* scale tend to react to the focus of the national programs and fill existing omissions. One example would be language classes for people that are not allowed to enter integration courses, for example refugees with tolerated stay.

(1) In the field of language acquisition, all five *Länder* included in this research offer **special programs for different target group**s. One focus is the provision of access to language courses for refugees that are **not covered by the national program** (*Landessprachprogramm* in Saxony and *Sprachkursförderrichtlinie* in Saxony-Anhalt). Another focus is learning the language for **faster labor market integration**, such as special classes in vocational school with language training and cultural content (SPRINT-Klassen in Lower-Saxony) or labor market programs that involve language classes (Network for refugees PLUS in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania). North-Rhine Westphalia enacted a law on integration and participation in 2022 that also entails one

part on integration through education, aiming at improving the German language knowledge of migrants.

(2) In the field of access to labor market, the *Länder* conduct programs to **support qualification of refugees** and turn them into skilled workers for their labor market. Some of the programs offer orientation on the German labor market and counselling regarding the recognition of qualifications (Labor market mentors in Saxony, Netzwerk für Flüchtlinge PLUS in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania). Lower-Saxony issued a regional law on recognition of qualification (Niedersächsisches Berufsqualifikations-feststellungsgesetz, NBQFG). Programs might also involve support for companies and employer's organizations to employ refugees (Project group "Professional integration of migrants" in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania). Most of the programs on labor market integration name refugee and migrant women as a special target group of their actions. Improving access (and using) of childcare and raising knowledge on possible professions and the German labor market are key actions in this field (FIFA-Richtline in Lower-Saxony, Interview G1-10).

(3) Programs for **integration activities and social cohesion** address various actors and scales of action. One key measure is the establishment of **local integration coordinators in each municipality** (Directive to foster local integration work in Saxony-Anhalt, *Kommunale Integrationsbeauftragte* in Saxony and North-Rhine Westfalia, local coordination units for integration in Lower-Saxony). Their tasks include the coordination of activities and actors in the field of integration, monitoring of integration progress, conceptual work on integration and support of migrant organizations and civil society (G3-1). *Länder* programs also offer funding for non-profit service providers and civil society organizations in the fields on integration, encounter and social cohesion (*Integrationsförderrichtlinie* in Saxony-Anhalt, directive for integration measures II in Saxony, *Richtlinie Integrationsfonds* in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania). The scope of action ranges from small scale projects, such as grassroots bicycle workshops to improve mobility of refugees in rural areas (G5-1) to more institutionalized support of neighborhood institutions and social meeting places. Funding is also provided for the **training of volunteers** working with refugees (directive for the qualification of integration guides in Lower-Saxony), and social workers with a focus on integration (Directive on Social Workers in Integration in Saxony). This field of action also entails programs for **intercultural opening of the local administration** (Law on integration and participation in NRW, agreement on intercultural opening in Saxony-Anhalt).

Although the programs mentioned above are formally attached to the *Länder* scale, the **distribution of tasks is not always clear-cut**. **Funding mostly involves different scales**, a common constellation is for example joint funding of EU level, *Länder* level and the local scale, or national and municipal scale (see table 2). Crucial institutions, such as the local *Jobcenters* or migrant counselling are often carried by different pillars and supported by multilevel funding. Migrant counselling for example is funded by the federal level but put into practice by local non-profit service providers. With over 1460 migrant counselling offers in Germany (BMI, 2017) this is an example of a key program **impossible to assign to one government level only**.

Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Mecklenburg-Wester Pomerania issued **regional integration plans** in the last decade. While integration plans existed in some regions before 2015 (Concept on Migrant Integration of MV in 2006, Migration and Integration Concept of Saxony in 2012), other regions developed regional integration plans as a consequence to the arrival of refugees in 2015 (Land Sachsen-Anhalt, 2020, p. 2). The concepts are constantly evaluated and reworked. **North-Rhine Westphalia** recently went beyond integration plan and issued a **law on integration and participation** in 2022. Lower-Saxony does not work with a separate action plan on integration, however manifold directives and funding schemes address the topics.

Besides these main fields of action, there are manifold programs and policies that touch the topic of integration, such as laws and policies on (higher) education, laws and policies on childcare or local policies on health care. These policies also have implications on local integration outcomes. However, to keep scope of this report clear, we put a focus on laws, programs and policies that directly relate to integration. As government levels are often intertwined, e.g., national policies impact local scopes for integration through funding schemes, it is not always possible to assign one policy level. In table 2, we therefor choose to assign policies to the highest possible level and making the involvement of other government levels clear in the category "actors involved".

Table 2. Overview of main policies and actors in the field on integration of different scales

	RELEVANT POLICIES/LAWS[3]	YEAR OF ENACTMENT	MAIN ACTORS INVOLVED	ROLE/ RESPONSIBILITY OF ACTORS	FUNDING
NATIONAL LEVEL	Immigration law (ZuwanderungsG) Asylum law and residence law (AufenthG/AsylG)	2004, latest version: 2021	BMI	Sets legal framework in this field	
	Integration Law Prominent topics - Language training (integration courses (IntKVO); German language courses (DeuFöV;) - Integration into labor market (legal certainty during vocational training for people with tolerated stay; "job opportunities for refugees"; facilitate access to labor market and vocational training) - accelerated process to settlement permit	2016 (year of revision / omnibus law)	BMI BAMF BMAS BA Local immigration authority Regional coordinators of integration into labor market Job center Education provider Non-profit service providers	BMI/BAMF Job center/education provider/local immigrant authority/: implementation on local level	Federal level *Länder* level Local level

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			Public/non-profit employers („job opportunities for refugees)		
	Asylum Seeker's Benefits Law (AsylBLG)	1993, latest version: 2021	BMI Local administrations	Local administrations are responsible to distribute money/services to refugees	Federal level *Länder* level Local level
	Law on acknowledgement of professional qualification (BQFG)	2011, latest version: 2021	BMAS	Sets legal framework in this field	
	Program Integration through qualification (IQ Network)	Since 2005, recent funding period 2019-2022	BMAS BA BMBF ESF Local IQ network units	BMAS/ESF: funding BA, BMBF: implementation Local units: counselling, support in application,	BMAS EU (ESF)
	Asylum, Migration, Integration-Funds (Post-AMIF)	2021	BAMF Regional granting units	BAMF coordinates funding; regional units support in application process and select projects	EU (AMIF)

REGIONAL LEVEL	Saxony-Anhalt				
	Directive to foster integration of migrants (Integrationsrichtlinie)	2014	Länder level NGOs/MSOs Civil society	Länder level funds activities for migrant integration on the local level, esp. encounter, social participation, intercultural opening	85% Länder, 15% local level
	Directive to foster integration, refugee support and intercultural opening (Integrationsförderrichtlinie)	2020	Länder level MSOs/NGOs Non-profit service providers	Länder level funds; MSOs/NGOs/non-profit implement projects, e.g. Counselling, participation, intercultural opening, prevention against racism, foster welcome culture	85% Länder, 15% local level
	Directive to foster local integration work (Richtlinie Koordinierungsstelle Migration)	2015	Länder level (Regional Official for Integration) Local coordination units for integration	Local coordination units for integration in all municipalities establish networks, coordinate local services, develop local integration plan, acts as central contact person for all matters related to integration	90% Länder 10% local

	Directive to support language classes for foreign nationals (Sprachkursförderrichtlinie)	2014-2020	Education providers	Basic language classes for foreign nationals that have no access to federal "integration courses"	ESF Länder
	Integration award	Since 2010	Länder level (Regional Official for Integration) Civil society Migrants/refugees	Regional Official awards locals and migrants for extraordinary engagement in the field of integration	Länder
	Integration plan of Saxony-Anhalt	2020	*Länder* level Municipalities Civil society Migrants/refugees	Improve integration of migrants in different fields of action and all parts of society	
	Lower-Saxony (LS)				
	Reception Law	2004, latest version: 2020	Länder level Municipalities Possibly: Non-profit service providers	Länder level grants money to municipalities; municipalities or non-profit service providers run accommodation	Länder (10 000€/person)
	Berufsqualifikationsfeststellungsgesetz (NBQFG) in L-S	2012, latest version: 2018	Federal Labour Office IQ Network	IQ Network provides support/counselling Federal labour office/responsible chambers decides	

				Responsible Chambers of Crafts, Commerce, etc.	
	Regulation "Lageangepasste Wohnsitzauflage" according to §12a AufenthG	2016	Länder level municipalities	After petition of three bigger localities in LS, Länder level issued this regulation, prohibiting asylum seekers to move to these three localities	
	Regulation on Migration and participation in L-S	2020	Länder level Local coordination units for integration (KMN)	Länder level grants money, oversees the local coordination units; local coordination units evaluate integration in the communities, propose fields of action	Länder (50%), local level (50%);
	Regulation to foster migrant women's integration to the labour market (FIFA)	2018	Non-profit service providers NGOs Private actors	NGOs/non-profit service providers coordinate programs, Private actors offer places for internships	ESF Länder
	Regulation for the qualification of "integration guides"	2015	Non-profit service providers, NGOs volunteers	NGOs/Non-profit service providers train volunteers as "integration guides"	Länder

	Program "Sprint-Klassen" to foster migrant youth's access to vocational education	2019	Länder Local vocational schools	Funding by Länder Implementation, organization: local vocational schools	Länder
	Agreement on intercultural opening of the administration	2016	State level administration	Fostering the intercultural opening through employing migrants and intercultural training	-
	North-Rhine Westfalia				
	Law on integration and participation Intercultural opening Statewide establishment of local integration manager Integration through education Integration through work Political representation of migrants through Migrant representatives on state level Distribution and reception of migrants	2022	State administration Local integration manager Schools, kindergarten Jobcenter, private actors, education providers MSOs Länder level – municipalities	All members of society	National level Länder level Local level
	Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania				
	Regulation on responsibilities in the field of distribution and reception of migrants	2005, latest version: 2016	Ministry for youth and sports,	Länder level actors set the frame of distribution and	National level Länder

	(Zuwanderungszuständigkeitslandesverordnung)		Immigrant authorities, county commissioners and mayors	reception, local actors implement reception	Local
	Directive to foster social integration of refugees (Richtlinie Integrationsfonds)	2018	Länder level civil society actors non-profit service providers	Länder level grants money to civil society actors and non-profit service providers to carry out projects that promote integration	Länder level (90%)
	Program „Network work for refugees PLUS"	2015-2021	Non-profit service providers BA/Job center Local administration Employer's association (IHK) Local coordinators for integration	Non-profit service providers implement the program in cooperation with BA/Job center, employers' associations, local administrations and local coordinators for integration	ESF
	Project group „Professional integration of migrants"	2017	Ministry for economy, labour and health Coordinator on state level 4 regional coordinators	Regional coordinators support employers and employer's organisations to employ refugees	Länder level
	Integration plan of MV	2006, latest version 2019	*Länder* level Municipalities Civil society	Improve integration of migrants in different fields of	

			Migrants/refugees	action and all parts of society	
	Saxony				
	Currently under development: Integration and Participation law (Integrations- und Teilhabegesetz)	Exp. 2022	Lead: Ministry for Social Affairs and Social Cohesion] Participative process, includes different actors from state & local level		Länder level
	Migration and Integration Concept II (Zuwanderungs- und Integrationskonzept II)	2018 (Version I : 2012)	Ministry for Social Affairs and Social Cohesion]	See "Richtlinie integrative Maßnahmen	
	Three administrative directives– (based on Migration and Integration Concept) Directive for Integration Measures (Richtlinie integrative Maßnahmen II (Saxony)): : Program for integration officers in all counties „Kommunale Integrationsbeauftragte (KIK)" German Language Classe "Landessprachprogramm" (for all refugees not covered by the national program) Funding program for low-threshold integration activities and voluntary work Richtlinie "Soziale Arbeit" (Directive on Social Workers in Integration)		Ministry for Social Affairs and Social (SMS) (for 1 and 2), Ministry for Labour, Economy (SMWA) Development Bank of Saxony Counties	Policies and funding responsibilities Funding process (processing the applications and payments) Applicants for integration measures in 1) and 2)	

	Funding Program for Social Workers in all countries Fachkräfterichtlinie (Directive on Skilled workers / migrants) Mentoring and Counselling program (in all counties) "Labour market mentoring" (Arbeitsmarktmentoren)		Other actors, e.g., social service providers and language schools, volunteer groups	Applications to Development Bank or to the Counties	
	All Länder				
	AufenthGesetz, Wohnsitzauflage (§12a)	2016 (federal law)	State level	Decides on scope of regulation: state-wide or county/city-wide	
	Flüchtlingsaufnahmegesetz (Federal)	Lower Saxony (2004)	Regional level responsible for reception and accommodation, practical acts on local level		Länder level
	LOCAL LEVEL				
LOCAL LEVEL	Under AufenthGesetz, Wohnsitzauflage (§12a): Wohnsitzauflage	2016	Immigration authority (county level or locality level)	Controls compliance with residence regulation in place	-
	Under AufenthG: Migrant counselling (MbE) and youth migrant counselling (Jugendmigrationsdienst)		Federal government Non-profit service providers	Federal funding for local counselling services	National level

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	Under FlüchtlingsaufnahmeG: Health & Education		Language schools; NGOs; Pro-Migrant groups	Professional language classes/Volunteer language classes	National, Länder and local level
	Local integration plans GD: local integration plan GS: Integrated action plan on integration GI: local integration plan GL: none GR: local integration plan GRA: on municipal level: no integration plan; on county level: Integration guidelines	2017 2014 In progress, exp.22 2014, 2nd edition 2021 2016	All relevant stakeholders in the locality Regional council and county administration (assessment every year)		No funding

Introduction to the local

In the following, we introduce the six German case studies and describe their response to the arrival of post-2014 migrants. To understand the differing scope of actions and efforts between the municipalities in the field of integration, it is crucial to say that **integration is a so-called voluntary task of self-government** (*freiwillige Selbstverwaltungsaufgabe*). This means that apart from the basic fields of accommodation and education (integration courses), it is a **deliberate decision** of the municipalities how much effort and financial resources they invest in this field. Thus, it has to be noted for the German cases that **the mayor does not necessarily represent party politics**. Previous research on refugee integration in SMsTRas has shown that "local integration policies in general seem to be rather independent of the party-political composition of local governments" (Schammann et al., 2021, p. 2909). Further, local councils in Germany do not necessarily work through coalition building and the principle of majority and opposition, because party members will decide individually on how they will vote on any matter, not always in line with the greater political lines of the party on the national level. For example, a member of the CDU could be part of a conservative party but follow a very progressive approach to integration. Majority-opposition constellations are further complicated by the fact that **mayors are elected independently by the people** and not by the local council. **A locality could have a progressive mayor but the strongest party in the local council could be conservative.** This makes it not always possible to label a locality as "progressive" or "conservative". Furthermore, Germany has a lot of **small parties that only exist on the local level**. These parties are founded locally and mostly concerned with local matters, so it is not always possible to label them as progressive or conservative (their attitudes might vary from topic to topic).

Case study G1, type C locality

The small town is located in the region of **Saxony-Anhalt (East-Germany)**. Since the German Reunification in the 1990s, Saxony-Anhalt is confronted with structural and social transformation. While the bigger agglomerations experience an increase of inhabitants since the 2000s, small towns and rural areas struggle with the effects of structural changes and have seen a **dramatic decrease of inhabitants** and increasing population ageing (G1-1). In the regional integration plan, **migration is thus portrayed as an important contribution to stabilize the number of inhabitants**, face societal ageing and ensure supply with work force (MS Sachsen-Anhalt, 2021, p. 2). The small town in Saxony-Anhalt reflects the demographic processes of population ageing and shrinkage mentioned above. The locality lost over 10,000 inhabitants in the last 15 years although the municipality incorporated a neighboring municipality in 2007. Today, the locality has around 80,000 inhabitants. In 2014, unemployment level was at almost 13% which is close to East German average, and a considerable improvement of the situation compared to the unemployment level of 20% in 2005. However, this is almost double number compared to the German average of 7.5% in 2014.

Figure 2: Typical municipal housing stock in G1. Own source

The share of foreign residents was at 2.5% in 2005, which is higher than the East German average, but still a small share. The case study region had only little experience with cultural diversity before 2014 except for the presence of foreign workers from socialist countries such as Vietnam, Cuba or Mozambique in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). However, the foreign workers project was strictly politically regulated, and kept migrant workers and locals separated, e.g., through separate housing. As a consequence, personal relationships between locals and migrants were rare, and xenophobic attitudes can be found in the population (G1-4; G1-4a; G1-7). Today, **migrants, especially refugees, tend to remain only for the compulsory three years** after reception of the residence status (Wohnsitzregelung after §12ª, AufenthG) in the locality. Afterwards, migrants tend to leave subsequently to bigger cities with a more flexible labor market and, even more important, existing migrant communities (G1-7; G1-3).

The **arrival of refugees was met with support of key local policy actors, and a small, but active civil society** (G1-7). Main initiatives were issued by the local official responsible for immigration affairs (G1-3), the local university (G1-10a), the local *Jobcenter* (G1-8, G1-8a) that developed a task force for refugee integration into the labor market and, most prominently the municipal housing company. Due to the significant loss of inhabitants within the last 20 years, vacancy rates are high, so the municipal housing company offered decentral accommodation for post-2014 migrants to ensure integration from the start (G1-3, G1-3a). The small town in Saxony-Anhalt also has a considerable number of right-wing, migrant-critical groups (G1-4a; G1-7). However, to avoid open conflict, policy makers are seen to refrain from working on issues of racism and xenophobic attitudes and rather "*keep the ball flat*" (G1-7:9). The political tradition of the locality is conservative with the CDU being almost always the strongest party. These conservative tendencies have reinforced since the right-

wing party of AFD entered the local council in 2014 with 5% of the votes which increased to over 16% in the local elections in 2019.

Case study G2, type D locality

The rural area in Lower-Saxony (West Germany) is a **sparsely populated rural area** with a population density of 40 people per km² and around 49,000 inhabitants (county). Before 2014, the share of foreign residents was 2.5%, which is significantly lower compared to other municipalities in West Germany. In 2014, unemployment in the region was at 11 % which is considerably higher compared to West German average (7.5%). The **economic situation of the municipality is poor** (G2-2; G2-3), leaving hardly any resources for integration being a voluntary task of the municipalities in Germany.

In 2015, the **locality hosted three primary reception centres run by the *Länder* due to available buildings in the region**. A small number of refugees was assigned to the county and hosted in decentral accommodation (G2-3). The housing market in the rural area in Lower-Saxony is very tense and fragmented. The number of municipally owned flats or housing cooperatives is limited, and they refused to participate in an interview as refugee accommodation would not be a relevant topic to them (Conversation via phone with two housing cooperatives, October 2021). **Most of the flats are owned by single private persons**, and these are the relevant actors for housing asylum seekers and refugees (G2-3). Attitudes towards migrants among locals are thus crucial context factors for access to housing in the locality (G2-3; G2-4a).

The case study region experienced **media attention as best-practice region of welcoming reception of migrants in Germany despite little experience** with migration-related diversity before (G2-7; G2-4b). The number of volunteers who engaged in refugee reception 2015 was overwhelming (G2-4b). One possible reason for this is the influx of people with left-alternative lifestyles to the locality, as the region has been a center of ecological protests since the 1970s. Having reached some important political goals until the 1990s, civil society organizations and individual volunteers from the eco-scene were open to find new fields of action, and perfectly implemented their competencies of networking and engagement on the topic of refugee reception. Only recently, urban elites are moving to the region due to modest distances to the cities of Berlin and Hamburg, and the scenic landscape of the rural area (G2-13). Still, the locality is very rural. Institutions such as language courses, migrant counselling or legal advice for refugees are rare and hard to reach or simply non-existent. This situation and the economic situation of the locality renders volunteers important actors in the field of integration (G2-3).

The findings presented in this report refer to the rural area in Lower-Saxony as well as the respective county. **Because of the small size of the locality, many political responsibilities in the field of integration lie at the county level**, and civil society organizations and volunteers work across the county. The political tradition of the locality is conservative (CDU), however due to the settlement of environmentalists and the moving-in of urbanites, newly founded progressive parties are increasingly gaining votes.

Figure 3: "Get-a-lift-bench" as alternative to bad public transport in G2; Own source.

Case study G3, type C/D locality

The case study is a scattered medium-sized town in the region of **Lower-Saxony (West-Germany**). G3 covers an area of over 220 km² and **incorporates seven smaller towns and 31 villages**. In total, the locality has over 170,000 inhabitants. The locality's unemployment rate of approx. 9% is higher than the West German average, but still a considerable improvement to the unemployment rate in 2005 that was at 13.7%. The locality is **key location of five strong industrial companies**. **Since the 1960ies, so called "guest-workers"** from Turkey, Greece, Italy and former Yugoslavia were recruited by these companies, and many of the workers and their families stayed in the locality (G3-10). Existing migrant communities and related facilities, for example religious places, services, cultural groups, made the case study locality an attractive anchor point for post-2014 migrants (G3-8). The numbers of arriving post-2014 migrants were that high that the locality urged the regional government to prohibit further post-2014 migrants to move to the locality. This was also caused by the tense economic situation of the municipality (G3-2; G3-9) with limited financial resources for social services, educational and neighborhood institutions. Furthermore, the locality also saw an increased inflow of EU-migrants from Romania and Bulgaria, often from precarious background, which further increased the pressure on social assistance and integration infrastructures. As integration is a voluntary task of municipalities in Germany, only limited resources are left for this issue.

The locality owns one big municipal housing company. However, hardly any post-2014 migrants moved into this housing stock as they are in high demand and fully occupied (G3-14). The locality followed a decentral accommodation approach to foster integration (G3-3), and **most of the post-2014 migrants live in rental units in those parts of the city where former housing for migrant workers is located**. This housing stock is owned by a **foreign real estate company that hardly invests in the quality of buildings**. Thus, rent in these quarters are comparably cheap and lie in the financial

scope that social welfares covers. Social problems tend to cluster in these neighborhoods and most of the inhabitants have a migrant background (G3-15). Some key actors even speak of patterns of ethnic segregation in the locality (G3-3; G3-8).

Figure 4: Housing blocks in G3. Own Source.

Compared to the other case studies in Germany, **volunteer support in the medium-sized town in Lower-Saxony seems less structured and organized.** Pro-migrant groups by churches or civil society organizations are less visible, and support was based on the hands-on effort of single persons that "*rather do than talk and organize*" (G3-3). Much of the support was carried out by migrants of the linguistic communities that have been in the locality since longer (G3-6). The city administration employs a volunteer coordinator that connects volunteers with post-2014 migrants in needing support (G3-4). The political tradition of the locality is socio-democratic/progressive. Strongest parties in the local government are CDU und SPD, however the new right-wing party AFD gained over 10% in the latest local elections in autumn 2021. The party AFD is especially strong on the neighborhoods that have a high share of migrants from the former UDSSR (G3-10b).

Case study G4, type B locality

The small town is located in **North-Rhine-Westphalia (West Germany).** The case study locality with roughly 51,000 inhabitants is surrounded by other small and medium-sized towns, offering a network of economic and social anchor points within the larger region. The economic situation of the location is advantageous with an unemployment level of only 2.3%. This is significantly lower compared to the rest of the country. The number of inhabitants decreased slower than the average in Germany from 2005 to 2014 and is rising since 2020. This and the low unemployment level are remarkable facts given the region's recent challenge of economic transformation due to the shutdown of the

mining industry. The transformation process was supported by local policy maker's strategy of a positive narrative of social change (G3-2). Local policy makers applied this strategy also to the arrival of post-2014 migrants. Although the region of North-Rhine-Westphalia has a long history of migrants, notably guest workers from Turkey, Greece, Italy and former Yugoslavia, the case study's share of foreign residents was only 5 % before 2014. This is significantly lower than West German average (approx. 9%).

Figure 5: Inner city street in G4. Own source

In the context of the arrival of post-2014 migrants, policy makers in the small town in North Rhine-Westphalia decided to host a first-reception center (Zentrale Unterbringungseinrichtung, ZUE) in the locality in 2016. Distribution keys of asylum seekers and refugees by the Länder-level takes the numbers of people hosted in the ZUE into account. As the ZUE is run by the Länder-level and managed by a non-profit service provider, this **removes some responsibility from the locality** (G4-2; G4-3). The locality saw a considerable decrease of post-2014 migrant's numbers since this decision. Actors from the political sphere and administration believe that is now possible to better accommodate and provide services for the assigned post-2014 migrants (G4-2; G4-3). Up to now, conceptual as well as practical work in the field of integration was **delegated by the local government to two key non-profit service providers** through a political mandate by the local county. The local administration had only little involvement in integration affairs (G4-4a; G4-3). Only recently, local policy makers are taking up migrant integration as a political issue and are now in the process of drafting a local integration plan. The locality has a socio-democratic political tradition. In the last elections, SPD and CDU were the strongest party, but also the Greens won almost 15%. The small town in North Rhine-Westphalia is the only locality in the six German case studies where the right-wing party of AfD was not elected to the local council until today.

Case study G5, type A locality

The medium-sized town is located in the **North of Mecklenburg-Wester Pomerania (MV) (East Germany)** at the coast of the Baltic Sea. While the **economic situation** in the locality was harsh in the early 2000s with an unemployment rate of over 21% in 2005, the situation **improved** and the share of unemployed inhabitants decreased to approximately 10% in 2014. Also, the **population is growing** considerably with an increase of over 11,000 inhabitants from 2000 to 2019. The share of foreign residents before 2014 was at almost 4% higher which is higher than the East German average. Due to its location at the Baltic Sea, the local economy relies on tourism and gastronomic service. These sectors offer jobs for unskilled workers and were open for post-2014 migrants, especially because the working conditions involve work on holidays and late working hours which other people on the labor market do not accept (G5-9). The medium-sized town in MV also has a university that is the locality's biggest employer, and that actively engages in integration affairs through its international office (G5-10).

In the early **1990s, the locality witnessed massive right-wing protests** against asylum seekers. These incidents are a frequent reference point of both civil society organization's and policy actor's narratives on 2014/15. **For left-wing civil society actors, this was one reason for widespread activism in 2015**. A strong civil society organized accommodation for refugees and transit of refugees who wanted to move on to Sweden or Norway over the Baltic Sea. In the first months of the arrival of refugees, civil society organizations were the main actor, because the local administration was not able to react fast enough (G5-3; G5-4; G5-15). Civil society organization thus are important partners of the local administration in the field of refugee integration until today (G5-3).

Figure 6: Housing in the outskirts of G5. Own source

G5 has a **very tense housing market**. Affordable housing is only available in the large housing estates at the outskirts of the locality. This results in a clustering of social problems in these areas and, in some places, to hostile attitudes towards migrants in general (G5-4a; G5-15). However, these are the only places where people with low income, among them many post-2014 migrants move, which results in **non-welcoming neighborhoods**. The provision of adequate housing for post-2014 migrants

is a serious issue and people tend to overstay significantly in shared accommodation (G5-4a). The medium-sized town in MV has a socialist/social-democratic tradition (SDP, Lefts), but there are also conservative elements (CDU, recently AFD). The current mayor is without party membership, follows progressive politics and is supported by conservative parties.

Case study G6, type A locality

The small-town case study is located in the **Eastern part of Saxony (East Germany).** The region's population development is stable, observing modest growth of 1.8% within the last five years. Due to its proximity to a larger city, the town serves as an **attractive residential area for commuters** because of its good train connections. The share of unemployed inhabitants decreased from 16% in 2005 to approximately 7 % in 2014 pointing to positive developments on the region's labor market.

The **housing market is not as tense as in larger cities** since the rural area in Saxony has a significant municipal housing stock but compared to other towns of the district the demand is high. After district reforms in the 2000s, the small town belongs to a relatively large district (>50 municipalities) with the administrative centers in a little further distance (30-45 km).

The case study locality had only **little experience with cultural diversity before 2014,** as the share of foreign residents was only 1.6% in 2005. During the last decades, the rural area in Saxony had a stable political structure since the 1990s. The locality has a **long-time mayor (SPD) with progressive attitudes** towards the reception of refugees and, at the same time, a rather **conservative town council** (CDU majority). Also, right-wing parties have increasingly gained votes in regional and national elections. The town was involved in the reception of post-2014 refugees with a reception center (2015-2017) in its outskirts and some individual flats. Many refugees moved to the rural area in Saxony after receiving their refugee status since it is close to the next larger city but within the county where they are obliged to stay (G6-4, G6-8). Until today, there are **no professional integration workers** hence the **civil society/volunteers play a major role** in integration processes.

Figure 7: Small town center of the rural area in Saxony. Own source.

Locality	Inhabitants (approx.)	Economic situation	Demographic situation	Political tradition	Previous Experience with migration
G1	~ 80,000	poor	Ageing and shrinking	Conservative (CDU)	Very limited experience
G2	~ 49,000 (county)	poor	Ageing and shrinking, very recent influx of urbanites (2nd home)	Conservative (CDU), but challenged by new local parties	Very limited experience
G3	~ 170,000	poor	growing	Socio-democratic-progressive (SPD, CDU)	experience
G4	~51,000	prospering	growing	Socio-democratic (SPD)	Some experience
G5	~ 200,000	Stable to prospering	growing	Socialist-social democratic, but existing right-wing attitudes	Limited experience
G6	~ 18,500	Stable to prospering	Stable - growing	Conservative council, progressive mayor	Limited experience

Table 3: Overview of the case studies

Integration policymaking in six German SMsTRAs

The following section describes the main findings on local responses to the arrival of post-2014 migrants and multi-level governance relations in the six selected case studies along four overarching themes: The section first turns to the development of local integration policies. Then, a second part presents existing frames of integration in the localities. A third section looks at networks between actors at different scales. The section closes by an analysis of the factors that influence decision making in integration policies in the case studies.

Development of local Integration Policies

This chapter discusses local responses to the arrival of post-2014 migrants in the selected localities. It looks at the local policies created and how they relate to policy making on the national and *Länder*

scale. After a case-by-case analysis, the section closes with a comparison of the findings across localities.

G1, type C locality

In general, integration policies put forward by the local government in the small town in Saxony-Anhalt **mainly rely on two local coordinators for integration, funded by the *Länder* level**. The federal state of Saxony-Anhalt funds local integration coordinators in all municipalities because most of the municipalities have only little experience with diversity before 2015 (G1-1). Policy makers on the *Länder* scale perceive immigration as a necessity to cope with demographic change, but as resentments are prevalent in many places, they seek to support integration through local coordinators since 2016 (G1-1). In G1, the **local coordinators work in a separate administrative department that is formally tied to the mayor's office**. However, it is **difficult to convince local administration and policy makers to engage in the topic**. Conservative members of the local council and administration are hard to address, and the rigid structures of the administrative system impede work on cross-sectional topics in general (G1-10; G1-3). Still, the local coordinators for integration try to raise awareness for this issue, for example through the development of a local integration plan, a "welcome guide" for refugees to the locality or the participation in external research projects on social cohesion in the locality (G1-3)[4]. The coordinators also initiated a local network funded by *Länder* scale to promote social diversity and social cohesion in the locality. Network partners are actors from the local university, the *Jobcenter*, a local radio channel, education providers and a non-profit service provider (G1-3; G1-7; G1-10a). Due to the restrictive attitude towards migration by many policy makers, local officials working in the field of integration cooperate with actors outside the local government, such as *Jobcenter* or the local university (G1-10; G1-3).

When post-2014 migrants arrived first in G1, this was met with support by the local administration and personal engagement of local officials. For example, the local administration organized (and paid for) a bus to bring refugees to the central registration of Saxony-Anhalt point which was several hours away (G1-3a). Volunteers collected donations and worked as guides to the new place. As in almost all localities in Germany, support for post-2014 migrants was high in summer and early autumn of 2015.

Due to high vacancy rates, the local government decided in **cooperation with the municipal housing company to accommodate post-2014 migrants in decentralized housing from the start**. The small town in Saxony-Anhalt is the only location in Saxony-Anhalt that works with decentral accommodation during the asylum process (G1-1). Local policy makers in the locality understood this as key to social integration (G1-3; G1-14). To prevent conflict, the arrival of post-2014 migrants in the neighborhood was supported by a social worker of the municipal housing company (G1-14; G1-10).

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[4] To ensure anonymization, references to local documents are not part of the bibliography but can be found anonymized in a separate table in the Annex of this report.

This was deemed necessary, because the population of the small town in Saxony-Anhalt has not been in touch with migrants before and has a high average age. To prepare locals to the arrival of migrants, including families with small children, the social worker visited the inhabitants of each block where migrants should be settled. To improve integration, not more than two migrant families were settled in one block (G1-14). As Saxony-Anhalt applies residence regulation according to §12a, AufenthaltsG as bounded to specific localities, migrants are obliged to stay in the small town for three years after they receive refugee status. The rationale behind this policy is to have more time to convince migrants that smaller towns and rural areas in Saxony-Anhalt can be good places to live and to "not lose the investment in migrants" in terms of language classes and counselling offers (G1-1). Post-2014 migrants could stay in their flats after they received their asylum status if they wished so.

Education providers in the small town in Saxony-Anhalt aligned their offers to the manifold new funding schemes developed by EU, national and *Länder* level after 2015. As non-profit service providers need a considerable number of participants in the language classes and education programs, this led to a competition between education providers (G1-10; G1-8). The local administration also made use of a national program to fund coordinators for education of refugees (G1-10). The local university's international office offered language classes preparing for the university. As language classes funded by the national level do not include higher levels (B2-C1), the university's offer filled a considerable gap for access to higher education and the labor market (G1-10a). Funding was first provided by the Länder level, but due to rising influence of the populist party AfD, this funding was terminated. Today, courses are funded by the German Exchange Service (DAAD).

In the field of labor market integration, the local *Jobcenter* took an active role. The head of the institution initiated a task force on refugee integration (G1-8) which mainly consists of young employees with a high motivation (G1-8a). Some employees had a migrant background and voluntarily signed up for the group. The *Jobcenter* of the small town in Saxony-Anhalt also engaged in the *Länder* program "Fachkraft im Fokus" (focus on skilled workers) that creates a network between companies, labor offices, *Jobcenter*s and refugees. A second central institution for labor market integration in the small town in Saxony-Anhalt is the IQ Network (see table 1). It is funded by ESF and national level to provide counselling on qualification and acknowledgement of certificates for migrants. The program is carried out by a non-profit service provider. Together with the local administration, the municipal hospital promoted an internship program to foster refugee's access to labor market. Refugees could work in the hospital and a neighboring nursing home to get insights into working in Germany (G1-11). Of over 25 people that participated in the program, two have started their vocational training in the clinic.

Although there are a range of integration programs and policies in place, migrant organizations and civil society actors refer to a hostile climate for migrants in the locality (G1-4; G1-4a; G1-7). Many post-2014 migrants have left the locality and moved to other towns with more migrant communities and a more progressive social climate (G1-3; G1-7). Migrant associations report a missing discussion over racist violence that has happened in the locality prior to 2015 (G1-4; G1-4a). According to them, migrant voices are constantly overheard by local policy makers. This is in stark contrast to the perception of the situation by local policy makers from the field of integration who develop a local

integration plan and a network on social diversity. It seems that the implementation of progressive integration policies by involved policy makers fails to meet the needs of the migrant population because of the troublesome constellation of a great part of the society that is not interested in integration (G1-3), strong right-wing tendencies that politicians do not seem to engage in open conflicts with (G1-7), and migrants associations who feel overheard. The local situation seems to be one of discrepancy between very active single persons in administration, and the majority population of the locality, behaving indifferent, critical or even hostile against post-2014 migrants. Local common sense seems to be that "homogeneity is the norm", and actors who try to challenge this narrative encounter problems (G1-3, G1-7) or even fear right-wing attacks (G1-4, G1-4a). This case study raises the question of effectiveness of policies if the local population does not respond to them.

G2, type D locality

G2 is a small locality in a sparsely populated rural area. **Local integration policy is thus inseparably tied to the county level where main decision making happens**. The financial situation in the municipality and the local county is very tense. In 2014, *Länder* government agreed to abate the county's debts of over 80 million euros. Since then, the county has limited financial resources and must ask permission from the *Länder* government for financing services that are no obligation. Due to that fact, **the municipality provided post-2014 only with the most necessary support, such as accommodation and language classes (G2-3). It was not possible to finance other services such as social workers or translators (G2-3).** From 2015-2019, the local administration initiated a round table on migration to discuss relevant issues with involved stakeholders (G2-4a).

This situation contrasts with the response of civil society actors to the arrival of post-2014 migrants. Since the 1970s, the county is heart of environmental movements that attracted left-wing activists to the locality. **Locals were very welcoming the migrant newcomers in 2015, potentially extreme**, as one interviewee describes with a certain discomfort:

> "*It was like a hype. […] We have a choir here, and when refugees arrived from the first reception centre, this choir was there singing for them. It was nice, but you know, people just arrived, and then all these Germans come and sing…*" (Pro-migrant group, G2: 6).

In the poorly equipped, rural locality, volunteers and local initiatives played a key role in the integration process. Due to the lack of sufficient language classes, volunteers offered private German courses and conversation classes in a village (G2-4a). The existing formal migrant counselling was overwhelmed by the arrival of new clients, so one volunteer applied for *Länder* funding to initiate a second counselling office (G2-4b). An existing, activist migrant counselling adjusted their offer to the new clients (G2-4). Due to the long history of political activism, civil society was able to build on existing structures to quickly organize refugee support (G2-4a; G2-7). The spirit of activism is prevalent in the locality. Due to a lack of suitable accommodation, a grassroots initiative started a new build housing project for locals and refugees as a village of refuge (G-L4c). Besides activist initiatives, the rural population was also ready to help, which was explained by the fact that

neighborly support is one of the key habits in sparsely populated areas (G2-6). For people that had not engaged in migrant support before, the local administration offered the education program "integration guides" for volunteers, funded by the *Länder* scale (G2-4b).

Due to available buildings, the locality hosted three bigger reception centers that were run by the *Länder* level (G2-3; G2-4). This led to conflicts between civil society actors and the local government over the living conditions in the camp, and the possible transfer of "our refugees" to other localities after decision over asylum status (G2-3). **Refugees who were directly assigned to the locality were accommodated in decentralized accommodation** because this was seen as a key to integration in a small locality (G2-3). However, the housing market in the locality is mainly owned by private persons, so the department of social affairs had to convince single people to rent their apartments to refugees. This has become more and more difficult as some landlords claimed that they had bad experiences with renting to migrants and discouraged others to rent their apartments to refugees (G2-4a).

In the field of education and labor market integration, one local vocational school participated in the Länder program of SPRINT-classes (see table 1). This involved the employment of several specialized teachers, and the adjustment of the whole school community to students from other cultural backgrounds. One reason for the establishment of these classes was the competition over students in the sparsely populated and ageing area (G2-9). One local producer of juices became also active in 2015 by sponsoring furniture and employing some refugees (G2-13).

Despite considerable effort of civil society actors, many post-2014 migrants left the locality after the decision over their asylum status (G2-3). As Lower-Saxony does not apply the residence regulation according to §12a AufenthG, refugees are free to move to almost all places in the region (for exceptions, see the medium-sized town in Lower-Saxony below). Most of the post-2014 migrants left for bigger localities with migrant communities, better public transport, and better possibilities to find work (G2-4).

Due to the difficult financial situation of the locality, the local approach is not strategically developed but rather reacts to whatever is possible. Integration mainly relies on civil society actors. As many of the civil society actors have moved to the locality from bigger cities – earlier due to the environmental protests and today due to general tendencies of second homes by urban elites – they appreciate migration related diversity as it adds some color to the rural area (G2-4c).

G3, type C/D locality

In 2015, the medium-sized town in Lower-Saxony registered great numbers of post-2014 migrants. As the locality has a long history of migration due to the presence of so-called guest worker in the 1970s and other groups of migrants, the locality was a popular place of residence for post-2014 migrants (G3-3). Existing family ties as well as ethnic and religious communities formed anchor points (G3-6) and provided considerable logistical and psychological support (G3-6; G3-8). These

communities made the medium-sized town in Lower-Saxony a good place to "*process the burden of a flight*" (G3-8).

The **non-migrant population was supportive towards post-2014 migrants as well** (G3-10), especially in initiatives organized by churches (G3-10b) and on a private basis between neighbors (G3-3). The local government initiated a forum on integration to foster exchange between actors from education, social services and the labour market (G3-8). A local volunteer coordinator reached out to Arabic speaking persons to match translators and local guides (G3-4).

Existing institutions reacted to the new situation by adjusting their offers to post-2014 migrants. **Education providers drew on EU, national and *Länder* funding to align their programs** to the new focus of refugee integration (G3-9). **Migrant counselling services expanded their offers** and employed new staff with the needed language proficiencies (G3-15). N**eighborhood centers and social meeting places started offers** for post-2014 migrants, such as language classes or conversation cafés (G3-10a; G3-10b). **The local *Jobcenter* created a new unit** for refugee's fast track labor market integration. The target group of this unit were refugees who had worked in internships before and have sufficient German or English knowledge. The unit was meant to work on a case-management basis to support refugees' aims for their future career. However, due to the massive arrival of refugees, the unit had to adjust their aims and mainly organized language classes for newly arriving people (G-39). **The local Federal Labor Office's service for employers received countless requests by local companies** on how to employ migrants and changed their counselling program accordingly (G3-12a).

However, the arrival of migrants continued in massive numbers (over 5000 people within two years), and social institutions, local authorities as well as neighborhoods were not able to adequately cope with the situation. Schools reported troubling numbers, such as classes in primary schools where over 50% of the children did not speak any German (G3-15; G3-3). Institutions of social affairs were overstrained and not able to provide basic needs in appropriate times (G3-3; G3-9), and counselling places for labor market access or migration-related issues were not able to provide their services (G3-9; G3-15). "*It was incredible, the corridors of our Jobcenter were black of people, it was like an economic crisis or something.*" (G3-9:4). In this period, the social climate became less welcoming towards migrants. Due to the ownership structure of the local housing market, most of the post-2014 migrants found accommodation in the run-down housing stock of a foreign real estate company. This led to processes of segregation in the locality, with streets where over 90% of the people have a migrant background (G3-15). These are the places where social problems already clustered before 2015 and provoked competition over resources in some quarters up to violent incidences against a neighborhood institution (G3-10b). The open-minded, or at least neural, attitude of locals who are used to live with diversity became challenged as they felt not at home in the place anymore (G3-3).

Against the backdrop of this situation, **the local government requested the *Länder* government to issue an immigration stop (Zuzugsstopp)** to the locality. According to §12a (4) AufenthG, *Länder* governments can take this measure if it is "*likely that migrants will not use German as language of communication there. The situation of the local market for vocational training and the labor market have to be taken into account for the decision*" (§12a(4)). An immigration stop was issued in G3 in

2016 and applies until today. With the situation becoming more relaxed, local actors could start to work on integration in the locality (G3-3; G3-6; G3-9; G3-10).

In the field of labor market, the local *Jobcenter* initiated various programs to foster migrant women's access to formal labor. Three programs that have been realized between 2018 and 2021 are jointly financed by ESF, national and local funds. They were initiated by the local *Jobcenter* and put into practice by local non-profit service providers (G3-8; G3-10; G3-10a). While these programs mainly provide internships and insights into the German labor market, local companies had their own strategy to win suitable work force out of the group of post-2014 migrants. The medium-sized town in Lower-Saxony is location of five big, internationally working companies. Urged by the workers council of trainees, the company offers vocational preparation for six young refugees each year. These are selected in an intensive process as the vocational training is demanding and requires high motivation (G3-12). Yet, most local employers are disappointed by the outcomes of the arrival of refugees for their businesses. They expected their shortage of skilled labor to be solved. However, this was not the case (G3-12a).

Regarding the social situation, different actors consider tendencies of spatial and social segregation the biggest problem (G3-3; G3-8; G3-9; G3-10b; G3-15). The local government seeks to increase their funding for neighborhood institutions as they are seen as key to social cohesion (G3-3). However, the locality is highly in debt and struggles to provide long-term funding (G3-3). Discourses around segregation do not only involve post-2014 migrants, but refer also to previous migrants, especially "guest workers". Their situation today serves as a frequent reference point to learn and achieve better integration outcomes with post-2014 migrants, especially migrant women (G3-3; G3-8; G3-10b). Besides, working on social cohesion in G3 is difficult because of the far-fetched structure that results in a certain fragmentation of civil society initiatives and structures of support. Creating a feeling of belonging across all parts of the locality remains a challenge.

G4, type B locality

In the small town, the arrival of post-2014 migrants was perceived differently by the locality's relevant stakeholders. Civil society actors engaged in refugee support and several pro-migrant groups emerged in 2015, most of them associated to local churches (G4-4). These initiatives offered conversation classes, cafés for encounter, places to play for children and support in managing administrative tasks (G4-4a, G4-6a). Existing non-profit service providers adjusted their programs to the new situation. The key institution for migrant support in the locality increased their services in migrant counselling by employing more staff with needed language proficiencies (G4-4b, G4-15). This institution and a second central non-profit service provider added social programs for refugees and locals, as well as training programs for volunteers (G4-4; G4-4a). Funding for these programs was mixed and involved EU, national, *Länder* and local sources. Established education providers drew on EU, federal, state funding and aligned their programs with the new focus on refugee integration (G4-10). They offered for example a combined course of language training and training on the German labor market (G4-10a).

The local government experienced the arrival of migrants as a stressful situation. Local administration was overwhelmed by the arrival of migrants. "*There were buses coming every day, and we did not have the place to accommodate people*" (G4-3:1). The **locality created 15.5 new positions across the local administration in 2015** to cope with the situation (G4-2). Thus, the local government felt **responsible for the smaller surrounding municipalities** that were struggling even more to accommodate the newcomers (G4-2). As the locality had hosted a reception center for refugees of the Balkan wars in the 1990s, the local government, in cooperation with the county government, developed the idea to reactivate the reception center. It was first used as a central accommodation for the county to relieve the smaller surrounding municipalities and hosted up to 800 refugees (G4-2). As the central reception center worked well, the locality offered the buildings to the *Länder* government to establish a central accommodation unit (ZUE) for refugees with "bad perspectives to stay" in the locality. The responsibility for refugees in this reception center (distribution, coordination, financial resources, security) lies fully at the *Länder* level. This gave the locality some "*time to breathe*" (G4-2; G4-3) because the refugees hosted in the ZUE are taken into account in the regional distribution key. Thus, after the establishment of the ZUE in 2016, the locality has received only small numbers of post-2014 migrants (G4-3). The establishment of the ZUE did not happen without protest. Pro-migrant groups complained about the difficult living situation in a reception center (G4-4a; G4-6a), and neighbors of the ZUE raised security concerns (G4-3). These were met by the employment of a community manager (G4-3) and a daily police patrol along the ZUE (G4-2). Pro-migrant groups now have access to the ZUE and offer counselling, conversation classes and games for kids there (G4-3; G4-4a; G4-15).

Beyond accommodation of migrants, the local government follows a strategy of "outsourcing" integration tasks to non-profit service providers. Two local institutions receive funding for integration work (G4-4b) and volunteer coordination (G4-4). Until recently, integration was no important topic on the local political agenda. The reception of refugees was framed under accommodation only and thus assigned to the administrative health unit working on homelessness. Pro-migrant groups and left parties in the local council have stressed the need to develop a local integration plan since 2015. Recently, the process of drafting the concept has begun, and the topic of integration is planned to be shifted to the unit of social affairs. To stress the locality's involvement in refugee affairs, the green party initiated a participation of the small town in North Rhine-Westphalia in the Network "Sichere Häfen" (safe harbors) that sees responsibility for refugee reception in municipalities and tries to strengthen cooperation's with "safe cities" in Europe. In 2021, the local council approved the twon's participation in this initiative. As the local government had not been so much involved in the topic of integration, the *Länder*-funded integration coordinator on the county level (KIM) is an important reference person for actors outside the local administration (G4-8; G4-10; G4-13).

Concerning labor market integration, the local *Jobcenter* established a local integration unit with employees that have a migrant background themselves. They drafted the program of this unit in close cooperation with KIM on the county level. **The local Union of skilled craftsmen took an active role in labor market integration of post-2014 migrants**. The locality's unemployment level is low, and workers are needed in almost all sectors (G4-2). To profit from the arrival of migrants, the Union of skilled craftsmen employed welcome guides for labor market integration that conduct cooperation programs with vocational schools and migrant counselling (G4-13a). They also offer preliminary

qualification before vocational training and established a network between local companies, civil society and KIM (G4-13). As vocational training in Germany takes three to four years and involves practical as well as school-based training, the Union of skilled craftsmen encouraged business and Chambers to pursue modular qualification for vocational training. This gives migrants, especially middle-aged persons who have worked in the profession in their home country, the possibility to acquire the German qualification step-by step and while working. Thus, they envisage creative methods to increase post-2014 migrants passing of exams, for example through oral exams (G4-13).

G5, type B locality

In G5, the prevailing narrative on the arrival of post-2014 migrants is that of a **strong civil society**. When refugees arrived in the locality, it was actors from civil society who organized accommodation and distribution of donations and essential goods (G5-3; G5-4; G5-15). The **local administration was simply too slow to react** to the arrival of high numbers of people appropriately (G5-3). As the medium-sized town in MV is located at the Baltic Sea, many of the migrants used the locality as a transit town to reach Sweden. In 2015, the local initiative for refugee support accompanied over 30.000 people on ferry from the medium-sized town in MV to Sweden (G3-4), operating in a legal grey area when helping people to cross borders. The local government supported the transfer through paying for the ferry tickets, which was highly debated in the local council afterwards and even had penal consequences (G3-6).

Because of the essential work of volunteers in the first three to four months of the arrival of refugees, **the local refugee support initiative has become an important partner of the local government**. The less formal initiative can react more flexible to newly arising challenges compared to the slow and rigid structures of administration.

After some time, several measures were taken by the local government: **A new local office for refugee affairs was established in the administration**. This office was meant to **work cross-sectional** between the local immigration authority, the administrative unit of youth, social affairs and asylum and the mayor's office, represented by the local coordinator for integration. Work in this setting requires cross-sectional cooperation, which is not easy given the rigid structure of the German administrative system (G5-3). **In the local council, a working group on refugee affairs** was established from 2015-2019 (G5-3; G5-6). **Members of the refugee supporter's initiative were also part** of the working group and urged the integration coordinator to rewrite the local integration plan according to the new situation – in the timeframe of two weeks (G5-3:10). The status of the topics migration and integration has obviously changed since 2015. When the integration coordinator first attempted to develop a local integration plan in 2011, this was met with comments such as "*If you don't have anything else to do*…" (G5-3). The local government is involved in networks on different scales, such as the network of county's officials for integration on Länder scale, the participation in German-wide research projects and the network of United Baltic Cities (UBC) (G-R-3).

Actors from the local administration also established **a round table on "health and integration"** together with a student group and the health department. The aim was to establish health care provision that is easy to access. The program was funded by the local health department in the first

four years and has become independent from the local administration in 2021 through funding from private donors, UNHCR and funding from the *Länder*-scale. (G5-15a).

Existing institutions of the **education sector** and counselling reacted to the new situation by **aligning their programs to the needs of post-2014 migrants**. Education providers developed new programs (or slightly changed existing) to be eligible for funding schemes of refugee integration on EU, national and Länder scale (G5-9). This strategy was not without problems as refugee integration has become a business, and the quality of, for example, language classes do not always meet the basic standard (G5-3). A program for labor market integration run by a local non-profit service provider and funded by ESF was continued due to the arrival of migrants in 2015 (G5-9). Migrant counselling points increased their serviced by employing more staff (G5-15). The local university shifted the focus of its international office to refugee integration. Reacting on the initiative of the university's president, the international office developed fast-track language classes, buddy programs and trainings for refugees who have arrived some time ago to support newcomers (G5-10). Today, their programs have developed according to the situation of post-2014 migrants, focusing on support in the university, e.g., academic writing and access to labor market, such as workshops on job interviews (G5-10a).

In the field of labor market integration, the local *Jobcenter* **has become active from the start**. They developed **a special unit** for refugee integration that accompanies people with a holistic approach while searching for a job. Counselling is not limited to job seeking, but might also involve searching a flat, finding childcare facilities or solving health issues (G5-8a). The local Employer's organization started the program of integration guides to facilitate labor market access (G5-8).

One of the **main challenges in the medium-sized town in MV is the tensed housing market**. Problems to find a flat have reinforced for post-2014 migrants since the municipal housing company introduced the policy to grant rental contracts only to persons with a residence permit of three years or longer (G5-15; G5-4a). This has become a serious problem as the local immigration authority issued residence permits on a yearly basis (G5-15). As housing is very scarce, people tend to overstay in the shared accommodation which is a stressful situation for refugees and poses problems to the operators of the accommodations and the local administration alike as newly arriving people lack space (G5-4a).

G6, type A locality

G6 is a small town in a rural county. Still, the location, the basic infrastructure and good transfer connection (by car and train) to a big city renders it a desired location for post-2014 migrants. The **financial situation and economic situation are rather good** compared to other municipalities in the county. A **municipal integration policy is not existing, and the locality is heavily depending on the county level** in the topic of integration which is regularly leading to conflicts (G6-2).

Unlike most other county municipalities in 2015, the **mayor proactively responded** to the number of refugees by offering housing in G6 to the county. However, the county officials decided to open a larger reception facility in one of the small town's surrounding villages. This led to several problems in the village due to weak infrastructure and the comparably high numbers of refugees:

"This led to the absurd situation that we had in this small village 120 inhabitants and 90 refugees in the middle of the forest, where there is no option for groceries, no bakery, nothing." (Mayor in G6)

This situation clearly reflects the dependency on the county level in integration policymaking and implementation. Although the town's mayor (social democrat) follows an inclusionary idea of integration and spatial integration, the decision is finally made by the county authorities and politicians (conservative majority in county council).

Today, there are **55 flats rented from the public housing company** to refugees. Most of them moved to the rural area in Saxony after their asylum recognition. There are only few flats rented by the county to accommodate asylum seekers as initial housing. The public housing company is the first point of contact for most refugees as they hold a significant number of rental flats in the rural area in Saxony (G6-14). During the first phase of refugee's arrival in 2015, a volunteer support group was formed, and they continue to act as key integration actors in the town. The group was founded to create a counter-movement to anti-refugee protests (G6-4). They also expanded their activities to other types of neighborhood support as fewer refugees came to the rural area in Saxony (e.g., support during the COVID-pandemic). The group represents the central structure for integration in the rural area in Saxony and is regularly contacted by professionals (e.g., social workers when refugees want to move to G6 when they have to move out of the reception center).

In **2015, the *Länder* government of Saxony started to fund a wide range of integration measures** throughout the federal state (1,29 % of state budget) including regional and county coordinators, social workers, reimbursement of expenses of volunteers and language classes. However, since the **counties take over most of the integration management** structures, there are **no service providers directly located in the small town of GRA**: There is labor market counselling and social workers with office hours in other towns of the county. In G6, no paid position had been installed to manage integration issues, except during the existence of the initial reception facility (social workers of the operating company). Apart from organizing the initial reception center, migration and integration measures have not been discussed widely in the town administration or the town's council. There is no integration concept or policy as the county takes over most of the tasks.

From a societal point of view, we can observe a dualism: **In contrast to low numbers of migrants, the political polarization and right-wing protests are a major public issue**. During the field work period in the beginning of 2022, the town experienced large protests against COVID-measures driven by right-wing actors who were also present in anti-migrant protests (G6-1, G6-2, G6-4) Sometimes, the today's protests also include anti-muslim slogans. A rperson from the Länder government comments that "W*e are still a long way from the recognition of a immigration society*". (G6-1)

In the rural area in Saxony there are **no German language classes or integration courses** since there is a large number of courses in the next bigger city and there is no sufficient demand to install courses in the rural area in Saxony (G6-8). There is a *Länder* funded labor market counselling in the county's capital (G6-10) supporting post-2014 migrants in all issues concerning their job search (application, finding a flat and childcare etc.).

The **labour market situation is rather good but not sufficient or not suitable for highly skilled** (e.g., for teachers, who need specialized training to obtain their German licence). Additionally, a common problem is the type of residence permit issued by the county's foreigners' office. This foreigners' office is known as a restrictive authority, so there are legal restraints to employ some of the post-2014 migrants. During the times of the field works, case of a deportation of an employed migrant was widely discussed by the interviewees and in the media (GRA-10, GRA-14).

Comparison between the cases

When comparing the six cases, it first becomes apparent that **structural factors**, such as the **financial situation** of the locality and the **size of the locality**, matter. In the case of the rural area in Lower-Saxony for example, the locality is highly in debt which significantly restricts its scope of action, a situation that is similar to the situation in G3. Also, the **size of a locality** makes a difference. In smaller localities, some services are simply not available (e.g., sufficient language classes, legal advice), and important political decision-making happens on the county level (G2; G6).

Another structural factor is the **frame provided by the *Länder* scale.** How *Länder* apply for example residence law after §12a AufenthG impacts how long and how voluntarily refugees stay in a locality. While many post-2014 migrants left the rural area in Lower-Saxony after they received their asylum status, refugees have to stay in the small town in Saxony-Anhalt for three years after reception. Refugees in the county of the rural area in Saxony are allowed to settle across the county, while in the medium-sized town in Lower-Saxony, no further post-2014 migrants are allowed to move in. Also, the **funding of additional integration measures such as local coordinators for integration by the *Länder*** scale has an impact on the value of integration as a political topic. In the small town in Saxony-Anhalt for example, the local coordinator is fully funded by the *Länder* level which gives the position some independence independent from the local government and the possibility to address unpleasant topics (G1-3). The small town in NRW, the rural area in Lower-Saxony and the rural area in Saxony do not have integration coordinators in their locality, but on the county level. Integration is a less debated topic in the local council as the lack of local integration plans in the localities shows.

Concerning services for refugees, our case studies show that Germany has a **nation-wide supply of essential institutions**, namely migrant counselling and non-profit service providers that offer language classes and integration programs. ***Jobcenters* are key institutions** in all localities when it comes to labor market integration. These institutions were established long before 2015, and do not only target post-2014 migrants. Thus, they could draw on existing structures and programs to meet the needs of newly arriving refugees. The extent to which single institutions engage in refugee integration is inseparably tied to **single persons and their motivation and values**.

Our case studies show further that **social climate and experience with diversity in localities highly impact integration policies and integration outcomes.** In the small town in Saxony-Anhalt that has only little experience with diversity, migrants miss ethnic communities and experience a less-welcoming climate, which renders the location a transit town (G1-3; G1-4a). The medium-sized town in Lower-Saxony has a long experience with diversity, but due to a massive arrival of migrants and

tendencies of residential segregation, the social climate is not too favorable towards post-2014 migrants today. Still, experience with diversity is not the only factor. When comparing the small town in North Rhine-Westphalia with the small town in Saxony-Anhalt, these cases seem like counter examples as regards the **level of activity of the local government on post-2014 migrant integration**. While in the small town in Saxony-Anhalt, members of the local administration's integration office have been very active to promote integration but fail because of lacking interest of the wider population, local initiatives in the small town in North Rhine-Westphalia urge their government to become more active in the field of integration that has been outsourced to the *Länder*-level (ZUE) or local non-profit service providers. Despite this observation, it must be taken into account that the "*big silent, possibly hostile part of society*" also exists in the small town in North Rhine-Westphalia (G4-4), but incidents of xenophobic violence or right-wing demonstrations have not happened to far (G4-6; G4-2; G4-3).

A certain **flexibility of actors** also supports successful integration policymaking. While Chambers of Commerce in the medium-sized town in Lower-Saxony and the small town in Saxony-Anhalt are reluctant to find ways to include migrants with foreign qualifications into the labor market, the Union of skilled Craftsmen in the small town in North Rhine-Westphalia continues to search for possibilities. Finally, the case studies reveal the **impact of narratives of migration and diversity and how they are linked to local histories**. The medium-sized town in Lower-Saxony and the small town in North Rhine-Westphalia have a certain experience with diversity and perceive it as being part of the locality's character. This is very different in the small town in Saxony-Anhalt where homogeneity is perceived as the norm and both, existing diversity, and existing hostility towards diversity, are widely ignored by local policy makers. The medium-sized town in MV turns on its narrative of an open, cosmopolitan locality at the Baltic Sea that has a certain obligation to welcome migrants because of the racist incidents in the 1990s. In G6, migrant integration is only a side-issue as the civil society and local policy-makers have to deal with right-wing protests in general. Lastly, the locality of the rural area in Lower-Saxony draws on a twofold narrative of left-wing political activism that welcomes migrants and a rural population that is hospitable towards everyone who knocks at their door. Of course, these narratives are contested and further developed by the actors in the locality, including post-2014 migrants, but they have a conceivable impact on the local responses by policy makers, local administration, private actors and civil society in the locality.

Frames of Integration

Chapter 3.2 describes the frames of integration that exist in the six case studies. It first introduces seven frames of integration that research participants related to. It then turns to factors that are deemed particular for integration in SMsTRAs. The section closes by presenting the research participants' perceptions of local attitudes towards migrants.

Frames of integration

For this section, an analysis of the perception of integration of all interviewees was conducted. Based on this analysis, **seven frames of integration were inductively developed**: (1) Integration as Whole of community concept, (2) Integration as a two-way process, (3) Integration as social participation and equal opportunities, (4) Integration as adjustment to majority society, (5) Integration as technical term, (6) Critique/Refusal of the term integration, (7) Integration as confrontation. We characterize the frames below and outline which actors in which localities refer to the respective frame.

Frame (1): Integration as Whole of Community concept captures all perspectives that understand integration as a process that involves all members of society and creates something new, e.g., new ways of living together, new structures in local administration and policy, new concepts of belonging.

> "*If integration is understood as inclusion, I like the term, because it involves the idea that all parties involved have to move, so that something new, something common can arise.*" (Social Worker in G3)

> "*For me, perceived difference in outward appearance such as skin color has never mattered. People are people. Everyone should be able to do their thing and people should approach each other*".(Pro-migrant group, G6)

Frame (2): Integration as a two-way process involves understandings of integration that stress the necessity of both, the local community and the incoming person, to engage in integration process. Frequent terms are mutual respect, mutual adjustment, open up, change of local's perception. In comparison to frame 1, this does not involve the development of something new.

> "*In my view, integration is an important topic for Germans too, and how we can contribute, open our doors, engage in encounter and show how we live. And be open to learn.*" (pro-migrant group, G2)

Frame (3): Integration as social participation and equal opportunities is the frame that is referred to most frequently by the interviewees. It involves views on integration as access to work, education and healthcare, social inclusion, being able to solve one's problems, claiming one's rights and acquiring German citizenship.

> "*We explain to people which rights they have and how the system works they are now living in. It is about showing possibilities and chances to people so they have options and can participate. Actually, it is about empowerment.*" (social worker, G5)

Frame (4): Integration as adjustment to majority society mostly contains quotes on the need to speak German and to comply with the norms and rules in German society. Except for one interviewee, this frame was only used in combination with other frames, e.g., explaining that it is compulsory to speak the language to participate in social life (G2-3).

> *"People here expect you to learn Germany to integrate." (refugee journalist, G5)*

> *"For me, integration implies that you align to the host culture [..]" (head of local immigration office in G1)*

Frame (5): Integration is a technical term for some of our interviewees, that they use to describe their work. This applies to interviewees from the labor market as "integration into labor market" is an established term in this field. Often, this is combined with integration as social participation, because labor market participation offers possibilities for social participation.

> *"In our field, integration means integration into labour market." (Member of local Jobcenter, G3)*

Frame (6): Critique/refusal of the term integration involves quotes that point the implicit assumption that integration means assimilation, critiques on the term in general as empty signifier, and perceptions of no differences between people which makes integration pointless.

> *"Integration into what? What is the norm people are expected to integrate in?" (local expert, G3)*

> *"Mh... Integration, okay. It is not about the term, they keep changing. I have been a foreigner, a fellow citizen, a migrant, now person with migrant background, and what else to come? I don't care, it is not about the terms, but how they treat us." (migrant organization, G1)*

Frame (7): Integration as confrontation conceives integration as something necessarily conflictual in order to produce something new.

> *"If we take about integration and if we have conflicts over integration, this means that integration has happened. It is like an iceberg, you don't see how people have come together under the surface, that is why the conflicts on top arise. This is very important!" (refugee social worker, G3).*

Comparison of frames

The following section provides a comparison between the frames. It focuses on **differences between actors and between localities**.

   (a) Between actors

Policy makers and local officials in all localities perceive integration either as a two-way-process or a whole of community process. This is in line with the fact that they also see locals as the target group of integration processes reflecting for example in funding schemes that support volunteer trainings or encounter between locals and migrants. Except for local integration coordinator in G5, none of the policy makers and local officials formulates critique on the term integration. If they are not too convinced by the term, they accept it as a working vocabulary or technical term (G1-3; G5-3). Those who frame integration as adjustment to majority society refer to language, norms and, in the case of the local immigration authority, to the acquiring of German citizenship.

Labor market actors use the technical term of "labor market integration" on a daily basis, so the question on the meaning of integration seemed odd to some. Beyond integration into work, social participation was stressed. Only in two localities (G2 & G5), integration was referred to as a whole of community concept, and none of the actors criticized the term.

NGOs and pro-migrant groups most frequently criticized the term, especially MOs raise concerns that terms keep changing, but problems stay the same, e.g., lack of acceptance of diversity (G1-4). Following the critique on the term integration (conflation with assimilation), this group of actors points to the need of all members of society to open up and engage in integration processes. This again leads to the importance of the frame "social inclusion and equal opportunities" which also entails quotes on non-discrimination and fighting exclusion.

We find no clear pattern of frames in the group of **Non-profit service providers, street-level bureaucrats, experts/journalists and housing market actors**. This could be caused by the fact that these actors cover a broad spectrum of activities and responsibilities. Frames of integration differ depending on their field of expertise, e.g., social participation and equal opportunities in migrant counselling, critique/refusal of the term integration in interviews with experts.

   (b) Between localities

In the **medium-sized towns in MV and the small town in Saxony-Anhalt**, where policy makers regularly engage with the outside, for example in municipality networks or participation in studies (by scientific foundations om the state of social cohesion in the locality), we find the progressive understanding of integration as a whole of community process. But this does not necessarily apply to all actors on the locality. Especially in G1, MOs see the need to criticize local policy makers' doing of integration although the local official in charge of integration has a progressive understanding of the term.

In **the rural area in Lower-Saxony**, we find a dichotomy of basic understanding of integration as a two-way process in the local administration and more activist views on integration that would require a change of system. This regularly causes tensions between local NGOs and the local administration.

In the **medium-sized town in Lower-Saxony** which has a comparably long experience with migration, we observe less popular frames of integration that point to notions of a post-migrant society. The perception of integration as conflict that necessarily arises when different groups articulate their needs (G3-15), is only possible when migrant and non-migrant groups are equally granted space to claim their needs. In the German context, this is particular to places where migration is part of the local history.

The **small town in North Rhine-Westphalia** is the only case study where no interviewee raised critique on the term integration. This could be caused by the fact that supporters in this place are all from the older generation and from church-related (more conservative) institutions. Thus, no person with migrant background was present in the support networks. It seems that these actors do not see the need to critically engage with terms, compared to younger (G5_4b) or left-wing (G2-4) actors in other localities. Thus, integration is only in the beginning to become a topic of local policy making and debate (G4-3; G4-15).

In **the rural area in Saxony**, migrant integration has not played a major role in politics during the last years but rather the polarization and political right-wing movement are a huge concern to civil society actors and local policy makers. Here, any integration activities are driven by the aim of securing peaceful co-existence and the reduction of anti-migrant actors. However, the town's asset in coping with the arrival of post-2014 migrants is a close and constant cooperation between the voluntary group and local town council and mayor.

Expected **differences between Easter and Western case studies** due to lesser experience with migration in the East **do not play out as much as expected**. On the contrary, local officials in charge of integration in two localities in the East refer to integration as a whole-of community approach, and only one in the West. This could be linked to the fact that local integration coordinators are very engaged, fighting against existing structures and thus take on an extra progressive attitude. Still, this attitude does not always lead to the desired outcome.

Regional level

Frames of integration on Länder scale were taken from the regional integration plans as they reflect the product of a political process rather than individual perceptions. Thus, interviewees on regional level referred to local integration plans when talking about their conception of integration, and funding schemes and are based on these plans. On the regional level, all **perceptions of integration draw on a frame of integration as Whole of Community concept** that involves all society members and requires change of local structures, e.g., intercultural opening of administration, acceptance of new values. Besides, all regional integration plans stress the **importance of language** when it comes to integration. This **reflects the national perception** of integration that is fundamentally based on learning the language.

TABLE 4. Dominant frames of integration in different localities and across different actors

	Local policymakers	Labour market/housing market actors;	NGOs, pro-migrant groups	Non-profit service providers, experts, street-level bureaucr.
G1	Integration as Whole Of Community concept; Integration as social inclusion policy and equal opportunities; Integration as adjustment to majority society	Integration as technical term; Integration as social inclusion and equal opportunities; Integration as adjustment to majority society	Integration as social inclusion and equal opportunities; Integration as a two-way process; Critique/refusal of the term integration	Integration as Whole Of Community concept; Integration as a two-way process; Integration as social inclusion and equal opportunities; Integration as adjustment to majority society; Integration as technical term
G2	Integration as a two-way-process; Integration as social inclusion and equal opportunities; adjustment to majority society;	Integration as Whole Of Community concept; Integration as a two-way-process; adjustment to majority society;	Integration as a two-way process; Critique/refusal of the term integration	Integration as Whole Of Community concept; Critique/refusal of the term integration
G3	Integration as Whole Of Community concept; Integration as a two-way-process; Integration as social inclusion and equal opportunities; adjustment to majority society;	Integration as technical term; Integration as a two-way-process; Integration as social inclusion and equal opportunities; adjustment to majority society;	Integration as a two-way-process; Integration as social inclusion and equal opportunities; adjustment to majority society; Critique/refusal of the term integration	Integration as Whole Of Community concept; Integration as social inclusion and equal opportunities; Critique/refusal of the term integration; Integration as confrontation
G4	Integration as a two-way-process; adjustment to majority society; integration as a technical term	Integration as technical term; Integration as a two-way-process; Integration as social inclusion and equal opportunities; adjustment to majority society;	Integration as Whole Of Community concept; Integration as a two-way-process; adjustment to majority society;	Integration as Whole Of Community concept; Integration as a two-way-process; Integration as social inclusion and equal opportunities; Critique/refusal of the term integration;
G5	Integration as Whole Of Community concept; Integration as social inclusion and equal opportunities;	Integration as Whole Of Community concept; Integration as social inclusion and equal opportunities	Integration as Whole Of Community concept; Integration as social inclusion and equal opportunities;	Integration as Whole Of Community concept; Integration as a two-way-process; technical term; Integration as

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			adjustment to majority society; Critique/refusal of the term integration	social inclusion and equal opportunities; adjustment to majority society; Critique/refusal of the term integration
	Critique/refusal of the term integration			
G6	Integration as a two-way-process; Integration as adjustment to majority society;	Integration as technical term; Integration as social inclusion and equal opportunities; adjustment to majority society	Integration as a two-way-process; Critique of the term integration	Integration as a technical term, Integration as two-way process.

Sax.-An.	From regional integration plan (p.26f): Integration as Whole Of Community concept: cross-sectional task that involves all members and segments of society, involves intercultural opening, joint community involvement Integration as social inclusion and equal opportunities: access to services, housing, work; adjustment to majority society: language as key to integration, accept norms
Low-Sax.	From Interviews with regional officials: Integration as Whole Of Community concept: involves all members of community and willingness for change Critique of the term: term "Integration" is contested, rather use "social participation"; Integration as conflict: Integration involves discussion
NRW	From regional integration law (§1, §2): Arriving (adjustment to majority society): language, work, housing, foster acceptance of local norms through migrants' inclusion in democratic structures Participation (Integration as social inclusion): social, cultural, legal participation Integration as development (Whole of Community concept): process that involves all members of community
Meck-Pom.	From regional integration plan (p. 7) Integration as Whole Of Community concept: ongoing process involves all governance levels and all members of society Adjustment to majority society: learning the language, knowing and respecting national law and cultural norms; Integration as social inclusion and equal opportunities: esp. support for refugees that could not prepare for their migration
Sax.	From regional integration plan (p.13) Integration as Whole-Of-Community concept: integration involves all members of society and requires willingness to change Adjustment to majority society: knowing and respecting national law and cultural norms; Integration as social inclusion and equal opportunities: aim of integration is participation and inclusion of all members of society (according to their legal status)

Particularities of integration in SMsTRAs

Rural areas (G2; G6)

Interviewees in rural areas shared thoughts on benefits as well as challenges for integration of post-2014 migrants in very small localities. On the one hand, the small size of rural villages was seen as **facilitating integration because people know each other,** and personal networks function well (G2-3; G2-15). The narrative of a certain **"rural culture"** was brought forward that make village people pragmatic and hospitable, so they care for their neighbors no matter where they are from (G2-4a; G2-6). Yet, **rural communities can be closed-up** and it is not easy for newcomers to find contact, neither for German newcomers, nor for people who can be perceived as foreigners (G2-7; G2-4a). In small communities, people know each other well, and potentially **share stories of conflict**. This can complicate administrative processes or integration into work, for example if a volunteer is on bad terms with a member of the local administration (G2-3). All interviewees in the rural area in Lower-Saxony mentioned insufficient public transport as obstacle, as this makes it hard to access work, education and places of encounter. Yet, this is not the case for G6, that has a railway connection to a big city. Therefore, for post-2014 migrants, the infrastructure is good, e.g., special food-supplies, as well as the access to specialized language class and counselling. Thus, many integration measures or visible spatial adjustment processes in the public sphere of the rural area in Saxony are not as visible as in other rural places (G6-4, G6-10). Lastly, rural places **lack institutions that support integration**, such as a lawyer for asylum affairs, psychological support, or sufficient language classes (G2-4a).

Small towns (G1 and G4)

Like rural areas, interviewees in small towns referred to **well-functioning social networks** between private, civil society and institutional actors (G1-3; G1-11; G4-8; G4-13; G-I-8). Understanding integration as encounter and support, small social communities foster integration because people necessarily meet each other (G4-2), and the **community is too small for segregation** (G4-6). But again, similar to rural areas, people in small towns might have **difficulties to accept newcomers** (G4-4; G1-4a). In smaller towns, the lack of institutions such as language classes, ethnic communities or religious places can also be a problem (G4-15; G1-4a; G1-4).

In the category of small towns, a **difference between East and West** becomes apparent. The small town in Saxony-Anhalt serves as **a transit town**, that most post-2014 migrants already have left, because of lacking job opportunities, migrant communities and a difficult environment for those who are perceived as foreigners because they look different. On the contrary, the small town in North Rhine-Westphalia has a story of "guest worker" migration, and the favorable economic situation provides job opportunities, which makes **people stay in the region** (G4-2). However, also here banal racism and discrimination are reported as factors which hamper migrants' feeling welcome.

Medium-Sized towns (G3; G5)

First, it must be said that medium-sized towns after the Whole-COMM classification belong to big cities for German standards. Interviewees did not understand the question as concerning to the medium size of the city, but rather regarding specificities of the locality. In both localities, interviewees stressed that because of the considerable size of the locality do not stand out, compared

to the surrounding towns migrants (G5-9; G5-4; G5-10; G3-12; G3-8). The localities thus offer relevant infrastructure for post-2014 migrants, such as language courses, migrant counselling, public transports and jobs. Both places have a university or a higher education institution bringing about an open, alternative climate. Due to the long experience of migrant diversity in G3, this is a good place to cope with the experience of flight (G3-8), because diversity is rooted in everyday life and basic institution (migrant doctors, migrant teachers, etc.) (G3-7). This is not so much the case of the Eastern medium-sized town, where migration is perceived as something rather new, that still has to become accepted by parts of the society.

Actors' perceptions of locals' attitudes towards post-2014 migrants

Across all localities and actors, interviewees refer to a great hospitality and readiness to help in the first months of the arrival of refugees in 2015. However, this has changed over time due to various reasons: First, volunteers report to be exhausted by the workload (G5-15, G2-4a). Smaller integration outcomes than expected (G3-15) made people cease their engagement. Some volunteers voiced also frustration over cultural differences:

> "*I can say that in some political groups, people were disappointed that refugees were not all left-wing, progressive communist people, but just normal humans who like to wear white sneakers and who care for fashion*" (pro-migrant group, G2).

The **COVID-Pandemic** further decreased the number of active volunteers, especially in small places where volunteers are **mostly retirees** (G2; G4). After the first years, the situation normalized, and the attraction of having foreigners around was gone (G1-15). Still, in all localities, structures of support exist until today, and all localities report that their place has become more diverse.

In all localities, there are people that are critical to migration. Migration-skeptical attitudes appear in different forms. Some report open mobilization and demonstrations against migrants, mostly provoked by special incidents such as the building of a mosque or planned accommodation for unaccompanied minors in the neighborhood (G5-4a; G1-7). Other localities did not observe any mobilization against migrants, but harsh discussions arising in the private context, as one interviewee from the small town in North Rhine-Westphalia reports:

> "*When I told people in the private context that I work with refugees, the reaction were... sometimes, they said: 'You work for them? They are doing this and that, they are on the streets pestering people!' And everyone referred to New Year's Eve in Cologne [see 2.2]. I always have to justify my work.*" (G-I-4:12).

Local policy makers and administrations can also exert discrimination through ignoring migrant's perspectives (G1-4; G1-4a), or being particularly rigid on refugee's, pro-migrant group's and non-profit service provider's requests (experiences of G5-15; G2-4a; G1-4, G4-10). **Critical attitudes towards post-2014 migrants are not limited to people without migrant background**. Migrant groups that came to localities before might complain about the changing neighborhood and experience newcomers as competitors over resources (G3-10b).

Comparing the regions of Eastern and Western Germany, it becomes apparent that localities in the East were used to diversity to a lesser extent. As one interviewee from the small town in Saxony-Anhalt recounts (G-D-4a:1):

> "*2015 felt like a natural disaster. Local authorities, administration, the society were not prepared for that […]. Society reacted accordingly: A lot of unrest, a lot of fear, fear of contact, and of course also increasing right-wing attitudes. For the refugees this created an atmosphere of not being welcome, they arrived and stood in front of a hostile wall and a silent majority.*" Still, others were curious about the newcomers:"[…] *many of my colleagues said, that this is a great experience, because they were never before confronted with integration, migration. How to put it… It was the first time for them to really meet a foreigner.*" (G-R-3:4).

This finding is also true for rural areas and small towns in Western Germany. Local administrations there seemed to be overstrained by the new tasks. There was only one person responsible for asylum matters without necessarily having any experience in the field (G-I-4a). Also, there exists an intersection of conflicts between locals, migrants and generations, especially in localities that are affected by demographic ageing. Complaints by neighbors in the small town in Saxony-Anhalt for example do not refer to migrants as such, but rather to habitual differences between older persons that have live in empty (=silent) housing blocks for decades and families with several children who naturally bring more noise to the house.

Regarding interviewees' perception of locals' attitude towards post-2014 migrants, interviewees tend to refer to their social environment, e.g., their workplace, neighborhood, and so forth. Below, we give key quotes for each of the six perceptions:

(1) Locals are mostly hostile/skeptical towards migrants

> "*Of course, it would be great to accommodate refugees decentral, so they can integrate into the neighbourhood and get to know the long-term residents. That would be great. But if there is not feeling of welcome in the neighborhood, if locals do not know how to behave towards foreign people, it is difficult. That's why I refer to the silent wall.*" (Migrant organization, G1)

(2) Locals are mostly welcoming

> „*Of course there were some critical voices. But overall, I think, people were very active and supportive. I did not have the feeling that the attitude has changed a lot. This medium-sized town in Lower-Saxony is a town of immigration!*" (G3-10a).

(3) Mostly neutral

> „*So, they are just part of the city now. We had a time when right-wing voices were raised in the political sphere or among employers, that they would only profit from social benefits. But that was only half a year, now it went back to normal*" (Local Jobcenter, G1)

(4) Locals are split

„*There are places of encounter, and social networks. But the medium-sized town in MV is the locality with the second highest segregation index in Mecklenburg-Wester Pomerania. Quarters are really split between social status. Some refugees are on good terms with their neighbours, some experience discrimination. It is really different between the quarters*.“ (pro-migrant group, G5).

(5) Some are welcoming, and there is a big share of silent, undecided people

"*It was a polemical debate that was totally polarizing. It was difficult to always serve these poles. Either we had completely confrontational views and then we also had views that were extremely helpful across the board. […] And these two poles are very, very strong. That's why we have changed our entire integration strategy so that we address more strongly the invisible third, those who go back and forth, those who are annoyed by both poles, and that's why we have also changed our integration communication and said that we are working for social cohesion and for diversity characteristics, diversity dimensions.*" (coordinator for integration, G1).

(6) Locals are disappointed by integration outcomes

"*So you noticed, yes okay, the Germans were disappointed, because the people have not learned the language so quickly. No integration has not taken place at all. But they did not understand that the people had no opportunities to learn the language. So they waited a very long time for a waiting list, for example from the adult education center or others. […] At the same time, the Germans expected that in two or three years, people would be able to speak the German language. They only saw them on the street, so they have had nothing to do, they were out all the time, they met with each other and they also always spoke in Arabic. That had a very negative effect, also the integration images. So, the expectations, so the Germans were disappointed, because they say, because everything that they expected didn't work out at all. Then the other side was also disappointed*." (migrant counselling with refugee background, G3).

The following observations can be drawn from Table A.2: In the small town on Saxony-Anhalt, there are high number of hostile perceptions compared to other localities, and a large share of "neutral" attitudes. Diversity is a contested issue difficult to work on, and one local strategy is to leave the topic untouched to not provoke social conflict (G1-7). In the rural area in Lower-Saxony there is a clustering of "neutral/welcoming". This relates to the fact that outside activist circles, integration is no important topic and many migrants have moved on to bigger cities. In G3, a medium-sized town in Lower-Saxony we observe diverging perceptions from a welcoming, immigration city to hostile attitudes. Compared to other localities, there is a clustering of disappointed locals. In G6, migrants are generally not a mayor issue and discourses are not as polarized and hostile as in other towns in Saxony. However, there are ongoing right-wing protests and a rather homogeneous and less

experienced society dealing with integration. In the small town G4, actors do not refer to hostile attitudes, but mostly welcoming/neutral, and silent people. In the medium-sized town of GR5, we find an accumulation of the perception that locals are clearly split. In interviews this was always with reference to spatial segregation of a liberate inner city and deprived satellite towns with a clustering of hostile attitudes.

Multilevel Governance Dynamics

Based on a social network analysis derived from the survey data and insights from qualitative research, the following section describes dynamics between different governance actors and levels and their horizontal and vertical relationships. It first maps the networks between key governance levels, describes their functions and roles in the network and lines out patterns of cooperation and conflict.

Mapping the networks

This chapter looks at the networks between all actors involved in integration policymaking on different governance levels. The analysis of each case looks at the pre-Corona networks (20176-2019) and the development of the networks afterwards. The section closes by a comparison of the networks between localities.

G1, type C locality

Key actors of the locality's network of integration policy are local officials, the local *Jobcenter*, non-public service providers[5] and the business sector. However, it must be considered that no member of the local government participated in the survey on which the network analysis is based. The reluctance of local policy makers to participate in the survey, although various personal invitations through different channels to do so, might be caused by local policy maker's general hesitation to actively work on the issue of integration and migration-related diversity and the conflicts that are related to the matter (G1-3; G1-7, see also 3.1). Local officials in charge of integration who follow (and try to push) a progressive integration policy are funded by the Länder level and regularly meet with obstacles in the local council (G1-3). Other local officials, for example from the locality's administration further strengthen the network to non-public service providers and migrant organizations (G1-10). Again, funding for this program comes from the *Länder* level. The important role of the business sector can be linked to the active role of the local *Jobcenter* and a special program to foster integration into work by the local hospital which is one of the biggest employers in the locality (see 3.1). Compared to the other case studies, actors in the small town in Saxony-Anhalt maintain various network relations to higher government levels. On the one hand, this could be explained with the *Länder* level's intense interest in integration policy on the local level to counteract existing prejudices against diversity (G1-1). On the other hand, local officials in charge of integration actively search for cooperation on higher levels to foster the topic on the local political agenda (G1-3). Anti-migrant movements have a more prominent role in GD's network than in other localities due to open protests in the locality (G1-3; G1-4; G1-4a; G1-7; G1-15).

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[5] The term „non-public service providers" in section 3.3.1 and 3.3.3 is used synonymously to the term „non-profit service providers" at other chapters of this report. This change of terms was necessary to ensure comparability across countries in the network analysis.

The **post-pandemic network shows a general decrease** in actor's engagement and exchange. Private companies, for instance, then play only a minor role. This could be linked to the effects of the pandemic, but also by the termination of refugee integration programs one to two years after arrival (G1-10; G1-11). Thus, the small town in Saxony-Anhalt has served as a transit town for many post-2014 migrants who left the locality to other places with a more diverse population (G1-4; G1-4a; G1-10) or more possibilities to work (G1-8) as soon as the residence regulation allowed them to do so (see 3.1). Network relations could have become less intense because actors have shifted their focus from (post-2014) migrants to other groups.

G2, type D locality

The network analysis of the rural area in Lower-Saxony shows that before the pandemic key actors of the local network on integration policymaking are actors from the local government and local officials. They frequently exchange with other important local actors, namely pro-migrant groups, trade union and non-public service providers. This is not surprising as these are the actors most concerned with the topic of integration in the locality. Migrant organizations and anti-migrant organizations play only a minor role (see also G2-4). From qualitative findings this can be explained by the fact that these are very rare in the locality. Networks to other governance levels also play only a minor role, especially those on higher levels, such as from the *Länder*, national or EU level. The visualization of the social network analysis clearly shows that **actors that are in or close to the locality are in touch with key actors more frequently compared to those further away**. This could be related to the very rural, almost remote character of the locality as all interviewees stress strong local networks, whereas contacts to actors outside the locality play only a minor role (G2-7).

The social network **after the pandemic displays a change of key actors**. While local officials stay key actors, the local government has lost some of its influence. Still, private actors have gained importance. This change in actors can be explained by a different focus of the local government (the pandemic) but also the disappearance of the topic migration and integration from the local political agenda (G2-4a; G2-15). In general, interactions have become less frequent between all actors, which could be explained by a certain habituation to the topic of integration and **establishment of fixed programs over time** (G2-7; G2-9), but also **a shifting of attention from migration/integration to the COVID-Pandemic.**

G3, type C/D locality

In the pre-pandemic network of G3, the local *Jobcenter*, members of the local government and local officials play a key role. The local *Jobcenter's* network position can be explained by a very active, well-connected person who initiated various programs in the field of integration which involved close cooperation with non-profit service providers. **The importance of individual persons' decisions to take up integration as a key topic of their work and develop a strong network can be observed in all case studies**. As in most other localities, actors who are based in the medium-sized town in Lower-Saxony are more closely related to each other than to actors on other governance levels. Regional policy makers are an exception to this finding which can be linked to the locality's plea for the immigration stop in 2016 which involved (and continues to involve) a lot of interaction with the Länder level. The rather marginal network position of pro-migrant groups and migrant organizations resonates with qualitative findings on an active, but individualized scene of refugee support.

Post-pandemic network relations show a **general decrease of the network's density**. However, opposition parties evolve as a new actor in the integration network. This could be linked to the local elections in 2021 that first brought the right-wing party of AfD into the local government.

G4, type B locality

In the time from 2015 to 2020, key actors in G4's integration policy making network are pro-migrant groups, members of the local government and private companies. Further actors in the network are non-public service providers and members of the local county. Findings from qualitative research on local networks show that the **local government, represented through the major, has made use of regional cooperation** to cope with the arrival of migrants (see 3.1), and pro-migrant groups had been important actors for refugee advocacy. The key role of the business sector can be explained by the locality's good economic situation and private companies' interest in gaining new workforce (G4-13). While actors from the regional scale play a role in local policy-making processes to some extent, higher levels, such as national or EU level, have a minor role in the local network. **Comparing the pre- and post-pandemic network, the most apparent observation is a general increase of network relationships.** Anti-migrant groups and MSOs are only marginally involved in the network, which for anti-migrant groups can be linked to their lack in the locality (G4 is the only locality in this sample where the populist party AfD is not part of the local council).
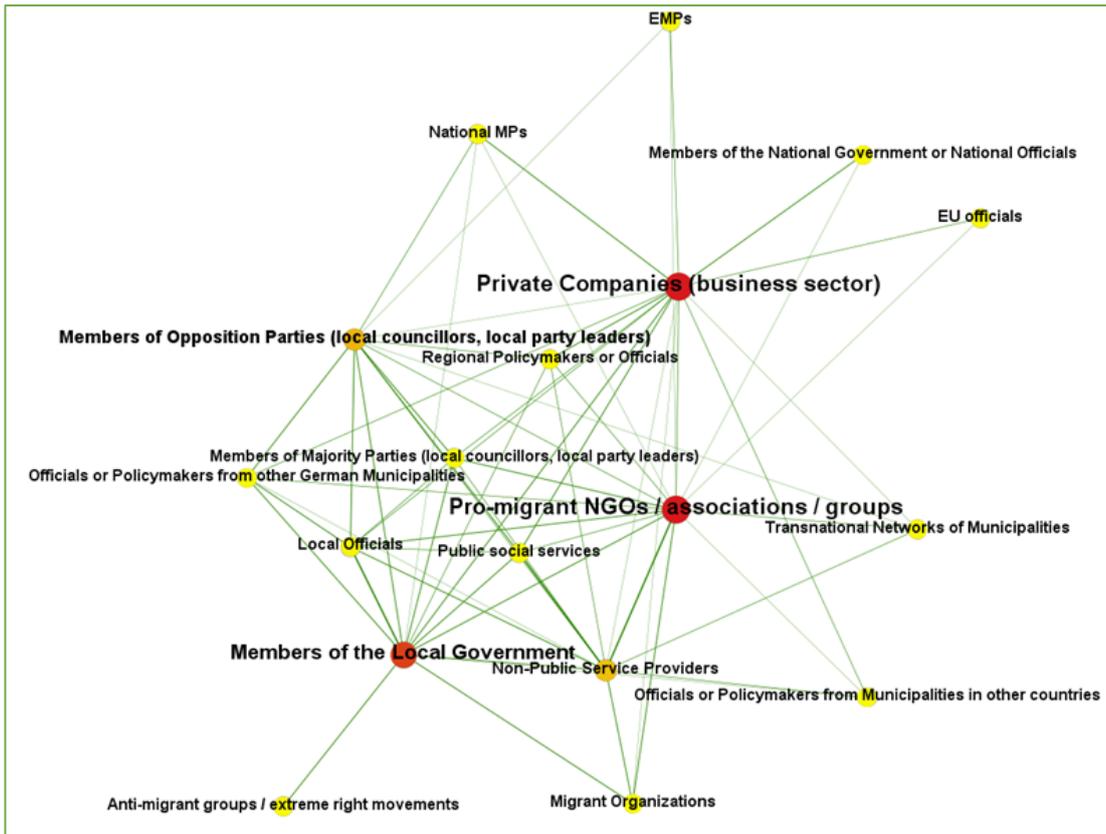
*Figure 8: G4's pre-pandemic network. Source: CCA*
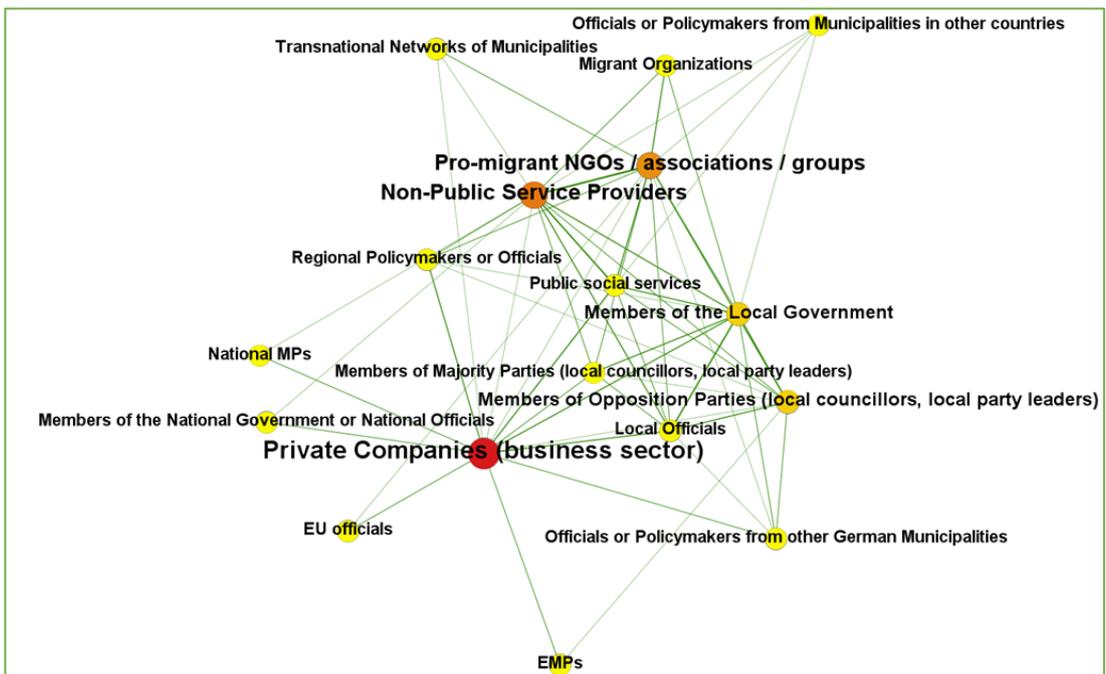
Figure 9: G4's post-pandemic network. Source: CCA

While in all other localities than in the small town in North Rhine-Westphalia network relations decreased since 2020, interactions between actors have become more frequent and stronger here. Actors from the business sector and pro-migrant groups continue to be key actors in the network,

thus local policy makers and officials have gained in importance as well as non-public service providers. **Insights from qualitative interviews explain this by a successful strategy of pro-migrant groups to put migration and integration on the local political agenda** (G4-3; G4-4; G4-4b). This has strengthened the network between all actors in the locality, as well as with actors outside the locality, such as other German municipalities and actors on the national and EU level. Also, MOs have now been stronger included in the network.

G5, type A locality

In G5, pro-migrant groups, local officials and the local government are key actors of the integration network. The local government maintains close relations to actors outside the locality (regional level, other municipalities), which could be linked to G5's role as subcenter in the region and the double role of the responsible person as a member of the local council and the Länder parliament. Different to other case studies, pro-migrant groups and local officials in the medium-sized town in MV have relations to municipalities in other countries which can be linked to the locality's location at the Baltic Sea and its function as a transit place to Sweden in 2015. Like other cases, actors in the medium-sized town in MV are more closely connected than actors outside the locality. Anti-migrant groups are involved in the locality's network, which is most likely due to open protests against post-2014 migrants (G5-15). Beyond a general decrease of network relations, the post-pandemic network shows a shift of key actors. Pro-migrant groups have become less influential and non-public service providers have gained in importance. This can be linked to the outstanding activism of pro-migrant groups in the first years of the arrival of post-2014 migrants. Some of their tasks have now been taken up by formal (and paid) institutions. Thus, anti-migrant groups have become stronger in the local network, which can be related to massive protests against COVID-19 measures in the medium-sized town in MV that are often organized by right-wing groups and propagate anti-migrant slogans (G5-4; G5-15). Relations to municipalities in other countries are now only maintained by the local official in charge of integration affairs. Other actors, notably pro-migrant groups, tend to focus now more on the local level.

G6, type A locality

In the pre-pandemic time after 2014, most of the actors in the rural area in Saxony have started to get involved in the field of integration work. Key actors on the municipal level are the Local Government (mayor and town council), a pro-migrant group supporting integration of post-2014 migrants (so called 'alliance') and the public housing company. Compared to the other case studies, there are less actors at municipal level involved in migrant integration. Almost all other actors involved in integration measures are regional (county) or actors at Länder level. There are strong relation between the Local Government and volunteer alliance. The town's council also decided to be a formal member of the alliance and pay an annual fee of membership, offer free rooms for meetings, etc. The mayor engages in exchange on the regional level, but also within the SPD party in regional networks. Therefore, the mayor maintains strong ties to SPD led ministries. The volunteer alliance, but also the local mayor, maintain contacts to regional and Länder networks. There are not formal networks or cooperation of the municipality with anti-migrant groups but there is contact within the town council (some AfD members participate in the protests).

The (**post-)pandemic network decreased in terms of the network strengths**. But the reason is not only the pandemic situation: At the same time, **several Länder funded services (e.g. social counselling) were shut down** (limited funding period) or some of the countries branch offices were closed. What is most interesting that during the pandemic several authorities and welfare services provided digital or phone consultations. In the interviews, they reported that they were surprised how well it works in practice (G6-8, G6-10, G6-14).

Comparing the networks

Comparing the networks of local integration policy in the six case studies, it first becomes apparent that **distance matters**. We observe the strongest ties in horizontal networks of local actors in all localities. **Network ties to actors on other policy scales are the strongest to the Länder level** which can be caused by the active involvement of the Länder scale in local integration policy (e.g., G1's fully Länder funded integration coordinators, Länder-led ZUE in G4) as well as relationships between policy makers of the local and the Länder scale (G6; G5). Looking at both, the networks analysis and findings from qualitative data, the importance of individual person's decision to actively built and engage in integration networks should not be underestimated. How (and if) local integration coordinators, for example, reach out to other governance levels and participate in exchange is left to their priorities. **While integration coordinators of the medium-sized town in MV and the small town in Saxony-Anhalt actively engage in networks on the regional and national level, others focus more on local matters (rural area in Lower-Saxony).** Of course, it has to be taken into account that priorities are linked to structural conditions which require different strategies, for example in the case of lacking (or no) personnel and inadequate funding.

Regarding post-pandemic networks, we see a decrease of the network's strengths in all localities except for the small town in NRW. On the one hand, this can be linked to the effects of the pandemic, namely a general shift of focus towards the pandemic and an overall decrease of social contacts. On the other hand, this can also be linked to a perceived decreasing need of interaction on integration issues. Funding for programs on integration of refugees have been terminated, and the topic has lost its attraction for both, policy actors and civil society (see also 3.4). Also, programs have been established over the last five to seven years and do not require so much exchange and coordination compared to the first years. The case of the small town in North Rhine-Westphalia shows that 2015 can also be a turning point and increase the importance of integration on the local political agenda. Through joint advocacy of local progressive parties and civil society, integration has become a more important topic on the local agenda in the last years compared to 2015.

Actors' functions and their roles in governance networks

Policy actors and officials on *Länder* level set initiative programs and provide funding for local integration. This covers for example the funding of local integration coordinators (G1-1; G1-1, G6-1) or funding guidelines for civil society actors and non-profit service providers. This can also involve practical support of local actors in the application process for funding. **Actors on *Länder* level thus establish translocal networks for exchange**, such as round tables on integration or regular meetings

of the local officials in charge of integration. Länder level thus reach out to migrant organizations and might include them into policy-making processes (Integration Law in Lower-Saxony; G1-1, G6-1). Thus, the *Länder* level decides over the distribution of refugees across counties.

The scope of action of local policy actors is influenced by the locality's financial situation (see G2; G3, 3.1) and whether the locality is an administrative part of a greater county or an independent city. Since integration policies is not a mandatory task for municipalities, there are **great variations between localities** and local policy makers have much discretion on how much importance they assign to the issue of integration in the locality and taking over additional tasks. In G5, for example, the local coordinator for integration is attached to the major's office and integration is acknowledged as cross-sectional task. In the rural area in Saxony or in **G4, there is no local official** in charge of integration and tasks related to the topic have been sourced out to non-profit service providers: "*I have to say, that until today, integration policy is a rather incidental business.*" (G4-3:6). **Local policy makers decide over the implementation of exchange formats in the locality, and whom to include in these networks**. It is also local policy makers' decision to participate in city networks and in how far they engage in local cooperation between localities (G4-2).

Local administrations are responsible for the coordination and implementation of relevant tasks, accommodation, legal registration, distribution of social welfare. Within the case studies there are variations how the respective county or the municipalities are involved in the aforementioned tasks. Provision with housing has turned out to be a key task of local administration, especially if the locality follows a decentral accommodation approach (G2; G1). Depending on the standing of integration in the locality, positions in local administration can be a key point of contact for private actors as a direct contact to local policy, for example companies that called integration coordinators or policy makers to ask for work force (G5-3, G6-2).

Regarding **real estate agents, the role differs between municipal housing companies and private owners.** Municipal housing companies play a key role for the provision of housing if there are rental units available and if they are fully owned by the municipality as in the small town in Saxony-Anhalt and in the rural area in Saxony. If housing stock is in the hand of individual landlords, it is up to their discretionary action to rent a flat to migrants or not, which gives them a powerful position compared to local government (see great efforts in the rural area in Lower-Saxony to convince landlords to grant rental units to refugees).

In the field of **labor market actors, it must be differentiated between public and private actors**. Among public actors the *Jobcenter* is an important network node. They are responsible for bringing people into work, grant social welfare and have the power to decide favorable (or not) in grey legal areas (for example grant social welfare to refugee students in G1). Because of their twofold task of labor market integration and granting social welfare they have strong networks with education providers, private companies, employer's organization, NGOs, non-profit service providers (G6-10). These networks are often influenced by personal sympathies or antipathies which facilitates or complicates cooperation significantly (G1-10a; G5-15). **Chambers of Crafts and Commerce** are responsible for acknowledgement of foreign certificates and set the rules for vocational training. Together with **Employer's Organization**, they can be important partners for NGOs and non-profit service providers if they understand integration as important issue. Trade Unions can either push or

neglect integration as issue for the labor market. Private companies decide independently if to engage in refugee integration or not. Examples of engagement can be found in small family businesses in all localities and in big firms that either need work force (G3-12; G3-12a), or feel an ethical obligation to support refugees (G1-11; G3-12; G2-3). **Semi-private companies**, such as local hospitals, might especially feel the need to support integration because of their (partially) public finding (G1-11). If active, private companies have a considerable impact on integration outcomes (G4-2: "*Who finds work, stays in the region.*")

It is the responsibility of **non-profit service providers** to implement programs funded by EU, National, Länder of local level in the localities, e.g., language classes, migrant counselling, programs for integration into work; operate accommodation for refugees (G2; G5). Besides their actual work, they often act as advocacy groups for refugees (G5-15; G2-4a; G1-4; G1-4a). Non-profit service providers offer places of encounter, such as neighborhood institutions, and are seen as responsible for fostering social cohesion in the locality by local government (G4-4b; G3-3, G6-4). These institutions often have strong networks with civil society, and, in some places, strong networks with local administration and policy makers (e.g., as general agents for integration in G4). These networks are helpful as they are the institutions that do practical integration work.

Civil society actors and NGOs are seen as responsible for social integration of migrants by *Länder* level and local governments. This reflects in the perception of integration happening "in place" through encounter, neighborly support and friendships (Deutsche Bundesregierung, 2007). Pro-migrant groups act as advocates for migrants through organizing demonstrations or petitions (G5-4) and point to shortcomings of political answers to challenges related to integration.

Dynamics of cooperation and conflict

Section 3.3.3 deals with dynamics of cooperation and conflict between key actors in the case studies. In the first place it is striking that **across localities relationships are predominantly described as cooperative**. Possibly, this could also be linked to social desirability in interview responses.

G1, type C locality

Network analysis on dynamics of cooperation and conflict in the small town in Saxony-Anhalt shows that compared to other places, the **network entails a considerable number of conflicts** (12% of all network relations). First, these occur between conservative and progressive actors in the local government, council, and administration. Second, conflicts arise between MO/pro-migrant groups and local political and administrative institutions. Qualitative findings reveal that beyond conflict, **a serious problem is a lack of network relations between MOs and institutions**. MOs feel widely overlooked by the majority population. Their claims and needs are not taken seriously by the local government and administration, and existing institutions, for example local coordinators for integration are not acknowledged or deemed helpful by the migrant community. The network is not inclusive for all actors and enforces divisions between migrants and locals without migrant background.

G2, type D locality

Network analysis shows that relationships between the actors are **mostly cooperative**. The **only exception are relations to anti-migrant groups** which are described as conflictual. Still, it must be considered that there is only a limited number of anti-migrant groups in the locality. Similar to the locality's network density (see above), actor's that are located in the rural area in Lower-Saxony work more cooperative than actors from the locality with outsiders. This resonates with qualitative findings on the locality where working relationships are strongly based on personal contacts that have been established over many years and that are also rooted in personal friendships (G2-3; G2-4b; G2-7). Yet, qualitative findings also point to the fact that long histories of working together can lead to conflicts between actors that endure regardless of the topic (G2-3; G2-7). This is especially true for left-wing groups in civil society that hold a general mistrust against state institutions (G2-3; G2-4).

G3, type C/D locality

As in other localities, network relationships are **predominantly estimated as cooperative in G3**. Especially relationships between institutions, public and private are described as cooperative. **Tensions exist between anti-migrant groups and pro-migrant groups, migrant organisations, and non-public service providers**. This can be underlined by qualitative findings on anti-migrant protests and attacks of migrant support centers in the locality (G3-10b). In the field of integration, relationships between parties in the local council are estimated as cooperative. This also reflects qualitative findings, where even politicians from the left party justified the conservative mayor's decision of immigration stop. This can serve as an example how local issues (in this case the unmanageable arrival of refugees in the locality) are prioritized over general party politics.

G4, type B locality

In the small town in NRW, pro-migrant associations are the most important knot in the network of cooperation and conflict and the relationships are **predominantly cooperative**, still there are some **tensions between the local county and pro-migrant groups**. Qualitative research shows that these lie in pro-migrant groups constant critique for greater attention to the topic of integration on the political agenda. Non-public service providers and the business sector also appear as actors of cooperation. This is since these institutions put integration programs in place (see 3.1) and are thus important contact persons for the local government. Thus, members of the local government are seen as cooperative, which also reflects in a general open-minded attitude of local policy makers in the locality (G4-I2). Relationships to actors on other governance levels are also described as cooperative and qualitative research did not point to any problems between governance levels, but rather contributions in problem solving, such as the establishment of the ZUE in the small town in North Rhine-Westphalia (see 3.1).

G5, type A locality

In the medium-sized town in MV, network analysis shows **cooperative relations between all actors** who are active in the field of integration **except for anti-migrant groups**. Due to the history of the locality (see 3.1), local policy, administration and civil society perceive anti-migrant protests as serious problem (G5-3; G5-4; G5-15). From qualitative data, it can be added that **conflicts exist within the group of non-public service providers over the distribution of financial resources**. This concerns for example the number of scholars assigned to a German class by the local Jobcenter, or the "winning" of a program of local NGOs (G5-3). **Conflicts further exist between the local administration and education providers** over the quality of the German classes. As from 2015, the competence to select education providers has been shifted to the national level who accepted education providers on paper basis, the local coordinator for integration sees a serious lack of quality in the German classes (G5-3). The medium-sized town in MV is the **only locality that explicitly refers to cooperative relations to municipalities in other countries**. This is due to its location at the Baltic Sea and the necessity to cooperate with neighboring municipalities in Sweden when great numbers of migrants travelled from G5 to Scandinavia.

G6, type A locality

In the rural area in Saxony, there are not many local actors, so the respective county takes over most of the decisions made in integration. There were conflicts between municipalities about the number of asylum seekers. In 2015, most of the municipalities did not agree to the reception. In contrast, the rural area in Saxony offered several flats for hosting asylum seekers, but the county officials decided to follow a more centralized housing approach. Also, the county made its sole decision in 2017 to shut down the facility in G6's suburb. Therefore, some conflict lines were present in the past years but were not mentioned as a recent problem. Another outstanding conflict line is the anti-migrant protests and the increase of right-wing votes (and upcoming elections in town and county in summer of 2022). However, this leads to cooperation of civil society actors and local policy makers.

Decision-Making

In this section, influencing factors for local decision-making are presented for each case study and compared across localities and groups of actors. The **findings are based on interviewee's answers to a quantitative online- survey where participants were asked to range the influence of different factors on their decision-making** on a scale from 1-5 (1: not influential; 2: somewhat influential; 3: influential, 4: very influential, 5: extremely influential). The outcomes are **contextualized by material from qualitative interviews**. Findings are summarized in table 3 below.

For all localities, three points should be considered for the analysis: First, it has to be noted that some actors, especially non-profit service providers were not able to respond the question about motivation or influencing factors, because **they continued doing their key business after 2015**, e.g., migrant counselling, social work, migrant's labor market integration or German language classes. All of them enlarged their scope of action (e.g., more language classes, more language offers in counselling) and employed additional staff, which was possible because of new funding schemes (see 3.1). Initiating programs aiming at post-2014 migrant was more of a business decision than based on political or ethical consideration. Second, **the role of local media follows no observable pattern**, apart from a slightly more importance for policy makers, but not in all localities. As media hardly came up in the qualitative research and cannot be contextualized, **this factor is excluded** from the findings below. Third, the **survey distinguishes between pressure/suggestions from majority parties in the local council and minority party's suggestions**. In the German context, **this differentiation should be treated** with caution because local councils do not necessarily form parliamentary groups of majority and opposition. Parties tend to decide on local matters very topic-oriented and across divisions of majority-opposition. For this reason, findings below sometimes refer to "local council" without differentiation between majority and minority.

Case study G1, type C locality

In GD, members of the local administration, labor market actors, street-level bureaucrats and pro-migrant groups participated in the survey (n=12). According to their answers the following **four factors are influential for decision-making** in the locality (except for one member of the local administration): **own values and ideas, pro-migrant mobilization, locals' attitudes towards migrants and requests/pressure from NGOs**. The two factors own values and ideas as well as pro-migrant mobilization have the highest approval with the majority considering them "influential" or "very influential". This is in line with findings from qualitative research that stress the wish for social cohesion as important factor, and personal engagement with the topic of integration.

Besides these findings, it becomes apparent that those **factors that related to the field of work of the participants are deemed most relevant**, e.g., suggestions from companies for labor market actors and suggestions from the local government for local officials. Regarding the local government, suggestions of local officials are considered more influential than of the local government, which clearly reflects qualitative findings on small parts of the administration that put integration forward as important topic and reluctant policy makers. It is striking that only migrant organizations and participants with a migrant background consider anti-migrant protests as "influential". This is in line with findings from the qualitative data that **non-migrants in the locality tend to underestimate the**

uncomfortable situation for migrants in G1, while migrants and pro-migrant groups aim at raising the visibility of migrants and start communication about right-wing violence. The economic situation of the locality is an "important" or "very important" to half of the respondents (actors from labor and housing market), four consider it a somewhat influential factor. This resonates with **narratives in the qualitative data of demographic change being the major factor to work on integration in this ageing and shrinking locality**.

Case study G2, type D locality

In G2, members of the local government, local administration, labor market actors, street-level bureaucrats and pro-migrant groups participated in the survey (n=9). The **most important factor** in this locality across all actors is **pro-migrant mobilization**, which actors perceive as (somewhat) influential, very influential or extremely influential. Thus, suggestions from local NGOs are influential for all actors except for pro-migrant groups. This reflects with the locality's strong civil society that actively advocates for migrants, but also the locality's remoteness and seclusion as pro-migrant groups do not seem to be in touch with activists from other places. Besides, **all participants consider the economic situation of the locality as "(somewhat) influential",** which can be explained by the lack of financial resources in the locality that restricts local governments scope of action (see. 3.1). Requests and suggestions of the local council, both majority and opposition, and public officials are considered influential by all actors except for one (employee in vocational school). This could be caused by the fact that the locality is so small that most of the involved persons have personal contacts to someone in the council. Except for local policy makers and a person running a business, suggestions of private companies are not considered influential (not influential or somewhat influential). This could be due to the fact that the rural area has only small and very small businesses. Except for the local policy maker, anti-migrant protests are considered not influential. Also in the interviews, no incidents of anti-migrant protest were reported, so the local policy makers' answer might be one of prevention. Beyond factors mentioned in the survey, qualitative interviews point to lacking resources and institutions as important factors, as pro-migrant groups and non-profit service providers stepped in to fill the gaps of much needed services (e.g., legal counselling, language classes). Existing migrants (very small numbers) supported newly arriving refugees with a similar experience and from the same linguistic community. Lastly, the locality has a local history of left-wing political activism which made it natural for people to engage in refugee support.

Case study G3, type C/D locality

In G3, members of the local government, local administration, labor market actors and street-level bureaucrats, who could also be classified as pro-migrant group, participated in the survey (n=9). Compared to other localities, **scores are generally lower implying less importance**. This could be explained by the fact, that the locality has a long history of migration and many institutions and offers had already been in place before. Local actors were thus not unprepared to the situation of accommodating migrants. Especially low are scores for suggestions from the local government and the local council (except for local policy makers), suggestions from public officials however are deemed more influential. There is no clear explanation for this finding in the qualitative data, but it seems likely that this is again linked to more experience with diversity. As integration was an important topic also before 2015, responsibilities were already existent in the administrative

structures and worked on by experts there instead of being matter of the local council. Similar to other localities, **own values and ideas as well as pro-migrant mobilization are considered important** factors. Importantly, **locals' attitudes towards migrants are considered "important" or "very important"** by seven out of nine actors. This links to the changing attitude of locals towards post-2014 migrants due to the extremely high numbers of arrivals and resulted in the policy change of immigration stop in 2016. Also, local official's perception of **social cohesion as one influential actor** adds to this finding. Lastly, **local history is a key factor** for local decision-making. On the one hand, this refers to a local company's decision to implement a program for refugees due to their involvement in the Nazi-Regime (G-S-12). One the other hand, and more prominently, this refers to the local history of guest workers. Already present migrant groups informally supported members of their ethnic or linguistic community. Local officials and non-profit service providers engaged in integration programs to prevent tendencies of segregation and back draw in ethnic communities which they attribute to guest workers and their family member, especially women (G3-3; G3-10a; G3-8).

Case study G4, type B locality

In G4, members of the local government, local administration, labor market actors, street-level bureaucrats, and pro-migrant groups participated in the survey (n=8). The **most important factors across all actors are "Own values and Ideas"** ("important", "very important" and "extremely important"), **"pro-migrant mobilization"** (all "important" and "very important") **and locals' attitudes towards migrants** (from "somewhat important" to "very important"). On the contrary, **"anti-migrant protests" have the lowest scores** with only a member from the opposition party considering this a "somewhat important" factor (all other: "Not influential"). These findings fit well with qualitative observations as **civil society organization and non-profit service providers have been actively engaged since 201**5 to foster integration on the political agenda. As they have been somewhat successful, e.g., drafting of a local integration plan (see 3.1), integration has become an important matter for the local government and administration, because of pro-migrant mobilization and locals' attitudes towards migrants. Still, **suggestions of the local government and administration are considered less important factors** (predominantly "not important" or "somewhat important") which points to their limited engagement in integration until know (see 3.1). For local government, administration and employer's organization, the economic situation and requests from private companies are influential or very influential on their decision-making which can be explained by scarce work force supply in the locality. Besides, the possibility to shift responsibilities in a multi-level governance system turns out as important factor in the small town in North Rhine-Westphalia from the qualitative data. Reacting to the plea from smaller surrounding municipalities to support in refugee accommodation, the small town in North Rhine-Westphalia established a central reception center in the locality and thus took over the small communities' responsibility to accommodate. Later, the local government offered the reception center to the Länder scale to be used as ZUE, which in turn relieves the small town in North Rhine-Westphalia from responsibilities (see 3.1). Over time, the arrival of migrants itself can be considered an influential factor that served as a kind of eye-opener for the need to engage in the topic of integration (G4-3).

Case study G5, type A locality

In G5, members of the local government, local administration, labor market actors, street-level bureaucrats, and pro-migrant groups participated in the survey (n=12). **Similar to G4, most important factors are "own values and ideas", "pro-migrant mobilization" and "locals' attitudes towards migrants"** (considered predominantly "very influential" or "influential"). However, the medium-sized town in MV is the **only locality where "anti-migrant protests" are relevant for decision-makin**g, ranging from "somewhat influential" to "very influential" (three respondents, social worker, opposition in the local council and labor market actor considered it "not influential"). According to the qualitative interviews this can be linked to **existing anti-migrant protests but also in light of the local history of racist violence in the 1990s**, which forms an important part of the local narrative of post-socialist transition. The local government for example saw the need to the establishment cross-sectional office of refugee integration and mobilized considerable resources for reception and integration of refugees to prevent the situation from becoming similar to the 1900s (G5-3). The impact of a strong civil society in the medium-sized town in MV is apparent in qualitative and survey data. Suggestions from local NGOs are considered influential for 10 out of 12 actors, and especially relevant for the local official in charge of integration affairs ("Very influential). Also in G5, it becomes apparent that those factors that related to the field of work of the participants are deemed most relevant, e.g., suggestions from companies for labor market actors. Suggestions of the local government and local council do not have a lot of influence ("not influential", "somewhat influential", "influential"), but the impact of suggestions from local officials is higher (mostly "influential"). This could be explained by the size of the locality. Whole-COMMs definition of medium-sized towns are big towns in German standards, governance tasks are delegated to the local administration who then are in charge of cooperation and not necessarily the members of the local council. Qualitative data further shows that the sheer number of arrivals was a decisive factor for civil society actors to become active. In the last two years, the COVID-Pandemic has become an influencing factor. For non-profit-service providers to pause or adjust their programs, and for pro-migrant groups to change their protest culture. Due to weekly protests of anti-corona-measure groups, demonstrations for other topics fear threats by this groups, and experience serious problems to get visibility for their claims, as all the attention is on corona.

G6, type A locality

In G6, members of the local government, local civil society/pro-migrant-group, and street-level bureaucrats on county participated in the survey (n=4). The **most important factors across all actors are "Own values and Ideas", "Requests/ Pressures/ Suggestions from local NGOs or associations" and "Anti-migrant protests" and locals' attitudes towards migrants** (esp. by local respondents). On the contrary, "**local media" and "Requests/ Pressures/ Suggestions from the local government" have the lowest scores**. As the number of actors remains low, the qualitative observations offer a deeper insight. Also, the street-level bureaucrats do not exclusively cover the town of the rural area in Saxony as their only working area, so their replies cover also the regional context. As there is no local integration plan and no integration policy at municipal, the in-depth interview showed that the problems described in 3.3 (right-wing-protests) are main factors influencing the local situation and local measures. This is shown in the survey, too. Also, the pro-migrant group was formed before first

post-2014 migrants arrived in the town: The aim was to form a counter-movement to right-wing protests. Another crucial factor is the decision-making by the Länder government (e.g., funding for social counselling) and the county decision-making (e.g. distribution of migrants, issuing residence permits and working permits).

TABLE 5. Dominant factors for local decision-making in different localities.

	Factors that crucially influence local policymakers' actions and decisions	Factors that crucially influence the actions/decisions/ mobilisation of 'political actors' (e.g. advocacy NGOs, pro-migrant or anti-migrant movements, local councillors from opposition parties etc.)	Factors that crucially influence the actions and decisions of street-level bureaucrats / non-profit service providers / trade unions / private employers /employers' organizations
G1	Demographic change

Fostering social cohesion in the locality (including the big share of silent population in integration processes)

Own values and ideas on integration

Suggestions of administration | Increase visibility of migrants and xenophobic violence (migrant groups)

Fight right-wing mobilisation (NGO)

Own values and ideas

Fostering social cohesion in the locality

Migrant communities: support people with refugee experience and from same ethnic/linguistic community | Adjustment to /making use of new programs/funding schemes since 2015

Changes in the legal framework

Own values and ideas

Adjust to the new circumstances with the arrival of migrants to be able do their job (job center; migrant counselling)

Provide opportunities for refugees, e.g. insight into labor market

Lack of work force, e.g., nursing stuff

Key stakeholder's positive attitude towards refugee reception & their expectations |

G2	Lack of financial resources Shifting responsibilities to the next governance level (county) Demographic situation of the locality (county)	(Experienced) Lack of action by local politicians and administration Lack of institutions in locality (e.g., migrant counselling, language classes, public transport) Own values and ideas: left-wing activists and urban clientele Single Migrants: support people with refugee experience	Adjustment to /making use of new programs/funding schemes since 2015 Changes in legal framework
G3	Clustering of social problems Locality was overstrained by the sheer number of arrivals: Zuzugsstopp Pressure/suggestions by local administration (esp. schools) Learn from (failing) integration of "Guest Workers Foster social cohesion and cope with conflict, also between migrant groups Own values and ideas	Learn from (failing) integration of "Guest Workers Migrant communities: support people with refugee experience and from same ethnic/linguistic community Own values and ideas: pacifist party	Adjustment to /making use of new programs/funding schemes since 2015 Pressure to act due to sheer numbers of arrivals in neighbourhoods Cope with social conflict Key stakeholder's positive attitude towards refugee reception & their expectations Need for information about new situation in private employment sector Changes in legal framework Own values: Western feminist thinking of working women Historical ethical obligation (GS_12)

G4	Availability of buildings for accommodation from former refugee crisis Intermunicipal cooperation and responsibility for surrounding rural areas Possibility to shift of responsibilities to other governance levels Confidence in transformation from economic transformation processes Arrival of post-2014 migrants as eye opener to take integration seriously	Own values and ideas (religious motivation) Perceive integration as marginal on the local political agenda Need of support and advocacy because of rigid administrative structures (GI15) Central accommodation Unit (ZUE) as both site of protest and refugee support	Responsibilities for surrounding rural areas Need to react to changing circumstances to be able to do good work Making use of new funding schemes since 2015 Changes in legal framework Need for work force
G5	Pressure of strong civil society Personal Openness, orientation towards bet-practice Persönliche Offenheit, Orientierung nach Außen, best-practice orientation; networks with other localities Requests/ Pressures/ Suggestions from parties forming the majority within the local Council Historical ethical obligation	Own values and ideas (Experienced) Lack of action by local politicians and administration Pressure to act due to sheer numbers of arrivals Increase visibility of migrants and xenophobic violence Migrant communities: support people with refugee experience and from same ethnic/linguistic community Historical ethical obligation	Working according to regulations Pressure to act due to shere numbers of arrivals Adjustment to /making use of new programs/funding schemes since 2015 Changes in legal framework Key stakeholder's positive attitude towards refugee reception & their expectations Own values and ideas

	Values and ideas	Increasing politization of Corona-Demonstrations; threat for pro-migrant advocacies Corona as influencing factor (digitalization, closure of spaces)	
G6	Distribution politics of the county, not so much agency of the local political scale Anti-migrant mobilisation Decisions made in the local councy: depend on majority in the local council	Changing access to housing facilities (from GU to decentral); closing of shared accommodation centers by county Gaps in local integration services (e.g. language courses) Anti-migrant protest and hostile attitudes towards migrants and volunteers Communication with county has become intense; fast reaction more possible Corona-Pandemic: changes work to social activities beyond refugees	Making use of new funding schemes since 2015 holistic approach to labour integration Closing of professional public service providers in the county's capital ➔ compensating lack of personnel Corona-Pandemic: personal counselling no longer possible Importance of Länder level Learning by Doing and lack of experts: learning while working

Conclusion

To sum up the findings of this report, we draw on the guiding questions of WP3 that are (1) Why have specific integration policies been decided upon and pursued in specific localities? (2) How have the localities/actors engaged in policymaking processes regarding the settlement and integration of post 2014 migrants? (3) How have localities established network relations and interactions regarding the settlement and integration of post 2014 migrants?

Regarding the development of local integration policies, **structural conditions** prove to be an important factor. Type C locality G1, for example, is undergoing **demographic processes** of ageing and shrinking which provides the locality with enough housing to accommodate migrants decentrally and renders migration and important process to ensure work force (G1-1). Still, the demographic situation, only little experience with diversity and open racism makes the place a **transit town** that many migrants leave as soon as they can. **Rural localities,** type D (G2) and type A (G6) are not able to provide much needed services at the local level, such as legal counselling, sufficient migrant counselling and language classes. However, in G2, strong civil society organizations who are present due to the regions history of environmental movements compensate for this lack. In G6, the supply with public transport to the next big city offers a solution to this problem. This also renders the locality a favorable place for post-2014 migrants all over the county. Still, rural areas that are part of a county have only a **limited scope of action** in the field of integration as this topic is in most parts in responsibility of the county level. The medium-sized town in Lower-Saxony (Type C/D) and the small town in North Rhine-Westphalia (type B) show that an **absorptive labor market** supports integration – because migrants can find work and have a reason to stay. Also in these cases, private economy actors engage in the field of integration or urge local policymakers to do so. Both localities are destinations where post-2014 migrants stay which can also be linked to the presence of so-called "guest workers" in the region since the 1970s and thus a certain experience with diversity in the places. The medium-sized town in MV (type B locality) is an important **center in relation to the sparsely populated surrounding areas**. It thus attracts migrants due to possibilities to work in the service sector (gastronomy and tourism) and gives migrants the possibility to be less noticeable as "foreign" compared to the surrounding areas. Regardless of their differing situation as regards their economic and demographic situation, case studies G2, G4, G3 and G5 face **challenges to provide post-2014 with (adequate) housing**. This lack is perceived by pro-migrant groups and non-profit service providers as key obstacle to integration as it means a longer stay in shared accommodation and overcrowded flats. All case studies have shown that **local histories of diversity** as well as a **local culture of remembering (or negating) racist incidents** play a key role in local integration policies and how migrants perceive the locality.

The **engagement of local actors in policymaking processes** significantly depends on the interplay between local policy makers/local officials and civil society. In the small town in North Rhine-Westphalia and the medium-sized town in MV, we find a very active civil society that reacts to a – in their eyes – slow and inactive political sphere and administration. To understand the German case correctly, the **role of local officials** has to be underlined. Local officials in the field of integration are assigned to this topic and are "the" experts in the field. They will be the responsible person to prepare decisions, develop and put forward programs and they are the responsible person to conceptually

develop the topic of integration in the locality. Their understanding of their own role can determine how municipalities in Germany can implement the (mostly voluntary) municipal task of supporting integration. Of course, members of the local government have to legitimize their proposals. Still, local officials have a considerable power to act independently as the case of the progressive attempts and initiatives of the local coordinator for integration in the small town in Saxony-Anhalt against very conservative groups in the council shows. In localities, where there is no local official in charge of integration affairs (or only on the county level), G2, G6 and G4, conceptual approaches to integration are less developed. Thus, **individual persons' motivation** should not be underestimated. In the end, it is always individual people – also in local governments and administration - who decide to put integration first and who activate their networks or refrain from doing so. In line with previous findings on decision making in local integration policies in SMsTRAs in Germany (Schammann et al., 2021), **integration policies seem to be related to factors other than party-politics**. In G3, for example, even a member of the left party is in favor of the immigration stop to the locality which is clearly not in line with party politics on a greater level. Governments on the local level seem to be more concerned with local situations than with general party politics.

Regarding **network relations** and interactions in the field of settlement and integration of post 2014 migrants, all cases show that local **horizontal networks** are more elaborated than vertical networks. Local networks often build on **existing structures**, such as environmental groups in G2, migrant structures in G3, and most importantly all formal existing structures of the non-profit service sectors (migrant counselling, education providers, etc.). Especially in rural areas and small towns, networks are also based on private networks and contacts. Cooperation and conflicts rely on personal **sympathy or antipathy,** and these endure over decades, although topics change (in the case of the rural area in Lower-Saxony for example from environmental issues to migration and integration). Horizontal networks between localities in the field of integration policies are rare. The small town in North Rhine-Westphalia is the only locality that explicitly refers to them as helpful. This is also due to the fact that exchange networks were established before to cope with processes of economic transformation.

Vertical networks in terms of policy exchange seem to **first touch the next higher level**. Rural areas and small towns relate to the respective county, county-free towns most often involve the *Länder* level. For some measures, such as the immigration stop in the medium-sized town in Lower-Saxony or the establishment of the central reception center (ZUE) in the small town in North Rhine-Westphalia, the application of the residence regulation and the distribution of migrants across localities, interactions with the *Länder* level are indispensable. The *Länder* level also provided several platforms for exchange of experience and information, especially among coordinators for integration. And lastly, laws and regulations on the Länder level set the frame within local policies work. However, in terms of funding, vertical relations become very important, especially EU funding is often combined with funding of the Länder funding or local funds, but also national funding schemes are used across the cases.

Recommendations

We can draw four recommendations from our findings for future integration policymaking in SMsTRAs: First, it becomes apparent that **existing local networks have been key to react fast** to the arrival of migrants and to ensure the implementation of integration measures. Local government and local officials should **acknowledge the role of these networks and support involved institutions** through long term funding to prevent a shutdown of the structures as soon as funding through a higher level is terminated.

Second, the sustainability of developed programs could also be fostered by **opening up integration measures to all members of society after some time**. Currently, most programs have been terminated after the arrival of refugees "seemed to be over". However, is it laborious, costly and takes time to reactivate all measures when needed again – as currently the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Germany and the challenges of supporting them shows.

Third, our findings show that localities that engage in multi-level exchange, for example through research projects or exchange formats on *Länder* level are motivated to think outside the box and work with new perspectives on local problems. National and *Länder* should **foster possibilities for exchange and provide incentives to participate** – not least granting time for exchange in the often tight timetables of local officials and non-profit service providers.

Fourth, our findings show **that local histories of diversity and local narratives of integration matter**. They form the ground on which local policy makers act and on which local attitudes towards migrants and migration develop. Although not always easy to trace, local histories and narratives significantly impact the understanding of integration and local policy making. Understanding diversity as part of the locality or homogeneity as the norm significantly impacts how locals and migrants encounter each other.

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APPENDIX

ANNEX 1 – Table A. 1: List of local documents

Locality	Document	Publisher	Date of Publication
G1, type C locality, small town	Local integration plan	Local government, local coordinator for integration	2017
	Welcome Guide for newcomers	local coordinator for integration	2021
	Report on social cohesion in place, in G1 within a greater research project of a German Foundation	Research Institute	2018
	Paths to work for refugees	Local Jobcenter	-
	Report on education status of newly arrived people	Local administration	2021
G2, type D locality, rural area	Newspaper article on the positive reception of migrants in the locality	Over regional newspaper	2015
	Amnesia of debts (over 100 Million €)	Regional Government	2014
	Leaflet of left-wing NGO for reception of further migrants	Local pro-migrant group	2015
	Call for free flats	Locality's Website	2015
G3, type C/D locality, medium-sized town	Request for the development of a local integration plan	SPD, Green party	2014
	Immigration stop for locality GS	Regional Government	2017
	Information on Länder funding for local integration projects	Locality's Website	2021
G4, type B locality, Small Town	Information on Central Accommodation Unit	Locality's Website	2019
	Proclamation to develop an integration concept	Mayor's Office	2019
	Integration plan on county level	County of G4	2017
	Proclamation to participate in the initiative "Sichere Häfen"	Local Council	2021
G5	Local integration plan	Local government	2021
	Report on social cohesion in the locality	Research institute	2019
	Report on social cohesion in the neighbourhood	Bertelsmann Stiftung	2017

	Welcome guide for migrants	Local government	2017
	Report on education level of migrants	Local government	2019
G6	Joint declaration of the local council to accommodate migrants	Local government	2015
	Newspaper article on a locals' migrant-critical initiative	Local newspaper (conservative)	2015

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