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MIGRANT INTEGRATION IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

COMPARATIVE WORKING PAPER

Migrants' and Refugees' Access to Housing and Employment in Small and Medium-Sized Towns and Rural Areas: Barriers, Opportunities, and Local Support Measures

WORK PACKAGE 4

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TARGET AUDIENCE

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Executive summary

This working paper looks at post-2014 migrants' access to housing and employment in 40 small and medium-sized towns and rural areas across eight EU Member States (Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Germany, Poland, Italy, and Spain). It focuses not so much on how many of these newcomers have struggled or are struggling to find housing and/or employment, but what they tend to struggle with or against and who does what (and for whom) in order to support them in this struggle. The aim was to identify and understand similarities and differences between different (kinds of) localities, both from a cross-country and cross-locality perspective.

Primarily based on more than 650 interviews with relelvant public and private actors at the local, regional and national levels, the comparative analysis allows us to draw several conclusions. With regard to the first question, which refers to the **main factors that tend to either complicate or facilitate post-2014 migrants' access to housing and employment** (addressed from a cross-national comparative perspective in sections 3.2.1 and 3.3.1 and from a cross-local comparative perspective in section 4.1), the qualitative and quantitative analyses suggest that structural, policy and societal factors are key.

Structural factors are fundamental in determining post-2014 migrants' access to housing and employment. The general picture for the eight selected countries is one with difficult access to housing (due to a general housing crisis) and relatively easy access to employment (due to general labour shortages). When zooming into local differences, our research confirms that indeed favourable local economic conditions tend to make it more difficult for migrants to find a place to live but play in favour of their access to employment. The quantitative analysis shows as well that locality size also matters: in medium-sized towns (compared to rural and small towns) access to housing seems to be more difficult while access to employment may be relatively easier.

Policies are also key when explaining access to housing and employment. Interestingly, the most relevant policies are not necessarily those that target migrants but rather social policies in general. National reports do also show that exclusionary policies are equally and sometimes even more important than those that aim to facilitate access. In this regard, national immigration and asylum laws are extremely relevant, as well as social and labour policies.

The **societal factor** is also relevant, again with inclusionary and exclusionary effects. On the one hand, both the qualitative and quantitative analyses show the role of informal networks (contacts with citizens in general or co-ethnics in particular) in facilitating access to housing and employment. This seems to be particularly true in smaller towns and in the absence of formal support structures, particularly in countries such as Poland, Italy, and Spain. On the other hand, in most localities across the eight selected countries interviewees refer to discriminatory practices as a key factor hindering migrants' access to housing and employment. Interestingly, discrimination seems to be more common regarding access to

housing (with a higher demand than supply) than regarding access to employment (where in a context of labour shortages it is the other way around).

If we focus on the local responses, that is **which concrete local policies, initiatives, and practices exist at the local level (what is done, by whom and for whom)**, we find that locality size and political orientation of local governments are the most relevant factors. It has also become clear, however, that these local level responses (not only formal policies but also implementation practices and other, including civil society led, initiatives) are also closely linked to (and clearly shaped by) what happens at higher levels of governance: National and regional policies and legal frameworks as well as the underlying approaches to integration and diversity are also key in explaining the significant variation in how (and whether) different localities have addressed the issue of post-2014 migrants' access to housing and employment.

Table of content

1. Introduction 2
2. Methodology & Analytical Framework 6
3. Cross-national comparison 10
3.1. National contexts 10
3.1.1. (National) housing contexts 10
3.1.2. (National) labour market contexts 14
3.2. Post-2014 migrants' access to **housing** (in selected SMsTRA) 18
3.2.1. Main challenges / obstacles 18
3.2.2. Actors involved at the local level 23
3.2.3. Local policies, initiatives, and practices 27
3.3. Post-2014 migrants' access to **employment** (in selected SMsTRA) 34
3.3.1. Main challenges / obstacles 34
3.3.2. Actors involved 37
3.3.3. Local policies, initiatives, and practices 40
3.4. Main hypotheses for the cross-local comparison 43
3.4.1. Housing 43
3.4.2. Employment 45
4. Cross-local comparison 48
4.1. What explains the relative ease or difficulty of post-2014 migrants' access? 48
4.1.1. The relevance of locality **size** 49
4.1.2. The relevance of local **structural conditions** 50
4.1.3. The relevance of **experience with cultural diversity** 52
4.1.4. The relevance of local **political leadership** 53
4.2. What explains the presence or absence of (local) policies, initiatives, and practices? 54
4.2.1. When do local governments take targeted measures? 55
4.2.2. When do non-state actors take the initiative? 58
5. Conclusion 61
6. References 65

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1. Introduction

Over the last couple of years (since 2014), many small and medium-sized towns and rural areas (SMsTRA) across Europe have experienced and dealt with an increased and often unprecedented arrival and settlement of migrants and/or refugees. These localities thus faced the challenge of not only receiving and temporarily accommodating significant numbers of newcomers but also facilitating their longer-term integration into local communities. With the unfolding of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, this issue has once again regained importance, as the European Union is currently facing the largest arrival of refugees since WWII. And also this time, smaller localities and rural areas carry a significant share of the responsibility for welcoming refugees and preparing for their potentially long-term stay. Whilst the interviews and other data collection for this working paper were carried out before the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, we believe that our insights can help evaluate and increase the preparedness and capacity of SMsTRA for dealing also with this latest influx of refugees[1].

Hence, investigating smaller localities and their diverse reactions to the arrival of newcomers is important because they have become lynchpins for the challenge posed to European societies of successfully managing what has often been depicted as a 'crisis' of accommodating and integrating large numbers or refugees. The Whole-COMM project aims to contribute to this endeavour by exploring how these communities have responded to the presence of "post-2014 migrants"[2]: Which policies, measures or initiatives have been developed or implemented at the local level, and in what way did these policies or initiatives enable or shape processes of integration. The project follows an innovative Whole-of-Community approach that conceives of migrant integration as a process of community-making that goes beyond public policies and necessarily involves many different actors including public and private institutions, civil-society organizations, individual professionals, as well as private citizens and corporate entities.

In this comparative working paper[3] we specifically focus on local policies, initiatives, and practices in relation to post-2014 migrants' access to housing and employment. Which concrete challenges and barriers do they face? Which local actors are (or feel) responsible

[1] For a discussion on how small localities in Europe can make a difference in the reception of Ukrainians fleeing the war, please see https://whole-comm.eu/blogs/is-multilevel-governance-all-we-need/.

[2] 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).

[3] This comparative working paper is a deliverable of the fourth work package (WP4) of the Whole-COMM project (https://whole-comm.eu/). For an outline of the overall project and its methodology please consult Working Paper 1, available at: https://whole-comm.eu/working-papers/working-paper-1-2/.

for these issues? Who provides support? What is being done to facilitate (or further complicate) their finding work and a place to live?

In line with the Whole-Comm approach, we assume that the multiple actors involved in integration and community-making processes will have different interests, strategies, resources, and power positions; and that integration – understood as mutual adjustment between newcomers and long-term residents – and social cohesion do not necessarily represent the only/overall rationale guiding their various efforts; instead, the interplay between different actors (and their various interests and rationales) may also lead to exclusion or reinforce existing inequalities (Collyer, et al., 2020). By looking at how a wide range of local actors (private actors, civil society actors and street level bureaucrats) foster but sometimes also hinder migrants´ access to housing and/or employment, we hope to better understand (and be able to compare) these complex dynamics across different local and national contexts.

The choice of focusing on housing and employment follows two main rationales. First, they obviously are key resources for the realization of fundamental rights and for achieving sustainable integration. Second, their distribution does not exclusively depend on local, regional, or national administrations and their various public policies, but on a much wider and very diverse range of (local) actors, thus allowing us to fully apply the whole-of-community approach. Housing is (partly, or, in some cases, almost completely) in the hands of private actors, ranging from big owners (including banks and international investment funds) to small ones. Employment opportunities largely depend on private businesses, which again are very diverse ranging from big to small (including family) employers, from private to public employers and across different economic sectors. In both cases, between migrants and these private actors, we find a broad range of intermediaries (CSOs, trade unions, real estate agencies, civil society organizations, social networks, etc.) in addition to a diverse and sometimes even contradictory set of public policies and programs (at the national, regional, and local levels). All this leads to a very complex and seemingly inconsistent picture, which we are trying to make sense of in this comparative working paper, hoping to thereby contribute to a better understanding of post-2014 migrants' integration in European and non-European SMsTRA.

> *"There seems to be integration… everything seems to be fine. But we would obviously need to look beyond what we see on the street; ask how many of them [post-2014 migrants] don't find work or struggle finding a place to live – that I think is the biggest issue" (SP-2-06)*

This statement was made by a local politician interviewed in a small town in Castile & Leon, Spain. It summarizes what many local actors interviewed for this project perceived as the two

major challenges for newly arrived migrants and refugees; and it suggests that effective access to housing and employment can be thought of as a measure of integration. And indeed, the aim of this working paper was precisely to look at migrants' access to housing and employment as one way of investigating their integration. In doing so, however, it focuses not so much on *how many* of the people who arrived in these localities since 2014 have struggled or are still struggling to find housing and/or employment, but *what* they tend to struggle with or against[4], and *who* does *what* (and specifically *for whom*) in order to support them in this struggle.

Our analysis was thus guided by the following initial research questions:

- What are the major **obstacles/challenges** that are reported to exist in each locality for post-2014 migrants?
- Which **actors** (public, private, and civil society) are involved at the local level, and what is their concrete role in the context of housing and/or employment?
- Which concrete **local policies, initiatives, and practices** exist that intend/help to overcome these obstacles (or that have exclusionary effects on post-2014 migrants' access to housing and employment)
- What are the specific **target groups of these local policies, initiatives, or practices**?

In analysing these issues across the different national and local contexts, we have also become interested in the more specific question of when and why do local authorities or other local actors (perceive a need to) go beyond mainstream policies and measures in order to facilitate, or otherwise regulate/restrict, post-2014 migrants' access to housing or employment? Overall, our comparative analysis carried out in this working paper allows us to draw two main conclusions:

First, the paper shows that **structural, policy, and societal** factors are key to explain post-2014 migrants' access to housing and employment.

Second, we find that **locality size and political orientation of local governments are the most relevant factors that influence local level responses** (not only formal policies but also implementation practices and other, including civil society led, initiatives) but they are also closely linked to (and clearly shaped by) what happens at higher levels of governance: National and regional policies and legal frameworks as well as the underlying approaches to integration and diversity are also key in explaining the significant variation in how (and whether) different localities have addressed the issue of post-2014 migrants' access to housing and employment.

The remainder of the working paper is organized in the following way: The next chapter briefly describes the methodological approach, underlying data and data collection, and analytical

[4] That is, what a diverse range of local actors perceive as the main barriers that post-2014 migrants face in their respective locality.

framework (chapter 2). We then present the main findings of our analysis, first from a country-comparative perspective (chapter 3), and then by discussing the similarities and differences that seem to exist between different kinds of localities (across national contexts), as well as possible explanations for these variations (chapter 4). In the conclusion (chapter 5) we bring these two levels/dimensions of the analysis together and provide 'overall' answers to the research questions. We then summarize the most important insights and highlight some of the implications they have for policymakers and other stakeholders.

2. Methodology & Analytical Framework

The analyses and results presented in this working paper are based on document analysis (media sources and policy documents) and on semi-structured interviews conducted between November 2021 and February 2022 in 40 SMsTRA across Europe. The research carried out within the Whole-COMM project covers eight EU countries (Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Germany, Poland, Italy, and Spain) as well as in Turkey and Canada (for more information on the selection of countries see: Caponio and Pettrachin, 2021). In total, 696 interviews have been conducted by the ten country teams, including:

- 647 at the local level, involving the following actors: mayors/members of local government responsible for integration (69), high-level local officials (75), pro-migrant groups/CSOs/migrant organizations (61), anti-migrant groups (8), members of opposition in the local council (40), experts/journalists (27), street-level bureaucrats working in public social services (127), employers (43), employer organizations (38), real estate companies (32), non-profit service providers (95), trade unions (26), others (6).
- 30 officials at the regional level (regional officials in charge of immigrant affairs/integration)
- 12 officials at the national level (national officials in charge of immigrant affairs/integration)
- 7 expert interviews at the European level (officials, think tank staff, CSO staff in charge of immigrant affairs/integration)

In each of the countries, between four and six[5] SMsTRA were selected for in-depth, mixed-method case studies. The case selection process was very structured and theory oriented. All selected localities – 49 in total – were directly involved in the reception of asylum-seekers and refugees between 2014 and 2017, and they are all characterized by the presence of currently residing post-2014 migrants. None of the selected localities is a satellite town of a big city and we aimed to exclude 'extreme cases'. Case selection was conducted by the country teams in close collaboration with the project coordinators, and with the aim to maximize variation across a set of variables, such as population size (we selected a mix of medium towns, small towns and rural areas), administrative role (a mix of provincial/regional capitals and localities with no administrative function), the localities' experience with cultural diversity, their economic and demographic situation, and the political affiliation of their local government. The variables 'experience with cultural diversity' and 'structural factors' were also combined and used to distinguish four (ideal) types of localities:

[5] Depending on the size of each country.

Type A	Characterized by a recovering local economy and improving demographic profile and significant migrant settlement before 2014
Type B	Characterized by an improving economic and demographic situation and no significant arrivals of migrants before 2014
Type C	Characterized by demographic and economic decline and significant migrants' settlement before 2014
Type D	Characterized by economic and demographic decline and no significant arrivals of migrants before 2014

The methodology used is comparative case study research, which is geared towards creating deep knowledge of cases and entities as well as synthesizing similarities, differences, and other patterns of phenomena across cases in a way that allows some generalization (Goodrick 2014, 2019). In line with our initial research questions, the analysis in this comparative working paper seeks to compare the main barriers, relevant actors, and concrete local policies, initiatives, or practices in relation to post-2014 migrants' access to housing and employment, not only across countries but also across (different kinds of) localities. Though the Whole-comm project covers eight EU countries, plus Turkey and Canada, in this working paper we had to leave out the non-EU cases for reasons of comparability. To start with, Turkey constitutes a too distant case study given its temporary approach to protection and the residual role of municipalities. In the Canadian case, selected municipalities do not follow the same selection criteria (type C and D are inapplicable) and most immigration occurs through 'regular' channels that are heavily controlled by the state and managed through immigration targets.

Three **important limitations** of the chosen approach must be highlighted here: Firstly, that our comparative analysis is based on the country reports prepared by the various project partners (and available for download at the project website: https://whole-comm.eu/), rather than the original interview data itself. This would have taken much more time and required a huge amount of additional work (including full translations and common coding of all interview transcripts). Secondly, another important limitation is that both the underlying country reports and the comparative working paper are based on interviews with a diverse range of institutional actors but not on interviews with post-2014 migrants themselves. While such interviews have also been conducted within the framework of the Whole-COMM project, they form part of a different work package (WP5) and therefore took place at a later stage (and did not explicitly focus on perceptions and experiences regarding access to housing and employment). This means that our findings, especially regarding the main challenges that migrants and refugees face in the selected localities, reflect relevant local actors' perceptions but not the migrants' own first-hand experiences. Arguably, this limitation is partly offset by the fact that the interviewed actors do include representatives of local NGOs and migrant-led organisations who directly work with migrants and refugees and are thus familiar with the concrete difficulties they tend to face. Thirdly, despite having limited the comparison to the European countries, differences across national contexts may put into question the degree of comparability across cases. Of particular importance is the fact that the category of "post-

2014 migrants" covers a rather heterogeneous group, both in terms of countries of origin, ways of entry into the EU and status given once in the destination country (from recognized refugees to asylum seekers and irregular migrants). On the contrary, differences in terms of welfare state and characteristics of the housing and labour markets are extremely relevant to understand to what extent and how they play a role in determining migrants' access to housing and employment at the local level. Last but not least, it should be noted that the number of selected localities per country (between four and six) is relatively small and not necessarily representative of the situation in the whole country.

In order to systematically assess and compare the challenges that post-2014 migrants' face in terms of access to housing and employment, the role and relevance of different actors and the concrete measures they take in this regard, we have followed a **two-step approach**: First, we asked all country teams to identify, discuss, and report the most relevant information and findings to us and thereby follow the same structure and set of guiding questions (see chapter 1). In analysing these issues for their respective countries, they also highlighted apparent similarities and differences between the four to six localities they looked at and provided some important clues for explaining these patterns. In addition to the country reports and in line with the projects' ambition to connect qualitative and quantitative analyses, we have created a set of basic indicators and asked each partner to categorize each of the selected localities in their country[6] in terms of 1) the relative ease/difficulty of post-2014 migrants' access to housing and employment[7]; and 2) the kind/s of policy or societal response/s to each of these two issues[8]. While this obviously meant a rather crude classification, it helped us to conduct a more systematic analysis and to structure the presentation of findings accordingly.

In the next step, we have conducted a comparative analysis across these very different national contexts. This analysis consisted of two parts, which will be presented in the following two chapters: The first – country-comparative – part (chapter 3) discusses the findings regarding the major obstacles/challenges, relevant actors, and concrete policies, initiatives, and practices (incl. their specific target groups) in relation to housing and employment for

[6] We had also considered doing the same categorisation ourselves for all the localities (to ensure overall consistency) but since they know their respective country and cases much better than we do, we decided to instead rely on their assessments.

[7] We asked them to indicate whether post-2014-migrants' access to housing (beyond initial reception) and to employment is A) relatively easy, B) relatively difficult, or C) extremely difficult, compared to the other localities in their respective country.

[8] We asked them to indicate whether post-2014 migrants' access to housing and employment (respectively) is being facilitated through A) targeted local measures, B) mainstream local measures, C) targeted national or regional policies, D) mainstream national or regional policies, E) private or civil society initiatives, or F) not being addressed/facilitated at all (or even hindered). In this case they were asked to mark all those relevant (multiple answers possible).

each country[9]. This not only provides an overview but also helps us to generate hypotheses regarding what might explain the within-country differences identified by the national research teams.

The second part of our analysis (chapter 4) is complementary to the first and consists of cross-locality comparisons that allow us to test the hypotheses generated in chapter 3. We thereby explicitly look beyond national contexts and try to identify and explain similarities, differences or other patterns that are not linked to national legal frameworks, welfare traditions, and so on, but instead seem to be related to other characteristics of the localities. In particular, and in line with the theoretical assumptions underlying the Whole-COMM project, we thereby focus on four key variables: 1) population size (rural, small, or medium-sized), 2) structural conditions (i.e., unemployment and demographic development), 3) experience with cultural diversity (i.e., the level of pre-2014 immigration), and 4) local political leadership (i.e., whether a locality is governed by a conservative or progressive government/majority). For a more detailed discussion of the indicators used to operationalize these variables see Caponio and Pettrachin (2021).

[9] The order in which they are presented reflects their geographical distribution: First the three northern European countries (Sweden, the Netherlands, and Belgium), followed by the three central and eastern European countries (Austria, Germany, and Poland), and two southern European countries (Italy and Spain).

3. Cross-national comparison

3.1. National contexts

3.1.1. (National) housing contexts

The (general) housing situation in **Sweden** is characterized by a shortage of available housing and a relatively low share of rental housing (38%), just under half of which is publicly owned. This means that a relatively large part of the housing market can be subject to political steering, and municipal governments can in principle set aside any number of housing units for migrants and other vulnerable groups. The public housing stock is equally accessible for all local residents through an open queue system that gives no preference based on income or economic need (no system of social housing). National law includes two important regulations regarding refugees' access to housing: Firstly, the so-called *Own Housing Act*, which allows asylum seekers to choose between guaranteed housing in a specific centre (to which they are allocated), or self-settlement in privately organized housing anywhere in Sweden. Those who choose to self-settle are eligible for a small daily allowance (approx. €6 per diem). In recent years, the national government has allowed municipalities to exclude certain neighbourhoods from the act (in order to avoid very high concentrations of foreign-born residents). Asylum seekers who nonetheless choose to self-settle in those neighbourhoods are no longer entitled to the daily allowance. Secondly, the so-called *Settlement Act*, establishes the obligation for municipalities to provide housing for all recently arrived refugees (within two years of acceptance) allocated them. Refugees can also choose to find their own housing somewhere else, and richer municipalities (with particularly tense housing markets) often organize housing in poorer and less densely populated municipalities, a practice often referred to as 'social dumping'. Long-term status holders (after two years from acceptance) have the same access to housing as other local residents and are eligible for short-term emergency housing. Only the latter also applies to undocumented migrants. For unaccompanied minors, the allocated municipality is responsible for providing special housing (in family homes or care homes) until the age of 18.

The **Netherlands** stands out as the country with the largest social/public housing sector in Europe (in 2020, the share of social housing accounted for 26% of the available rental housing stock). Nonetheless, and just like many other countries in the sample, also the Netherlands are currently experiencing a severe housing crisis which intersects with a refugee reception crisis. While the former has led to a general shortage of affordable housing, the latter further increased the pressure on municipalities to find housing for recognized refugees (which is their legal obligation). In 2021 the problem became so urgent that it temporary measures had to be taken, including the so-called "Hotel- and Accommodation Arrangement" and "Lodging Arrangement", giving recognized refugees the possibility to be housed in hotels, holiday bungalows or B&Bs, or to stay with a host family for three months. In general, recognized refugees in the Netherlands are distributed across the country via a national dispersal mechanism (within two weeks after status recognition), which leaves little room for

municipalities deciding how many or which refugees they will receive[10]. To fulfil their statutory responsibility, most Dutch municipalities have a performance agreement with local housing corporations, which assign recognized refugees to available social housing. Based on a specific (national) regulation, refugees can be prioritized for accessing social housing. Whereas until 2017 they automatically received priority status, the current regulation is more selective. Overall, this policy still channels recognized refugees into the social housing system, while excluding most other categories of migrants who have a different or no legal status.

In **Belgium**, the overall share of public/social housing is lower than in many other EU countries (around 5,5% in Flanders and Wallonia), which puts it in stark to the Netherlands. This partly reflects the fact that private homeownership has long been considered one of the cornerstones of the Belgian welfare state (as reflected in the favourable treatment of homeownership in taxation). Since it is mostly the regional government that is responsible for housing policy, there are significant differences between Wallonia (73% owner-occupied, considerably older, and lower quality housing stock, slightly cheaper rent and property prices) and Flanders (77% owner-occupied, until the so-called "concrete ban" in 2012 there was higher building activity, slightly higher prizes). The strict separation of competences between the federal level (responsible for asylum and reception) and the regional level (responsible for integration, incl. housing) means that neither of them is responsible for facilitating the transition to long-term housing for recognized refugees, which after 2015/2016 has led to a severe housing crisis for refugees. Another distinguishing feature of the Belgian context is that there are no dispersal mechanisms that would restrict the movement of people once they have received international protection. Once granted, they are allocated to a local accommodation initiative (LAI, managed by Local Centres for Public Welfare but entirely financed by the federal government) where they can stay for a maximum of four months, after which they must find housing on the private housing market. Social housing services usually do not have specific services for migrants or refugees, so after they are granted status, refugees are very quickly confronted with long waiting lists for social housing. All this means that in practice, recognized refugees' access to housing largely depend on the (very tense) private rental market.

Housing policy in **Austria** is decentralized with most competences shared between the regional level – the nine provinces [*Bundesländer*] are responsible for housing benefits and subsidized housing – and municipal governments, which are responsible for social housing (usually referred to as municipal housing). The share of municipal housing in the total number of dwellings rented out (roughly 19% in 2012) is relatively high. Social housing and non-profit, semi-public housing (roughly 41% of total rented housing) taken together account for more than half (about 60%) of all rented housing, which significantly lowers the average housing costs. In spite of this, and especially in the West of the country (Tyrol), rental prices have risen

[10] Asylum seekers are similarly dispersed across the country but accommodated in state-run reception centres (outside of the purview of local governments).

sharply over the last decade. As in other countries, access to municipal housing usually depends on income as well as residence criteria, including legal status and a certain minimum duration of residence in a municipality (between two and five years). Only long-term third country nationals have equal access to municipal housing, other third-country nationals may have access on a discretionary basis. The criteria for allocation of municipal housing are not very transparent and allocation of housing is largely up to the discretion of local officials, especially in smaller communities (like AT-2 and AT-4, both rural areas). With regard to asylum seekers and refugees, housing provided under the refugee reception system must be vacated four months after protection status has been granted, although there is some flexibility in practice. Given the difficult to fulfil requirements and long waiting lists for social housing, most beneficiaries of international protection must rely on the private housing market and thus face significantly higher rental costs, which they are only able to cover once they found relatively stable and full-time employment.

The housing market in **Germany** is characterized by a high share of rented housing (53%) and comparatively less owner-occupied housing. The renting housing stock is mostly owned by private owners: 42% individual private owners, 23% by associations of private owners; municipal housing, housing cooperatives, and private companies each own around 9%. Social housing is mainly located in urban areas and in localities that observe rising demands on the rental market. Access to social housing is granted through the so-called *Wohnberechtigungsschein* (social housing legitimation), assuring the access to people with limited financial resources only. In general, the *Wohnberechtigungsschein* is only granted to persons that are long-term residents in Germany; Whether refugees (with different legal status) fall under this definition differs from region to region. Asylum seekers generally stay a minimum of six months in initial reception centres (and up to 18 months, even longer for those with low acceptance rates). After decision on the asylum status, accommodation becomes the competency of the regions (*Länder*), whereby the distribution between and within regions follows a quota system. With the exception of Bavaria and Saxony (locality GE-6), asylum seekers and refugees with tolerated stay (*Duldung*) are allowed to move and settle freely in the entire Land. Lower-Saxony only imposes residence obligations (Wohnsitzauflage) for three specific cities that have already received very high numbers of refugees (locality GE-3 is one of them). In the whole country, recognized refugees are obliged to remain in the same Land for three years after the completion of their asylum procedure (unless for specific reasons like job opportunity or family ties). Only after a protection status has been granted (in most cases within 24 months after that), refugees are allowed to move to private apartments. For refugees with tolerated stay, the right to move to a private apartment depends on the discretionary decision of the relevant immigration authority.

The housing market in **Poland** has been completely privatized after the country's transformation in 1989, which strongly reduced the amount of social housing that is available. Today the Polish housing market is largely dominated by private house owners and managed by real estate agencies. Social housing, which since the 1990s is a municipal responsibility, is very limited (only 4% of the total housing stock in the country) and difficult to access not only

for migrants but also citizens. Asylum-seekers are either accommodated in centres or are granted a housing allowance to pay for independent housing. (Recently) recognized refugees are given access to social or other housing during the first 12 months after they have been granted status, after that they can choose where they want to live but receive no further support. There is no specific policy for labour migrants, who thus must find accommodation on the free market.

In **Italy**, public housing policies are a national competence, but the social housing stock is owned and managed by regional housing agencies, municipalities, or housing cooperatives. The specific requirements such as the length of residence within the municipality vary from region to region: Piedmont requires applicants to have resided (or worked) in the municipality issuing the call for at least three years, whereas in Sicily there are no such requirements. In all parts of the country – as pretty much everywhere else – the social housing supply remains far below the demand. Compared to northern European countries the share of public housing is low: the social rental housing stock constitutes around 4% of the total dwellings in 2020. Rental prices as well as housing conditions are thus mainly driven by the market. Most of the housing stock is owned by private individuals and families. Italian legislation affords relatively strong protection for tenants (e.g., against being evicted), which is why many landlords ask high guarantees, or prefer to leave their apartments empty. The quality of available housing is often very poor. Apart from social housing, housing is a municipal responsibility, but local authorities only have a duty to provide accommodation for people with vulnerabilities, mainly minors. The Italian asylum/reception system underwent a series of changes in the last decades but basically consist of two strands: state facilities (CAS), which are often outsourced to non-profit or for-profit organizations that provide accommodation services of extremely heterogeneous quality; and so-called SAI facilities that are set up on a voluntary basis by local authorities in response to calls for projects issued by the Ministry of the Interior and usually managed by NGOs, offering mostly apartment-based solutions and more comprehensive integration support.

The **Spanish** context is characterized by one of the lowest rentership rates in Europe, with just 23% of all households renting their homes (in smaller towns, the share is below 15%). It is mostly foreigners who rent their homes: 60% of households led by citizens of other EU countries, and almost 85% of non-EU immigrants live in rented accommodation. Rental housing has traditionally been owned by private individuals and prices rose exponentially from 2000 onwards, in big cities and touristic areas partly due to increasing demand for short-term rentals (e.g., Airbnb). In response, all regions have launched housing subsidy programs for low-income residents; in 2020, Catalonia was the first region to establish a rent control program for large municipalities (incl. locality SP-3). Public housing is very scarce in Spain, representing only 2,5% of all housing (Only 1,6% is public rental, compared to 9,3% on average in the EU). The public housing system (incl. the register according to which social housing is being assigned) is a regional competence but is being implemented and managed at the local level. Eligibility is strictly based on (legal) residence status, socio-economic need, and length of residence in the municipality, which automatically disadvantages newcomers. As for asylum

seekers, housing is provided through the state reception system, first in one of the central government's refugee reception centres or in reception facilities managed by NGOs and, after six to nine months, in independent (private) housing with rent and maintenance assistance.

Overall, many of the selected countries are experiencing an acute housing crisis or at least what local actors described as "tense housing markets". This is particularly true in the Netherlands and Sweden (where it affects pretty much the whole country) as well as parts of Austria, Italy, and Spain. Lack of housing is thus a very widespread problem that has not been caused by the arrival of migrants and refugees, but significantly complicates their accommodation. While the selected countries are characterized by very different shares of social housing (particularly high in the Netherlands, Austria, and Sweden; particularly low in Italy and Spain, but also Belgium and Poland), this does not make a huge difference in terms of post-2014 migrants' housing access since social housing is generally not accessible for newcomers. This makes private citizens and companies (incl. real estate agencies) the main actors in this context. A particularly difficult moment is the transition from asylum accommodation (during the asylum procedure) to independent housing once international protection has been granted[11] (or denied[12]). Generally speaking, in countries where there is more control over the settlement and mobility of refugees (like in the Netherlands, Sweden or Germany), there also tends to be more (targeted) support for them to find housing in the localities they are allocated to.

3.1.2. (National) labour market contexts

In **Sweden** the labour market is characterized by high barriers of entry to newcomers and vulnerable groups. This is due in part to the extensive system of collective bargaining, which ensures strong protections and relatively high wages for insiders. It is also due to a skills-intensive labour market and discrimination in hiring processes. Post-2014 migrants' access to the labour market depends on their legal status. On the one hand, non-status holders (asylum seekers, undocumented and rejected) are not allowed to apply for work permits (with some exceptions vaguely defined), thus there are no measures to support their labour market integration. On the other hand, for status holders the design of income support and other social protections aims broadly at labour market activation. For recently arrived refugees this is done by accessing to the introduction program and for long-term status holders by acquiring the same rights and obligations as other Swedish residents. Employment is a national

[11] Recognized refugees usually fall under the remit of mainstream social housing policies, whereas in Sweden (for two years) and Poland (for one year), also recently recognized refugees receive specific (additional) support.

[12] Undocumented migrants (including rejected asylum seekers) are not explicitly excluded from the private rental market (as they are, for example, in the UK) but from any public policies/subsidies and support measures apart from short-term emergency housing (e.g., night shelters) provided locally and often only for particularly vulnerable groups.

competence, with the Public Employment Service responsible for service provision to the unemployed and with municipalities only launching specific complementary measures when considered necessary.

In the **Netherlands** the labour market shows severe labour shortages in all industries. It is thus no surprise that the unemployment rate in the Netherlands is relatively low (3,5 percent). However, this overall positive picture of the Dutch labour market is not always reflected in the situation of residents with a migration background and post-2014 refugees, whose employment rate is generally lower, and their working situation is often more precarious. For instance, only 41% of asylum seekers who received a residence permit in 2014 had a job in 2021 (CBS, 2021) and 73% of those had a part-time job and 84% a temporary contract. Municipalities are responsible for the labour market (re-)integration of social welfare recipients. This gives them some room of manoeuvre in the implementation of (nationally defined) employment integration programs and, more generally, when finding a (sometimes fragile) balance between labour integration (promoted by the Participation Act) and language, social and cultural integration (promoted by the Civic Integration Act).

The **Belgian** labour market is also characterized by important labour shortages in all economic sectors. For instance, in 2022 for every open vacancy there were less than two job seekers without work. However, here as well there is an important "ethnic gap", with an unemployment rate of the foreign-born (16,4%) much higher than that of the native-born (6,5%) (OECD 2018b: 77). Studies also show a clear ethno-stratification, with people with migration background overrepresented in the least-valued sectors and working under the least favourable conditions. In contrast to the Netherlands, asylum seekers are allowed to work four months after they have submitted their application. However, their work permit is precarious as it depends on the resolution of their asylum application. While social security is organized at the national level, employment is shared between the national and regional levels. Since 2011 regions are responsible for labour market (re-)integration programs. Migrants and ethnic minorities are not a specific target group, despite their lower labour market participation. However, there are specific integration programs for newcomers.

In **Austria**, most interviewees have pointed out that general labour shortages had facilitated refugees' access to the labour market. Labour market policy is a national domain, with the Public Employment Service (AMS) responsible for the provision of unemployment benefits and active labour market policy measures and the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) responsible for the value, orientation, and German language courses. Since 2017 the *Integration Year Act* prescribes integration obligations for humanitarian migrants. While beneficiaries of asylum have equal access to mainstream welfare benefits (beneficiaries of subsidiary protection only in Tyrol), they need to sign an integration declaration (declaring that they will adhere to fundamental Austrian value), complete a value and orientation course, and are required to pass an integration exam. Non-compliance can involve benefit cuts of at least 25% for at least three months. In Austria integration has thus become an obligation and a condition for welfare dependence.

Also **Germany** is experiencing important labour shortages in different economic sectors. As in the rest of the countries, access to the labour market depends on legal status. While some asylum seekers are excluded from work (in the first three months after registration, those obliged to live in reception centres, those coming from the so-called "safe countries of origin"), the rest are allowed to work after permission. Refugees with protection status (either asylum or subsidiary protection) can access the labour market without further permit. Since 2016 those with a weak protection status (such as "Duldung") can follow a three-year vocational education without being at risk of deportation. The Jobcentre is the responsible public authority for unemployed people in Germany. Local Jobcentres can be financed jointly by the Federal Labour Agency and local administration or by the local administration only. As in other countries, they have the double task of distributing social welfare and supporting integration into the labour market through coaching and education programs.

Poland has the lowest unemployment rate (3,1%) in the EU. Labour demands are extensively covered by migrant workers on a temporary basis. According to Eurostat, 40,6% of all non-EU workers in Poland have temporary employment. Most prevalent labour shortages are seen in the manufacturing sector, where migrants represent the core of the employees. Since 2022 citizens from Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Armenia, and Ukraine are allowed to work in Poland for up to 180 days within 12 months without the need to obtain a work permit[13]. For other non-EU migrants applying for a work permit imply complicated procedures and in-person meetings which are mostly declined for those not speaking or understanding Polish. As migrants are perceived as temporary workers, there are no specific programs for their labour integration. Only recognized refugees are eligible for the so-called individual integration programs, including specific allowances, health insurance and integration activities.

As in other Southern European countries, in **Italy** the labour market is highly segregated with foreigners concentrated in the lower segments. The share of foreign workers is particularly high in domestic and care work, hospitality, logistics, construction, and agriculture. Despite the high dependence of those sectors on migrant labour, the annual entry quotas for labour migrants have remained small-sized after the 2008 economic crisis. This has been feasible not only as a consequence of the shrinking labour demand but also because family migrants, intra-EU mobile citizens and refugees, including post-2014 migrants, have been playing as functional alternatives to labour immigration. In Italy asylum seekers can work after 60 days of their application. Although structural employment policies are rather weak, in the last years the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies has promoted several projects financed with EU funds to foster asylum seekers and migrant integration into the labour market by supporting their employability and providing internship opportunities.

[13] The relevant Act was proceeded in 2021 and entered into force in January 2022. These rules have not been adapted following the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In **Spain** too immigrants' incorporation takes place in a highly dualized labour market. In contrast to Spaniards, the foreign-born population is mostly concentrated in the secondary sector, in jobs with minimal educational requirements and low salaries. This explains why high unemployment rates (12.6% in 2022, 26.9% among those under 25) do not necessarily mean fewer demands for migrant workers. The specialization into certain job niches brings about acute occupational segregation, not only regarding the autochthonous population but also among workers of different origins. Informal employment (regardless of immigrants' legal status) is also a key feature of the Spanish labour market. As for asylum seekers, access to the labour market is guaranteed six months after their application. The state reception system for asylum seekers includes employment orientation courses. Employment offices are a regional domain, though their impact in terms of labour (re-)integration is rather low. As we will see, informal networks are key for matching workers and labour demands.

In general terms, most countries present important labour shortages (the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Germany, and Poland), which in Southern Europe are combined with the effects of a highly segmented labour market (Spain and Italy). Despite these labour demands, most countries present lower employment rates for immigrants. Barriers to employment are in the first place related to limitations of access to the labour market, particularly for asylum seekers in countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, and Austria. In contrast, in Belgium, Italy and Spain asylum seekers are allowed to work few months after their asylum application. In countries such as Austria and the Netherlands "active" integration (also into the labour market) is a requirement for keeping mainstream welfare benefits. At the same time, there seems to be a double tension, on the one hand, between fast integration into (the lower segments of) the labour market and more long-term integration goals (language acquisition, finding qualified jobs, social interactions) and, on the other, between dependence on welfare benefits and incentives to participate into the labour market. Employment can be a national competence (Sweden and Austria), a regional competence (Belgium, Spain) or a responsibility shared across different administrative levels (Germany, Italy).

3.2. Post-2014 migrants' access to **housing** (in selected SMsTRA)

3.2.1. Main challenges / obstacles

In **Sweden**, a general shortage of rental housing – which has been affecting most Swedish municipalities since at least the early 2010s – has been identified as the major barrier also in terms of post-2014 migrants' access to housing. In four of the six selected localities (all but SE-1 and SE-5) the local renting markets are highly competitive and thus inaccessible for most newcomers. Where housing is more affordable, it is often of rather low quality and/or overcrowded. Of the two localities with less competitive housing markets, one has been strongly affected by privatization (SE-1) while the other has a lot of public sector housing; both are characterized by high levels of segregation. Two of the localities with highly competitive housing markets, in turn, are less segregated and both have high shares of publicly owned housing. Residential segregation (which often follows ethnic lines) was highlighted as a barrier in all localities except the small town in Gävleborg (SE-4), and as particularly problematic in the medium-sized town in Jönköping (SE-3) and the rural municipality in Dalarna (SE-5). Many local actors see residential segregation not only as a problem in itself but also an obstacle for migrants' access to social networks, employment, and language attainment. Unlike in most other countries, interviewees hardly mentioned racism and discrimination as a significant barrier.

Similar to Sweden, the general lack of affordable housing due to a generally very tense and competitive housing market is seen as the major barrier that post-2014 migrants are facing in the **Netherlands**. This problem is particularly acute in two of the four selected localities (NL-1 and NL-2), where (recently) recognized refugees often must stay in initial reception centres for extended periods, until they can move to regular housing, which significantly delays their local integration process[14]. Interviewees across all four localities report significant levels of segregation, which partly reflects the spatial concentration of the social housing estates where many newcomers tend to live. This aspect is closely related to everyday racism and discrimination, which is mentioned by many interviewees across all localities. Compared to countries with less public housing (like Spain and Italy, but also Belgium), this barrier seems to be less significant because municipal housing departments and local housing corporations are less likely to openly discriminate than individual property owners, who in the NL play a comparatively smaller role for post-2014 migrants' access to housing. What housing corporations in all localities highlight as a challenge in relation to this target group is that they are often either large families (with more than five or six family members) or single men (often waiting for their family to arrive at a later stage) which makes it difficult to find a suitable apartment. An additional problem that was mentioned across all municipalities is the newcomers' lack of language skills, which complicates communication with municipal actors,

[14] On paper, municipalities have ten weeks to find appropriate accommodation; in practice it often takes much longer.

housing corporations, and neighbours and thereby hampers post-2014 migrants' more generally. There are relatively few notable differences between the four selected localities: The overall situation of the housing market appears to be more critical (particularly tense) in the West of the country (NL-1 and NL-3), whereas the two municipalities in the East (NL-2 and NL-4) had fewer problems meeting their target in terms of refugee housing. The localities also differ – if only slightly – in their share of social housing, which ranges from 21% in NL-4 to 32% in NL-3. The concrete challenges in relation to post-2014 migrants' housing access are overall very similar.

The most significant barriers that post-2014 migrants are facing in **Belgium** are the high rental and property prices, racial discrimination, and the lack of suitable housing for large families. Especially in two of the selected localities (BE-1 and BE-2) rental prizes are extremely high due to competition from people (incl. many EU migrants) working for higher wages across the border; and the rising demand for touristic/summer flats. Interviewees across all four localities also mentioned discrimination based either directly on ethnicity/origin, or via strict requirements in terms of income and job stability, which migrants and refugees often cannot fulfil. In all localities but especially BE-1 and BE-2, the general lack of social housing and therefore very long waiting lists are also seen as a significant barrier. Especially in locality BE-3, where housing is more readily available, it is often in very poor (substandard) conditions. But also in BE-2, for example, a large number of student flats that do not fulfil the quality standards are systematically rented to migrants and other poor residents. Similar to the Netherlands, many interviewees across all Belgian localities point out the lack of housing suitable for large families (in combination with strict health and safety standards). Especially in the medium-sized town in Wallonia (BE-3) also the lack of language proficiency is mentioned as an additional obstacle for many post-2014 migrants. Overall, it seems that in localities with a good economic situation (BE-1 and BE-2) the high prizes are the major problem, in the other (shrinking) localities it is the quality of available housing. In all but BE-1, local governments are tackling abuses on the housing market and investing in renovation; especially in BE-2 this is affecting the prize, effectively pushing people with low incomes (incl. migrants) out of the city.

The main barriers that post-2014 migrants face in **Austria** largely reflect those in other contexts: First of all, the very high rental prizes, especially in the two Tyrolean localities where prizes have recently increased quite dramatically, and partly due a rising demand for student (especially in AT-1) and tourist flats (in AT-1 and AT-2). Rents in locality AT-1 are by far the highest (at around €16/m2), followed by localities AT-2 and AT-3 (around €11/m2), whereas the average rent in locality AT-4 is around €8/m2. Especially in locality AT-1, but to a lesser degree also in AT-2 and AT-4, this is aggravated by the fact that available space (for new construction) is very limited, and the local housing market largely privatized (and public housing very difficult to access for newcomers in general). Private owners can charge so much during the tourist (winter) season that there is little incentive to rent out long-term. Compared to the other three localities there is relatively more supply in the small town (AT-3) but also that does not lead to easier access for post-2014 migrants. The latter has to do with a significant level of racial discrimination, which is often mentioned as a major barrier across all

selected localities. Discrimination is often openly expressed (and directed against specific groups and/or clearly based on skin-color), but sometimes also built into certain requirements, often justified in terms of potential problems with neighbours (many children, different cocking habits, etc.) or expected difficulties to pay the rent (especially if dependent on welfare benefits). Apart from these issues, several interviewees also mentioned language barriers, especially affecting those refugees who receive status quite quickly (e.g., Syrians) and thus spend less time in the reception system, so they do not have the necessary language skills to find a job and afford an apartment. Like in the NL, some local actors also highlighted a mismatch in terms of the size of standard apartments which are not large enough for migrant families with many children. Overall, and in spite of the significant difference in average rental prizes, the challenges faced by post-2014 migrants are very similar across all four localities.

Also in **Germany**, the main barrier in terms of housing access is the lack of affordable housing, as local actors in all but two localities (GE-1 and GE-6) explicitly highlighted. While this is an obstacle not just for post-2014 migrants, their lack of access to economic resources aggravates the problem. It is also very difficult for them (as newcomers) to access social housing (only in locality GE-1 there is sufficient supply of social housing), partly because people who at some point qualify can live there for decades or even pass the flats to their children. Interviewees across localities mention a certain mismatch between available housing and the needs of post-2014 migrants (esp. large flats for large families). An obstacle that specifically affects refugees has to do with their legal status and the lengthy (asylum) procedures, which force them to wait for years until they are allowed to search for their own flat. There is also significant racism and discrimination (in all six localities, but particularly often mentioned in GE-5), which follows a clear hierarchy based on skin-color. Residential segregation is also seen as limiting migrants' access to housing, especially in the two medium-sized towns (GE-3 and GE-5). Finding a flat in a 'migrant-friendly' neighbourhood is almost impossible. There are several differences between the six selected cases: Small towns (GE-1, GE-4) and rural areas (GE-2, GE-6) tend to have a higher share of private ownership and smaller rental housing stock. While most localities (all but GE-1 and GE-6) have tense housing markets, this has different reasons (e.g., strong demand for second/retirement homes in GE-2 and GE-5). Localities in the Eastern Part of Germany tend to have larger stocks of public housing, partly those built during the GDR period. Also the particular ownership structure in some localities seems to matter: In GE-3, most of housing stock is owned by one foreign private investor who does not invest much in the quality of the housing stock; In GE-1, large parts of the housing stock are owned by the municipal housing company and the relatively high vacancy rate allowed local policy makers to offer decentralized accommodation for refugees in which they can stay also beyond the end of their procedure, thus not being confronted with the challenges of finding their own flat. Where there is only a small stock of municipal housing (as in GE-2), refugees depend on the goodwill of individual private landlords for longer-term housing (beyond initial reception). In places with longer migration experience, the housing market proves to be more accessible for refugees, partly because there are more migrant owners.

The main barriers that post-2014 migrants face in **Poland** largely reflect those in other countries: In all selected localities, there is limited housing supply, which led to generally very high prices. Rental prices spiked after 2014, and during/since the pandemic grew by more than 12% every year, which allowed private house owners to become more and more selective. Public housing is generally scarce and practically inaccessible for foreigners, due to the language barrier, strict and difficult to fulfil requirements and complicated procedures. But also private landlords tend to set strict requirements (including a formal employment contract) and in most cases only speak Polish. While they are accustomed to tenants from traditional origin countries like Ukraine and Belarus, refugees from elsewhere face significantly more challenges, including racial discrimination. This intersects with significant difficulties obtaining residence and work permits, due to very slow procedures (and because applying for a temporary residence and work permit requires residential registration).

The main barriers that post-2014 migrants face in **Italy** are not exactly the same in all selected localities. In the northern towns Novara (IT-1) and Cuneo (IT-2), the main problem is the general lack of housing leading to very high prices, and significant residential segregation (especially in Novara, to a lesser extent also affecting Siracusa (IT-4)). The opposite is true for Avigliana (IT-3) and Caltagirone (IT-5), where housing is more readily available. Generally, the supply of affordable housing is larger in the south (Sicily), but this often goes together with very poor housing quality; in the Northern region of Piedmont, the demand/price is much higher and there is generally little supply/vacancy. An obstacle that was mentioned across all localities is the general lack of social housing. The usually very long waiting lists put newcomers automatically in a weaker position and in addition to that, most local welfare services lack the necessary knowledge, skills, and devices to support the access of migrants. In all six localities, post-2014 migrants face significant levels of discrimination (even where locals' attitudes are generally more positive, like in Avigliana and Siracusa), which is a mix of racism and mistrust (fear that migrants and especially refugees will not be able to pay the rent of provide financial guarantees), and particularly directed against families with children and single men (who are seen as unreliable and too mobile). Seasonal agricultural workers (who represent a large share of post-2014 migrants in Cuneo, Acate, and Siracusa) are in a particularly difficult position, because they face a lot of discrimination (both as foreigners and due to the short-term nature of their contracts) and their employers have no obligation to accommodate them (like foreign workers that are "brought to" Italy).

In **Spain**, as in most other countries, the most important problem identified by local actors in relation to post-2014 migrants is the (general) lack of affordable housing. It reflects both the insufficient supply of social housing (affecting all six localities) and the steep increase in rental prices, which in the case of foreigners intersects with other barriers (especially discrimination and legal/economic precariousness). In several localities (SP-2, SP-3, SP-4) there is also a lot of empty housing that owners are not interested in renting long-term due to strong demand for touristic and/or student flats (especially in the medium-sized town in Andalucía, SP-5). For refugees, the problem is often the transition from the formal reception system to independent housing. Migrants in general face significant levels of racism and racial discrimination on the

housing market, which was mentioned particularly often in the two Catalan localities (SP-1 and SP-3) and seems to follow a clear racial hierarchy based on skin-color (but also class). In Andalusia (localities SP-5 and SP-6), most interviewees did not perceive racism as a widespread phenomenon but one that affects specific groups, like young asylum seekers from sub-Saharan countries. A very tight housing market (particularly in localities SP-1, SP-3, and SP-5) is seen as conducive to discriminatory practices among property owners[15]. Discrimination often works indirectly, by real estate agencies or property owners setting hard-to-fulfil requirements in terms of minimum monthly income and job stability, which are much more difficult to fulfil for (especially recent) immigrants who seldom have permanent jobs nor can rely on a financial guarantor. There is a vicious cycle through which migrants' difficulties of finding adequate housing can increase prejudices and discrimination against them (e.g., because of overcrowding), which further increases their exclusion. The main differences between localities are in terms of the tightness of local housing markets (tightest in SP-1, SP-3 and SP-5) and the degree of residential segregation: relatively low in the rural locality (SP-4), two of the small towns (SP-2 and SP-6), and one of the medium-sized towns (SP-5); high/er in SP-1 and SP-3 (both in Catalonia).

Across all selected countries, a general shortage of affordable housing is the most common barrier. This is often due to increased demand for tourist, student, or other short-term accommodation and also affects non-migrants. It is a significant problem in the majority of localities and in those (relatively few) where housing is more readily available, it tends to be of poor quality. Closely related to this is the problem of residential segregation, which also affects many – especially the larger – localities in all countries, posing an obstacle not only in terms of migrants' housing access but also their integration more generally. Another issue that was frequently mentioned in several northern and central European countries (NL, BE, AT, GE) is a perceived mismatch in terms of the size of available apartments which are too small for migrant families with many children. Finally, racism and discrimination also significantly obstruct post-2014 migrants' access to housing (this was particularly often highlighted in the NL, AT, GE, IT and SP, not very often in SE, but this says little about the actual scale of the problem). Discriminatory practices are most explicit and widespread among private landlords and tend to intersect with limited supply allowing owners to be even more selective. In this way, a particularly tight housing market is conducive to discriminatory practices, which are often hidden behind "formal" requirements regarding income and employment.

[15] A real estate agent was aware that these practices violate anti-discrimination laws, but also noted that if he does not comply with the owners´ wishes "they just go to another agency, if we say we cannot have discriminatory practices" (SP-1-06).

3.2.2. Actors involved at the local level

In **Sweden**, the municipalities generally have very limited competences and capacities for generating policy or other measures in relation to post-2014 migrants' access to housing. While they cannot refuse to offer housing to recently arrived refugees and must organize family homes or residential care for unaccompanied minors, they have no responsibility or capacity to provide housing for asylum seekers (who are the responsibility of the Migration Agency) nor "long-term status holders", who are covered by mainstream social/welfare policies. Also other responsible actors are largely the same across the six localities: The national Migration Agency is responsible for the distribution and settlement of refugees, and thus frequently blamed for problems emanating from uneven settlement patterns (and uneven pace of allocations). At the local level, public housing companies (and sometimes the municipal planning board) play a crucial role in terms of housing supply, in collaboration with social services (but not specifically for migrants or refugees). Civil society and other non-public actors only get involved when there are concrete conflicts, e.g., regarding the prioritization of recently arrived refugees in local housing policy, or housing for unaccompanied youths (a particularly pressing issue in the rural municipality in Dalarna (SE-5)). Even in SE-3, where local civil society plays an unusually central role in the planning of integration activities overall, interviewees do not perceive churches, humanitarian, or other pro-refugee organizations as responsible for housing. Only in one locality (SE-1), there is a clear overall trend toward stronger involvement of private actors.

In **the Netherlands** – the country with the highest share of public housing in Europe – the role of (individual) private owners is considerably smaller than in most other countries under study. Municipalities, on the other hand, make annual performance agreements with local or regional housing corporations in order to fulfil their legal responsibility to provide housing for all recognized refugees allocated to them. Provincial governments are responsible for supervising this task and can intervene if municipalities recurringly fail to meet their target. A crucial role is played by the housing corporations: apart from finding and allocating adequate housing to refugees they are also responsible for making sure that these newcomers understand common rules of conviviality in the local community. More specific (individual) actors – including the housing corporations' social advisors, municipal neighbourhood-teams, or staff from local welfare organizations – play a role at the neighbourhood level, by providing practical support and resolving day-to-day problems. In term of relevant actors there is little variation between the four selected cases: The two (larger) localities in the West of the country (NL-1 and NL-3) work with two or more housing corporations, while municipalities B and D work (primarily) with one local housing corporation. Only in the medium-sized town

(NL-1) does the municipality also collaborate very closely with a local non-profit service provider to organize housing of refugees[16].

In **Belgium**, local governments have no specific responsibility for post-2014 migrants' access to housing and do little to facilitate it. What they are responsible for is the quality of housing and compliance with health & safety standards (in addition: L1 - locality also set up a service for urgent housing for people in need; L2 - the municipality has set up the Housing service which acts as a central agent in the area of housing mostly to do with housing quality inspections. A more important role, although also not specifically targeting migrants or refugees, is played by municipal social service departments: especially in the two Flemish localities (BE-2 and BE-4) there are dedicated teams supporting people in their search for housing. Across all four localities, social housing companies are responsible for the development and management of social housing. Civil society organisations seem to be more active in Wallonia (BE-1 and BE-3), although there is not much they can do given their limited resources and lack of competences. The involvement of real estate agencies, on which most people, incl. migrants and refugees, depend for finding housing, tends to aggravate discrimination because it allows owners to choose from a list of potential tenants. Overall, the set of local actors is very similar in BE-1 and BE-3 (both WAL), as well las in BE-2 and BE-4 (both FLA).

In **Austria**, the municipalities are important actors in terms of social housing, but they have no formal role or competence regarding the reception of asylum seekers. While their distribution across the nine regions/provinces follows a national quota system, their distribution within a province usually depends on housing availability and is negotiated directly between the provincial government and property owners/individual landlords, often without consultation of the municipalities concerned. In case of facilities owned by the federal government, the latter may also be involved. While municipalities do not have a formal role, they can still shape the local reception context and have some influence in how many refugees can be housed and where[17]. In all four localities, NGOs play a very central role especially the *Diakonie* (linked to the evangelical church, across all localities) and *Caritas* (linked to the Catholic church, mostly in Lower Austria). A notable difference between the two regions is that in Tyrol there is significant public actor involvement – in the Tyrolian localities (AT-1 and AT-2) the "Tyrolean Social Services" (TSD) - a publicly owned company, was specifically established (in 2015) for

[16] In NL-1 the NGO formally acts as the intermediary, it applies for and reacts to available houses on behalf of the applicant; NGOs involved in other localities have much less formalized roles.

[17] In locality AT-3, the initial policy was not to have larger accommodations, but to accommodate asylum seekers in smaller units. The mayor of the locality emphasizes the importance of refugees also being (equally) distributed throughout the city to avoid concentrations in certain neighbourhoods. In the rural area in Lower Austria (locality AT-4), the local government resisted the provincial governments' plan to accommodate 400 asylum seekers in military barracks, and instead offered a different facility with 100 places.

the accommodation and integration support of asylum seekers and until today is one of the most important actors in this field.

In **Germany** local administrations have the responsibility to provide accommodation for refugees only during the asylum procedure, and they have limited say in terms of where and how exactly this accommodation looks like[18]. Those whose claims have been recognized and who receive welfare benefits, become the responsibility of the Jobcentre**,** which grants social services including subsidized rent, and oversees rental arrangements (contracts can only be signed with their consent). Individual case workers can provide additional support in searching for a flat, if the local Jobcentre follows a case management approach (as they do in localities GE-5 and G-6). Apart from public institutions, pro-migrant groups and non-profit service providers are important intermediaries that provide crucial support in the process of finding a flat (across all localities except for GE-1). Private real estate companies are important intermediary actors, as well as potential gatekeepers, especially in localities that decided to accommodate asylum seekers de-centrally from the beginning, as was the case in GE-1 and GE-2. Even in localities where they own a significant share of the available housing, however, they tend to not feel responsible for the needs of post-2014 migrants and do not take any specific measures to facilitate their housing access.

In **Poland**, as in many other countries, local authorities are responsible for the management and distribution of social housing, but since there is enough social housing to even cover the demand of long-term residents, newcomers are effectively excluded. In all four localities, migrants' access to housing is thus entirely in the hands of private owners and real estate agents. Across all localities, a number of private citizens have started to act as intermediaries between local property owners and migrants, who they usually charge for their service. This is not the case for NGOs and other locals who sometimes offer places for refugees and migrants to stay for a short period to assist during emergency situations and avoid instances of homelessness. Last but not least, also migrants' personal and ethnic network play an important role in their search for accommodation. Especially in smaller towns, migrants mainly organize themselves via Facebook and other social media. Few differences are noted between the selected localities: Only in the rural localities (PL-2 and PL-4), where migrants work predominantly in factories, housing is sometimes arranged by the employer (dormitories or hostels provided to the employees and paid directly via small deductions from their salaries). In the two small towns (PL-1 and PL-3) individual private landlords play by far the biggest role, while also social housing is slightly more accessible/available than in rural areas.

[18] In the rural locality in Saxony (GE-6), for example, the mayor offered private apartments for initial reception of asylum seekers, but the responsible county officials instead decided to open a reception centre in the outskirts of the town, which lead to conflicts. The small town in North-Rhine-Westphalia (GE-4) offered to the regional government to open a primary reception centre in the locality in order to decrease the number of (recognized) refugees assigned to the locality's responsibility.

Also in **Italy**, municipalities are relevant actors primarily in relation to the management of social housing and because they have a duty to accommodate vulnerable local residents (including, for example, unaccompanied migrant children). In the Italian context, the willingness and level of involvement of municipalities regarding post-2014 migrants' access to housing clearly seems to depend on the local government's political orientation. In progressive localities they often either promote or participate as partners in project-based interventions (i.e., IT-2, IT-3 and IT-4), while in most conservative localities (i.e., IT-1, IT-5) they are marginal; Only the conservative locality IT-6 constitutes an exception to this rule. Another crucial role is played by professional and voluntary-based NGOs**,** which lobby local authorities or respond to housing needs of post-2014 by providing services and/or apartments either with their own resources or on behalf of the municipality. Interestingly, also NGOs' level of collaboration with local authorities is higher in progressive localities than in conservative ones, where NGOs are often alone in promoting initiatives to facilitate migrants' access to housing[19]. Across all selected localities there is hardly any initiative or support coming from private actors like real estate agencies (who rather tend to reproduce property owners' discrimination). There are however various other local people who act as intermediaries and thereby significantly facilitate access: In IT-1, this role is usually played by employers of small companies for their own workers. In IT-5, NGOs workers and volunteers systematically act as mediators with potential landlords; in IT-4, informal solutions based on trust-based personal networks of NGOs workers, activists, employers, or parishes are widespread and seen as the most effective solutions to find a house.

In **Spain**, the most important kind of actors in relation to post-2014 migrants' access to housing are NGOs and other civil society organizations. Across all selected localities, they play a key role as intermediaries between migrants and the private housing market: they garner trust and overcome misinformation and prejudices, and in some cases, they even formally rent property from public or private owners or act as a financial guarantor for migrants. Like in most other countries the role of local administrations is rather limited since it primarily concerns access to social housing (managed either by a housing department or, as in the case of locality SP-5, by a public company). Another important role is being attributed to migrants' own personal, ethnic, or family networks, which especially irregular migrants tend to fall back on (across all localities). Private actors, in contrast, play no significant role. Post-2014 migrants seldom rely on real estate agencies, which act as filters for private landlords, whose often racist preferences and stereotypes they help to reproduce[20]. Also private employers usually do not feel responsible for housing and only seem to get involved in very exceptional cases, usually when they need immigrants as workers. According to several interviewees, locality size

[19] In IT-5, for example, there is a close-knit network of professional and voluntary-based NGOs, but the conservative municipality offers little support.

[20] Other local actors, including civil society organizations, therefore perceive private agencies much more often as part of the problem rather than a potential solution.

matters in the sense convincing individual owners tends to be easier in smaller localities, where "contact is much more direct and personal, and people don't come to the agency ´X´ but they come to the person working in that agency, and that person is then the one who talks to the owners, who he also knows personally…" (SP-2-09).

In all selected countries, municipalities play a significant role in the area of housing, but not specifically for migrants and refugees. Local administrations are usually responsible for the provision of social housing (often together with regional authorities and local or regional housing companies/corporations), ensuring minimum housing standards (as in Belgium), and for accommodating specific categories of post-2014 migrants (e.g., "recently arrived refugees" and unaccompanied minors in Sweden; asylum seekers in Germany, or unaccompanied migrant children in Italy). Recognized refugees (either from the moment of recognition or after some transition period) fall under the remit of mainstream welfare departments. There is more variation regarding the role of NGOs, which play a comparatively minor role in northern European countries with well-developed public welfare systems (like Sweden and the Netherlands; in Belgium they seem to be more involved in Wallonia than Flanders); whereas their role is particularly fundamental in Spain and Italy but also in Austria (as intermediaries as well as service providers on behalf of public institutions). In addition, various private actors are involved: a very crucial role is played by private owners/landlords (somewhat less in countries with high share of public housing like NL). The same is true for real estate agencies, which tend to reproduce discrimination and generally do not feel responsible for post-2014 migrants. Especially in smaller towns and in the absence of formal support structures, migrants – especially those with irregular or precarious status – often rely on personal and/or ethnic networks (incl. via social media) (PL, IT, SP). In several cases, either private citizens or individual employers tend to provide temporary housing solutions.

3.2.3. Local policies, initiatives, and practices

Given the limited competences that local governments in **Sweden** have regarding post-2014 migrants' housing access, it is no surprise that few municipalities have enacted any specific policies aimed at facilitating this access. Rather, migrants and (recognized) refugees are subject to mainstream municipal housing policies. The only policy specifically targeting post-2014 migrants that has been enacted in half of the six selected municipalities (SE-1 between 2016 and 2019, SE-4 and SE-6) consists in separate housing quotas for recently arrived refugees, the only group for which local governments are responsible. While it would be possible for municipalities to provide additional access to housing for long-term status holders or asylum seekers, this is not common practice. The only more specific target group of local policies or initiatives are unaccompanied minors or care leavers: When they turn eighteen, they must apply for asylum as adults and can be accommodated in the migration agency's accommodation facilities, which often means they have to move to other municipalities, often in distant regions. To avoid this uprooting, many civil society actors and municipal governments (that of SE-5) collaborated to offer the possibility to self-settle through the *Own*

Housing Act. Such collaboration is usually initiated by civil society organizations. Several municipalities (SE-5, SE-6) have projects for public-civil society cooperation aimed at neighbourhood improvement and other issues (social cohesion, safety, community relations) not necessarily/explicitly linked to immigration but often targeting 'immigrant' neighbourhoods. Only in the medium-sized town in Jönköping (SE-3) does the municipality explicitly use housing and allocation policies for recently arrived refugees as a means to limit segregation. It is also the only locality in the sample that used the possibility of making exemptions from the *Own Housing Act* to restrict access to housing for particular groups of migrants in particular areas. The willingness and/or ability to take action seems to be linked to locality size as well as political leadership. Especially in rural localities (like SE-2) with relatively few recently arrived refugees allocated by the Migration Agency, local governments find it difficult to maintain sufficient funding to make larger investments in housing and related resources. In the small town in Gävleborg (SE-4), used to provide additional targeted services through its own integration unit, which was dismantled after the 2018 elections, following a decline in new allocations and thus funding for integration-related activities.

In **the Netherlands**, the (national) *Housing Act* of 2014 gives municipalities the responsibility to provide adequate housing for recognized refugees, whose access to housing is thereby guaranteed. Municipalities have the possibility to give refugees a 'priority treatment' over other groups eligible for social housing in order to meet their target (which is bi-annually defined by the national government). While three localities (NL-1, NL-2, NL-4) opted to use this priority regulation, the (conservative) government of municipality NL-3 recently decided to treat refugees 'like any other tenant' and not as urgent cases[21]. Local governments can also arrange various forms of temporary housing (in hotels, with host families, in containers, former office spaces etc.) to 'bridge' the time until more permanent housing is found. For example, the municipality in NL-1 runs a 'mixed housing project' where various target groups live together, including first-time renters, but also former unaccompanied minors and other groups that fall under 'social/youth care'. The same locality (NL-1) also fosters the construction of new social and affordable housing by making sure that with any new construction development, a minimum of 35% social housing must be built (N-A-14). Also other/smaller localities (NL-4) do respond to spatial segregation and growing tensions in particular neighbourhoods, for instance through local housing policies. In this rural municipality the local housing corporation also published a brochure explaining some of the important rules on 'how to live' in the Netherlands (for instance, with regards to hanging the 'right' type and length of curtains, following the 'correct' ventilation habits and keeping the garden tidy).

In **Belgium**, housing policy is generally a regional competence, and there are hardly any policies or measures targeting migrants or refugees specifically. In response to the general

[21] However, with regards to the actual implementation of this municipal decision, a representative of a local housing corporation specified that they do have some leeway in finding accommodation for refugees.

housing crisis, the Flemish government introduced a rental bonus for households that have been on the waiting list for social housing for more than five years (in principle, recognized refugees are also eligible). The Walloon Government has introduced a tax advantage for mortgage loans called the "Chèque Habitat", which benefits individuals with a very low income and in need of help to buy their first home (less relevant for most refugees). At the local level, hardly any policy, measure or initiative has been identified that specifically targets migrants or refugees. For example, none of the four localities studied have taken steps to start their own local accommodation initiative (LAI)[22], and municipal housing offices generally have no specific services for migrants or refugees. There are, however, several mainstream local measures that also benefit post-2014 migrants: In the Flemish medium-sized town (BE-2), the municipality offers an additional housing bonus from the second year on the waiting list, and until they qualify for the Flemish housing subsidy, as well as a service to help socially vulnerable people (homeless people, refugees, people with poor housing conditions) in their search for rented accommodation (trough “coaching” and mediation by so-called “housing buddies” for newcomers to the city). Most of the selected localities also take measures to improve housing quality, including incentives for owners to renovate their property, as well as intensified control of health & safety standards. In several cases, this has contributed to even higher prizes and gentrification, with exclusionary effects particularly for irregular migrants. Providing better housing quality in the city can thus, indirectly, become a means to reduce migrant arrivals or longer-term settlement. The only local measures taken specifically to facilitate migrants’ access to housing are related to discrimination. One of the two medium-sized towns in the sample implemented systematic correspondence tests (BE-2), the other one (BE-3) initiated targeted information and awareness raising campaigns to counter discrimination of ethnic minorities on the housing market. Migrants and refugees are also among the target group of local projects addressing homelessness, which interviewees (especially in BE-3) described as a significant problem in relation to housing. In the context of social housing (and only in Flanders) migrant communities are targeted in the sense that they must fulfil additional “integration” requirements (language) and undergo screenings (of whether they own property in their country of citizenship), which further complicates (rather than facilitating) their access to social housing.

In Austria, no formal (public) policies could be identified that specifically aim to facilitate or increase access to housing for post-2014 migrants (beyond the refugee reception system). Municipal (social) housing is generally not used as a policy instrument, partly because the number of vacant apartments that could be provided to refugees are limited, partly because of fear of political repercussions of being seen as prioritizing refugees over other residents. In order to even register for municipal housing, applicants must prove continuous residence of between three and five years in the locality. Since the time spent in asylum accommodation

[22] It should be noted, however, that with the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, a more systematic housing response has been initiated at the local level.

(within the same municipality) is taken into account, asylum seekers whose procedures take longer can have a better chance of getting a municipal housing unit than those to whom protection is granted very quickly. Only in the Tyrolean medium-sized town (AT-1) has the allocation of (undesired) public housing units to refugees been explicitly mentioned as a (more or less informal) way of facilitating migrants' access to social housing[23]. In one of the rural localities (AT-4), initial concerns among the local population have been reduced by the (conservative) mayor's strong and explicit commitment and through public information events. In all localities, civil society organizations (such as *Diakonie*, *Caritas*) and the TSD (in Tyrol) are very active and take initiative in order to fill this gap, e.g., by providing starter apartments, giving information about access to subsidized housing, and acting as intermediaries with landlords. Even in rural areas, NGO-run legal counselling services tend to include housing information specifically for migrants and refugees. In more isolated instances, private individuals are also taking action to facilitate access to housing for refugees[24]. Some of the differences between the selected localities can be explained by their size: The capacities to develop housing policies beyond initial reception vary between localities, with the two larger municipalities (locality AT-1 and AT-3) having more capacity to respond to challenges. More specifically, many specific services – like emergency housing programs for victims of domestic violence or other emergency situations, homeless persons or unaccompanied minors exist in the small and medium sized towns (locality AT-1 and AT-3), but not in the two rural localities (locality AT-2 and AT-4).

Although housing is a significant problem in **Germany** – not only for post-2014 migrants but also other disadvantaged groups – the responses by local policy makers are few and of limited scope. All localities, except for GE-1, engage in new building activities but at a rather small scale and not necessarily targeting low-income residents. In GE-4, for example, the municipality aims to build 80 new housing units per year but with only 20% social housing. No formal measures and few informal steps have been taken in relation to housing access of refugees more specifically: Especially in localities with a high share of single private owners (GE-2 and GE-4), searching for accommodation and convincing owners to "take" refugees has become one of the central tasks of local integration coordinators and migrant counselling services. In reaction to conflicts between locals and post-2014 migrants, some public

[23] "We try to help with accommodation. We have apartments that are rejected several times by the locals. Either the size does not fit etc. From the 1960s there are even larger apartments available, which cost between €1.000-1.200. They are about 120m2 in size. These apartments are usually not preferred because people do not need such large apartments, or the rent is too high. If an apartment is often rejected, we have the opportunity to allocate these apartments freely. We give these apartments to the refugees because they can afford the rent through the state social benefits. In this way, we can create living space for the refugees in this way without breaking the rules" (AT-1-11).

[24] For example: One apartment building owner in the medium-sized town in Tyrol (AT-1) explicitly rents five out of six of her apartments to post-2014 migrants. In locality AT-3, some private individuals provided temporary accommodation for asylum seekers and (recently) recognized refugees (for some time during 2015/16, but that is not happening anymore).

education providers offer "renter classes" to inform newcomers about existing rules of conviviality and issue a "renter certificate" for participants to prove their knowledge to potential landlords. Given the difficulty of accessing the regular housing market, a provider of (shared) asylum accommodation in GE-5 adapted the accommodation for longer-term stays, e.g., by giving families more space and privacy. Importantly, some measures taken by local authorities or other public entities have rather exclusionary effects: The biggest municipal housing company in the medium-sized town in East Germany (GE-5) established the informal practice to grant rental contracts only to persons with a residence status of three years or longer, while the local immigration authority usually issues residence permits for only one year. In the absence of specific local (public) policies facilitating post-2014 migrants' access to housing, it is mostly through civil society and private citizen initiatives that the issue is being addressed. In all six localities there are (or were) groups of volunteers who accompany refugees to their first appointment with a possible landlord, not only to overcome language barriers but also as a measure against discrimination. Such initiatives and practices tend to respond to the local situation and thus differ between localities, also in terms of their composition. For example, in GE-6, there exists a cooperation of local volunteers, town authorities, county authorities and the public housing provider to offer private flats to refugees on a long-term basis.

Of all included countries **Poland** stands out in the sense that nothing seems to be done locally in order to facilitate post-2014 migrants' access to housing: In none of the four selected localities could any local policy, measure or initiative by identified that would be specifically related to housing for migrants or refugees. Local policymakers generally did not even perceive housing as part of integration/policy[25]. Mainstream public housing is not seen as a policy for migrants and if migrants a mentioned at all as the target of public policies it is (temporary) labour migrants, but not refugees.

The policy and other responses in the six selected **Italian** localities have been varied: In three of them (IT-2, IT-4, IT-5), the municipality-initiated SAI reception projects in cooperation with local NGOs (in the case of IT-2 also in collaboration with real estate agencies). In most localities temporary/transition housing, usually in shared apartments, was provided by various for post-2014 migrants leaving the reception system, either through the local SAI reception project or, in the case of Cuneo and Avigliana (IT-1 and IT-3), through other NGO-led initiatives. Such initiatives/efforts are missing in localities where migrants do not stay beyond reception (as in Caltagirone). Two more specific target groups are relevant in the Italian context: unaccompanied foreign minors (and care leavers) and temporary/seasonal agricultural workers. Specific measures for the former group that go beyond their reception (generally until the age of 21) have been developed in Novara (IT-1), Avigliana (IT-3), Siracusa (IT-4) and

[25] As the mayor of one of the localities mentioned: "We do not see the need to build any housing-oriented integration strategy. Migrants benefit from commercial rent. We feel that we should create activities aimed at integrating migrants into the local community, but this does not apply to accommodation" (PL-1-01).

Caltagirone (IT-5), where they make up a significant share of post-2014 migrants. The same is true for (seasonal) agricultural workers in the case of Cuneo (IT-2), Siracusa (IT-4), and Acate (IT-6), where they are seen as crucial for the local economy and specific measures have been taken to prevent homelessness and irregular encampments. Notably, (only) in the conservative locality Acate, this has been framed as a measure of public order rather than integration. An important factor explaining the differences thus seems to be the political orientation of the local government: in conservative localities (with the exception of Acate), NGOs are the only actors working on post-2014 migrants' accommodation (mainly on an informal basis), whereas in progressive localities NGOs generally work in partnership with local authorities.

When local actors in **Spain** are asked what is being done in order to facilitate post-2014 migrants´ access to housing, many point to social housing, as a mainstream measure that can contribute to a better integration of immigrants. Across all six localities, local administrations are very keen not to be seen as providing specific support for immigrants only (even if such measures are implemented via NGOs). Instead, they try to address migrants' housing problems through measures designed for all residents. Some of these mainstream measures, like those taken in several localities to increase the quality of available housing (like stricter rules or intensified control), can thereby have adversary effects for migrants, especially those with no or precarious legal status. In none of the six localities has there been any formal local policy (in relation to housing) designed specifically for (post-2014) migrants or other specific groups like asylum seekers[26]. The only exception are (rather limited) measures taken in some of the selected municipalities, like the small town in Catalonia (SP-1), to address the problem of racist discrimination. Two specific groups were identified by local actors as particularly difficult to support in their search for adequate housing: rejected asylum seekers (in all localities apart from SP-5, where their number is very small and employment opportunities extremely limited), and unaccompanied foreign minors/care-leavers, who make up a significant share of the homeless populations in the two medium-sized towns (SP-3 and SP-5). Given their precarious legal status, support is usually temporary and provided through NGOs.

There are generally very few local policies or other measures taken to facilitate post-2014 migrants' access to housing[27]. In most countries, the issue is instead being addressed through mainstream municipal housing policies. Exceptions are Sweden, where three (of six) selected municipalities established separate housing quotas for recently arrived refugees; and the Netherlands, where three (of four) municipalities are giving recognized refugees priority in accessing social housing. In both cases this is done because municipalities have a statutory

[26] Many respondents described the lack of such targeted policies as the result of a conscious decision taken in order to avoid (or at least not enhance) negative sentiments among the local population towards immigrants.

[27] Rather than migrant or refugee-specific policies, existing measures tend to focus on more specific target groups like unaccompanied minors and/or care leavers (in SE, IT, SP), temporary/seasonal agricultural workers (in some IT localities), and rejected asylum seekers (in some SP localities).

responsibility for these groups, and independent of political leadership. Only in Flanders (BE), there are formal "integration" requirements imposed on migrants and refugees wanting to access social housing. Apart from social/subsidized housing policy, there are projects aimed at neighbourhood improvement (social cohesion, safety, community relations, or homelessness) that are usually not explicitly linked to immigration but often targeting 'immigrant' neighbourhoods. Similarly, various local actors (in NL, GE, SP) mentioned information or education campaigns (regarding rules of conviviality, etc.) that more or less explicitly target foreigners. The only local measures taken explicitly to facilitate migrants' access to housing are related to discrimination (e.g., in BE, SP) and thus barely make up for disadvantages that (only) they face. Importantly, some mainstream measures, like those taken in several countries to increase the quality of available housing through stricter rules or intensified control, have adversary effects for migrants, especially those with no or precarious legal status. In several countries (AT, GE, IT, SP, PL) NGOs (or volunteer groups, or individual citizens) have taken initiatives to fill the gap in public provision, e.g., by providing starter apartments, providing information and counselling, and acting as intermediaries with landlords.

3.3. Post-2014 migrants' access to **employment** (in selected SMsTRA)

3.3.1. Main challenges / obstacles

In **Sweden** most interviewees point to two main problems vis-à-vis post-2014 migrants' access to employment: the reorganization of the Public Employment Service and the insufficiency of established language training programs. While the interviewees generally place the blame for insufficient language acquisition on the rigidity of the Swedish system for adult education, the reorganization of the public employment service is more complex, entailing both a decrease in the agency's resources and staffing, and cutbacks to the number of local offices. In practice, this has meant that migrants have greatly reduced access to personal contacts, and that the time that migrants must wait between interventions has increased. Interviewees also point to more general issues such as the lack of low-skilled jobs (related to the lack of labour market differentiation) and, to some extent, discriminatory hiring practices. Lax requirements on the migrants (as social welfare beneficiaries) and problems validating international diplomas are occasionally mentioned. The Swedish report does not show significant differences across localities. Despite important differences in their labour markets (in terms of private/public balance, economic sectors, and kind of employers), the main obstacles seem to be nationwide.

The **Dutch** report mentions different sets of barriers. At the individual level, the lack of language skills, the non-recognition of previous work experience and educational qualifications, cultural differences, and other aspects such as age, gender and employment level seem to be key. While well educated people seem to integrate easier, they may find harder to find a job that corresponds with their education and skills, thus sometimes refusing to start working and therefore finding employment later than those accepting jobs in the low-skilled sector. At the macro-economic level, national legislation is also identified as a barrier: the Participation Act pushes people to be self-reliant, which leaves them little choice or control over their own integration trajectory. The fact that asylum seekers are not allowed to work does also go against their (labour) integration. Barriers seem to be higher in contexts with limited job opportunities (such as in locality D), where employers may be more hesitant to hire refugees because of the investment in language learning and paperwork. Voluntary work may also become a trap, as employers may not be willing to pay equal salary for the same work and workers may be reluctant to take a "real" work but with worse conditions. Finally, at the societal level, the report also refers to discrimination, though it is often mentioned by respondents at the national level (for instance, by trade union representatives) rather than by local respondents.

In **Belgium** the inequalities that post-2014 migrants face in the labour market are particularly large. This is specially reflected by a high unemployment rate of non-EU migrants. At the national level, different studies refer to individual migrant specific factors, such as language competencies, educational level, and social network as key explanatory factors. Studies also mention more structural factors, including the segmented nature of the Belgium labour

market, its low demand for low-skilled workers, the difficult recognition of foreign qualifications and discrimination. These same barriers are also mentioned in the four selected municipalities. Though national legislation is not explicitly mentioned, different interviewees also observe that access to the labour market during the asylum procedure often proves difficult because of the provisional and precarious residence status. Interestingly, bad public transport (BE1, Type A) and the lack of social networks (BE4, Type D) are only mentioned in the two small towns. Despite all these barriers, here as well employers seem to play a crucial role in elevating or overcoming obstacles (e.g., language skills requirements) depending on labour demands (mentioned in BE1, BE2 and BE4, Type A, B and D). As one interviewee put it: "I have the feeling that our people find it much easier to find a job when the need is high. At this point, their Dutch doesn't have to be perfect if they can get around in another language" (B-4-13).

The **Austrian** report points to the legal status as one of the main barriers. Despite important labour shortages, asylum seekers have only access to seasonal and self-employed work (after a long bureaucratic paperwork) and since 2018 cannot do an apprenticeship. This means that in case of long asylum procedures, individuals are kept inactive for a long time. Since 2016 initial asylum protection is only granted for three years, which causes uncertainties among employers and therefore acts as well as a potential barrier to employment. As in the rest of the countries, interviewees also mention other barriers such as language skills, lack of recognition of foreign qualifications, gender specific issues (e.g., excluding mothers in practice), (work) cultural differences and discrimination. As for the Dutch and Belgian cases, labour shortages seem to have reduced employers' reluctance to hire refugees. Finally, two other issues appear as well in the Austrian case. First, as in the Netherlands, highly educated refugees face more difficulties to find a qualified job. Access to vocational professions seems to be much easier. Second, as also mentioned in the Swedish and Dutch cases, welfare benefits may sometimes end up having a countereffect on refugees' incorporation into the labour market.

In **Germany** there seems to be important differences between localities with important labour demands and localities with a lack of, which would lead refugees to leave the town after 3 years. In addition, the report points to similar barriers as in the rest of the countries. At the individual level, reduced language skills and lack of certificates are seen as highly problematic. Knowledge of German is more important in smaller companies and rural areas, where they lack English knowledge and time and manpower to include people with little language skills. In contrast, bigger companies have international staff and tend to rely on a greater division of labour. Previous certificates are not easily acknowledged, also due to local trade unions being proud of and therefore protecting their vocational training system. When certificates are not required (e.g., agriculture, gastronomy, and logistics), access to the labour market is not extremely difficult. Legal constraints appear as well as a major barrier. Long procedures and precarious legal status are seen by employers as highly problematic. The report also mentions discrimination and xenophobic attitudes, cultural differences (particularly vis-à-vis Muslims), lack of preference for women and workers older than 50 and poor public transport (in G1 and

G2). Finally, one of the interviewees sees the Jobcentre as the "biggest obstacle" since it makes "people dependent" and fails to take serious peoples' own aspirations and ideas.

In **Poland**, for those migrants with a work permit or with access to the labour market without the need of a work permit (citizens from Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine) barriers to employment are relatively low. The question is not so much accessing employment but rather doing this in proper labour conditions. In this case, language barriers may lead to underemployment. The report also mentions important labour segregation and discrimination, particularly in big cities where the anti-migration movement is stronger and well organized. In contrast to Germany, experience with diversity seem to hinder (rather than foster) migrants' integration. Exploitation at work and gender biased attitudes were also mentioned by interviewees.

In **Italy** migrants arriving after 2014 generally manage to find jobs by occupying the positions left empty by those who arrived before them and have improved their situation. In this regard, here again the question is not so much about accessing employment but rather about labour conditions. Labour exploitation and informality seem to be more common in logistics, agriculture and hospitality than in construction or manufacturing. Undeclared work is also more widespread in the South than in the North, where work contracts tend to be registered but with lower working hours. Most interviewees point to discrimination as one of the main challenges, which seems to be higher against black people and when tasks are performed in private houses. Not having a car, having low skills, not speaking the language and being a woman with children are also perceived as possible obstacles. A precarious legal status, subject to renewal, can also have a deterrent effect among employers. As we have seen in other countries, the higher the labour demands in a locality are, the lower the barriers to access employment become. Interestingly, the Italian report points to another relation: in small localities with low labour demands, social networks become fundamental to match labour demand and supply and therefore foster migrants' access to employment.

In **Spain** post-2014 immigrants are not excluded from the local labour market but, as in Italy and Poland, channelled into very specific (low-paid) segments. Here again barriers to the labour market depend on labour demands: the higher the labour demands, the lower the barriers. Legal status is one of the major barriers, not only for irregular migrants but also for those migrants (including asylum seekers) with precarious residence permits. Interviewees also mention racism and discrimination, though in a lesser extent than with regard to access to housing. Lack of language skills (also in the regional languages), lack of knowledge of the internal workings of the local labor market and lack of personal networks are also perceived as important barriers. Finally, other barriers mentioned are the lack of recognition of previous education and training and migrants' religious beliefs and traditions.

To sum up, structural factors seem to be key to limit or foster access to employment. In all selected countries, the higher the labour demands in a locality, the lower the barriers to access employment. Whether these labour demands are for low or high skilled jobs is also important for understanding access in practice. Indeed, in countries such as Belgium and Sweden the low

demand for low-skilled workers hinders immigrants' employability. Public transport seems to be particularly relevant in small towns and rural areas. Legal-political barriers are also mentioned across all reports. These have to do with limitations to work for asylum seekers (particularly in NL, AT, SE) and long procedures and precarious legal status, which are seen by employers as highly problematic. Non-recognition of educational qualifications is also very problematic, particularly for high-skilled migrants. Individual factors also play a fundamental role in explaining migrants' access to employment, particularly with regard to language skills and educational levels. Finally, the societal dimension, including discriminatory hiring practices, cultural differences, and lack of social networks, appears across all cases. In the Italian case, social networkers seem to be particularly relevant in small towns with low labour demands.

3.3.2. Actors involved

In **Sweden** the national level is the prominent one, with the Public Employment Service as the most important actor for providing migrants with access to employment. In this context, municipalities develop complementary programs. While some have set up comprehensive programs to support the Public Employment Service's introduction program (SE-1 and SE-5), others rely primarily on general labour market policies. Despite significant differences, all municipalities provide some type of additional service to migrants (with or without vocational tracks) and, possibly, additional support for language training. Interestingly, interviewees did not mention employers or industries (private or public) as key actors to facilitate labour market access, though their discriminatory hiring practices were pointed out as possible barriers. While most interviewees place the main responsibility on public agencies, some concede that employment is ultimately dependent on informal market contacts, either by street-level bureaucrats, members of civil society organizations or personal contacts.

In the **Netherlands** each of the 35 "labour market regions" has a public Employers Service Point (WSP), a collaboration of municipalities, the Employee Insurance Agency, educational institutions, knowledge centres and other parties. The overall goal of the WSP is to help jobseekers who are not immediately employable, such as welfare recipients, older unemployed persons, jobseekers with a disability and refugees. In the four selected localities the regional WSP is part of the structures in place to support recognized refugees, but its role differs with different degrees of outsourcing to external providers and commitment by the municipality. In NL-1 a non-profit service provider for integration supporting refugees during their civic integration trajectory provides language courses and assistance with labour market integration, in coordination with the WSP and the municipality. There is as well a national social corporation with a focus on labour market integration. In NL-2 labour integration is done by a regional (semi-public) service provider which is part of the regional WSP and supports all residents who receive welfare benefits. In NL-3 part of the work is done from the municipality, in coordination with the regional WSP and in NL-4 (the only rural area) the responsibility is taken primarily "in-house" with the WSP having a more marginal role.

In **Belgium** social benefits are provided by the National Office for Employment while access to the labour market is the responsibility of regional offices (VDAB in Flanders and FOREM in Wallonia). Regarding integration, while Wallonia keeps it a regional competence, Flanders decentralized it to the local level. This implies that in the two Flemish localities (BE-2 and BE-4) local governments, in coordination with the regional VDAB, are also key actors in migrants' labour integration. In the four selected localities civil society actors have also developed concrete measures to assist people excluded (including refugees) from the labour market.

In **Austria** labour market policy is a national domain, with the Public Employment Service (AMS) responsible for its implementation with a federal structure including nine provincial offices and regional branches located in district capitals. While job seekers and unemployed need to go to the corresponding regional offices, labour market programs and services are more decentralized through the outsourcing to third-sector providers. The provision of language courses is the responsibility of the Austrian Integration Fund, but it is up to the welfare authorities to monitor "integration" and apply financial sanctions in case of non-compliance. Across the selected localities, interviewees reported employers' interest in hiring refugees despite the current limitations (vis-à-vis asylum seekers and apprentices under the age of 25). It is thus no surprise that regional branches of business chambers advise their members on the employment of refugees. In the two rural localities, civil society organizations were also mentioned as key actors involved in supporting access to employment.

In **Germany** public institutions, private actors, NGOs and civil society organizations are active in the field of labour market integration. The most prominent public institutions are the local Jobcentres, that support all unemployed through counselling and programs to get to know the labour market. The IQ network, constituted by non-profit service providers funded by the nation state level, is also key for the acknowledgement of foreign certificates. Local coordinators for educational integration or for integration are also key in migrants' labour market integration. Interviewees also mention the key role of local companies. While some have developed special programs and internships, others have been reluctant to employ refugees. The position of trade unions can be described as ambivalent: while international solidarity is one of their core principles, there have been fears that incoming migrants might take jobs and decrease labour and wage standards. NGOs and non-profit service providers are key, first as the main executive agencies of federal and regional programs and second as those actors assessing the situation on the ground and developing programs in line, often in cooperation with public institutions. Finally, private persons (volunteers or personal contacts) play a major role in accessing the labour market. In terms of differences across localities, it has to be mentioned that integration is a voluntary administrative task of German municipalities that is not per se part of the municipal budget. Thus, the existence of programs depends on the active engagement of local actors to apply for funding by the regional, national or EU levels. Obstacles to apply for funding from a higher level are lack of information, knowledge of funds and lacking resources (staff and time) to engage in the application process. This especially applies to small localities.

In **Poland** the main actors involved are private employment agencies and "poviats", i.e., the local administration for employment where employers process the papers for their employees. In sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture and construction, private employment agencies are the biggest employers. Migrant networks are key to find employment, particularly in the case of circular migration.

In **Italy** employment is a regional competence, thus municipalities play a rather marginal role either as leaders or partners in projects with NGOs where employment measures are delivered alongside other types of interventions. Regional Public Employment Agencies are the main tool of intervention, providing labour market orientation and keeping track of recruitments while playing an extremely marginal role in matching labour supply and demand. When labour demand is higher, employers seem to use all the available channels for recruitment, including these Public Employment Agencies. Otherwise, they tend to rely on informal networks as Public Employment Agencies are often seen as rather inefficient. Non-profit services for work also play a crucial role. These include from Catholic organizations to training agencies and social cooperatives. These organizations tend to look for enterprises available to give chances to weaker social categories rather than being reached out by employers in search of candidates. For-profit services for work, i.e. (temporary) employment agencies, intermediate the largest quota of non-skilled work. While they act as brokers in the job hunt phase, trade unions are active in upholding the rights of those migrants already employed through advocacy campaigns and administrative services. Trade unions are particularly prominent in the selected localities in Sicily and increasingly in the Piemontese localities. Finally, ethnic networks and native-born residents appear as key channels for post-2014 migrants to seek jobs. The importance of ethnic networks seems to further increase in conservative localities, where policies are weaker and local actors less active. The role of native-born seems to be more important when labour demands are lower, and the various channels of recruitment are not under stress. The fact that native brokers rely on their trust-based personal networks seems also to contribute to limiting the likelihood of segregation and exploitation.

In **Spain**, like in relation to (public) housing, the regional administration plays a central role in the sphere of employment. At the level of municipalities, where regional programs are being implemented, many different actors work together, including different administrations, third sector and employers. Public and private actors thereby often fulfil complementary roles. In all selected localities, NGOs and other third sector organizations play an important role as intermediaries, either between migrants (as jobseekers) and public (employment) services), or directly between migrants (as potential workers) and local companies/employers. The willingness of employers to engage with NGOs in order to help newcomers' access the labour market clearly seems to depend on the economic situation, thus depending on supply and demand (or/for workers). In contrast to NGOs, trade unions tend to feel much less responsible for (and able to help with) post-2014 migrants' access to employment than regarding their (precarious) labour conditions. Local employers may actively contribute to limiting migrants'

possibilities to sustain their livelihoods, for instance when mobilizing against (irregular) street vending.

To sum up, in most of the selected countries employment is a regional competence (NL, BE, GE, IT and SP). Only in Sweden and Austria it is kept at the national level. The only country which does not seem to have active employment policies for immigrants is Poland. As employment is either a regional or national competence, municipalities play a rather marginal role. However, there are some exceptions, e.g., in the Netherlands where municipalities implement the *Participation Act* and thus foster the labour participation of welfare beneficiaries or in Flanders where responsibilities are decentralized at the local level. In the rest of the countries, the existence of local policies or measures depends in practice on the engagement of particular policymakers and other local actors. In Germany, for instance, as this engagement depends on access to information, knowledge of funds and resources (staff and time), small localities seem to be less capable to do so. In all selected cases non-profit service providers are key in the execution of national or regional programs. NGOs and civil society organizations set up complementary services, also for those who may be excluded from national or regional policies. The level of outsourcing to non-profit service providers varies across localities. For instance, in the Netherlands only in the rural area responsibility is taken primarily "in-house". In contrast, in Austria civil society organizations were only mentioned in the two rural localities. Profit-service providers, i.e. (temporary) employment agencies, seem to be particularly relevant in Poland and Italy. Finally, trade unions seem to have a more central role in Italy and Spain, particularly denouncing and working against their (precarious) labour conditions. Informal networks seem to be particularly important in Poland, Italy and Spain.

3.3.3. Local policies, initiatives, and practices

In **Sweden** all municipalities provide some type of additional service to migrants. What varies across municipalities is whether these complementary programs are only about language acquisition or also include labour-oriented measures, such as counselling, labour market matching, and vocational tracks; whether these are implemented by one department or transversally across different departments; and whether they target specifically recently arrived refugees or these are included in broader programs that either target long-term unemployed or specific neighbourhoods. Interestingly, more comprehensive labour market orientation in refugees' reception occur in the two municipalities where the conservative party is either governing as majority leaders (SE-1) or as part of the ruling coalition (SE-5). In the case of SE-1, active labour market integration, civic orientation courses, and progress in language attainment are part of a locally specific "integration duty", which is a condition for migrants' access to income support. In SE-2 (rural), SE-4 (small) and SE-6 (medium-sized) the municipal government shut down migrant-specific services due to the declining size of the target group.

In the **Netherlands** municipalities collaborate with various regional and local actors to facilitate access to the labour market. Once refugees are registered in a municipality, they receive social welfare benefits, which means that they fall under the national Participation Act. Under this framework, refugees are treated as "regular persons" with a distance to the labour market. None of the four selected localities has a targeted integration policy. Respondents argue that local governments have a limited role in this policy domain (NL-2, NL-3, and NL-4) and refer to the reducing number of refugees in their localities. Furthermore, municipalities also justify their mainstream approach by referring to the fact that integration is being closely interrelated with other policy areas such as work, care, or social policies. As exception, NL-1 (medium size, with a coalition of a progressive and conservative party but with a progressive politician as a responsible for integration) has continuously channelled funds under the Participation Act towards the main non-profit service provider for integration to offer a more tailed approach to refugees. It is also the only municipality which has designed an "Inclusive City Policy" and an "Anti-discrimination Agenda".

In **Belgium** local policies depend on different regional approaches. In **Wallonia**, a general colour-blind approach and no local competences in the field explain why in municipalities BE-1 and BE-3 migrants are not explicitly mentioned or included in employment policies. Civil society organizations working on labour market integration defend the importance of not targeting migrants in specific as a way to overcome discrimination. Regional offices do provide some customized assistance for migrants (4 hours of socio-professional integration) and assist employers in creating inclusive work environments. In contrast, in **Flanders**, with a more colour-conscious approach and with local governments having been given the "coordinating role" on migrant integration (including integration subsidies), both localities have set up specific policies for post-2014 migrants as well as for specific categories, such as young migrants, migrant women or highly educated migrants.

In **Austria** integration policy measures with a focus on employment were available in AT-1 and AT-3 (the two larger localities in the sample, AT-1 with a mixed government and AT-3 with a progressive government) and only partially in AT-2 and AT-4 (both rural and conservative), where these were discontinued after the number of humanitarian migrants declined. While AT-1 puts the focus on fast transition into the labour market (but often short term, towards low-skilled positions independently of previous qualifications), AT-2 (rural area in Tyrol) and AT-4 (rural area in Lower Austria) give priority to support by volunteers, the role of NGOs and "community work" by asylum seekers as a form of labour integration. Targeted measures define different targeted groups depending on the residence title (humanitarian migrants), benefit receipt (those refugees drawing on minimum income), socio-economic characteristics (young migrants, women) or qualification (counselling desks for those with formal qualifications acquired abroad).

In **Germany** the implementation of integration courses, defined at the national level, is in the hands of municipalities. Since 2015 Jobcentres set up special teams for refugees' labour market integration, which were jointly funded and developed by the national and local levels.

Matching events are organized by Jobcentres, policymakers, and employers' organizations. In GE-5, where there were hardly any local companies at the first matching event, the Jobcentre offered intercultural trainings for employers to reduce prejudices against post-2014 migrants. Jobcentres are also involved in local programs for post-2014 migrants to "get to know the German labour market", for instance through internship programs. Actors from the private business sector also actively engaged to support post-2014 migrants' access to the labour market, for instance by employing refugees or by supporting them in post-qualification while working. NGOs and civil society organizations (pro-migrant groups) also organize countless activities. Though asylum seekers are allowed to work after three months after arrival, they are not included in the Jobcentre's services. This was highly criticized by members of the local Jobcentres who deem this practice unfair and as an obstacle to long term integration. As in Austria, there are programs that target specific groups, e.g., migrant women, young people, or middle-aged men.

In **Poland** none of the 4 localities has explicitly formulated integration strategies. All interviewees coincide to point out that there is no need to support economic migrants. Therefore, actions taken by local authorities are mostly limited to cultural activities and language acquisition.

In **Italy** the role of local authorities is rather marginal. Interestingly the political party in government seems to have a significant impact, with local authorities playing a greater role in the progressive localities (IT-2, IT-3, and IT-4). But in general terms, municipal entities do not perceive employment as a key field of intervention. In comparison, NGOs seem to be much more active. But here as well, political tradition appears relevant. In conservative localities, NGOs partially make up for the marginal role of the local authorities developing initiatives even with their own resources. At the same time, in progressive localities NGOs seem to have developed larger and tighter networks around employment. Beside political tradition, geographical location is also relevant. In Southern localities, NGOs and trade unions are key actors in advocating against irregular work in agriculture. Finally, in all progressive localities the relations between NGOs working on migrants' employment and local entrepreneurs appear more extensive and fruitful than in conservative case studies, probably because of the more developing welcoming culture towards migrants.

In **Spain**, like in most countries, post-2014 migrants' access to employment was very often described by local actors as an issue that is being (and should be) addressed through mainstream policies and support measures that are available for any resident who is struggling to find a job. As exception, in Catalonia the two municipalities have specific programs to incentivize the regional language (Catalan) and include employment courses as part of the Initial Reception Service, which is directed at anyone moving to a municipality in the region. The exclusion of irregular migrants is addressed by initiatives taken above all by NGOs like Caritas or the Red Cross. Interestingly, the two Catalan municipalities are much further regarding anti-discrimination measures. Legal advice in view to individual regularization (through a formal job offer) is present in most municipalities (often in the hands of local NGOs

or trade unions), though in the Catalan localities (also as a result of regional programs) this goes even further with municipal programs (SP-3) that try to help migrants in fulfilling the requirement of having an employment offer.

In general terms, as employment is either a regional or national competence, municipalities play a rather marginal role. However, in some cases labour integration is included in programs that either target recently arrived migrants (Flanders, Austria, Germany, Spain) or welfare beneficiaries (Sweden and the Netherlands). In several countries (Sweden, the Netherlands and Austria), rural localities tend to have shut down migrant specific services due to the declining size of the target group. Local authorities take a greater role in progressive localities (the Netherlands, Italy), with a closer relationship with NGOs and civil society organizations. In Sweden is the other way around though, with labour integration measures as a duty for welfare beneficiaries in the more conservative municipality. The geographic factor is key: in Belgium there are clear differences between Wallonia (much more centralized and with a colour-blind approach) and Flanders (where responsibilities are decentralized at the local level and with a more colour-conscious approach); in Spain the two Catalan municipalities differ from the rest, with a much more inclusive approach; and in Italy NGOs and trade unions have a greater role in the Southern part, advocating against irregular work in agriculture.

3.4. Main hypotheses for the cross-local comparison

In this section we briefly summarize the findings across the eight national contexts and thereby discuss the extent to which the key explanatory factors – *locality size, structural conditions, experience of diversity, and local politics* – can account for the differences between localities. Here again, we deal with differences in terms of a) the overall difficulty and concrete barriers that post-2014 migrants face, b) the relevant actors involved in overcoming (or creating) these barriers, and c) the concrete policies or measures taken (including their target group).

3.4.1. Housing

The **main obstacles that tend to complicate post-2014 migrants' search for housing** are rather similar across the different contexts, and clearly linked to structural conditions, while their relation to population size, experience of diversity, and local politics is less straight-forward. The relationship between housing access and the locality size seems particularly ambiguous: In several countries (NL, AT, SP), the larger (medium-sized) towns in the sample are more segregated and characterized by tighter housing markets than smaller towns and rural areas. In other countries (IT), locality size does not seem to explain differences in terms of accessibility. What the latter does clearly depend on are structural conditions: It often is in localities with a good economic situation that housing is particularly scarce and high rents are the major problem for migrants. In economically and/or demographically shrinking localities,

in contrast, it is the quality of available housing that constitutes the problem. Only one country report (Germany) identifies localities' experience with cultural diversity as a relevant factor (since more landlords having a migrant background might render the housing market more accessible for refugees); while none of them suggests that the relative ease or difficulty with which migrants access housing has to do with the political orientation (conservative or progressive) of the local government in power.

In terms of the **relevant actors (and their relationship with each other)**, local politics seems to matter more than anything else (though in some countries more than others). Especially in the Italian context, the willingness and level of involvement of a local government in relation to post-2014 migrants' housing access clearly seems to depend on its political orientation. In progressive localities there also tends to be more collaboration between NGOs and local authorities than in conservative ones, where NGOs are often alone in promoting concrete initiatives. Independent of national context, locality size matters in the sense that contact (e.g., between public officials, private landlords, real estate agents, etc.) tends to be much more direct and personal in smaller localities, which makes finding individual solutions easier. At the same time, locality size also affects the ownership structure; in rural areas and small towns in Germany, for example, most of the housing stock is owned by single private owners, which increases the potential for (racial) discrimination. The level of previous immigration and resulting cultural diversity seem relevant (in some countries at least) in the sense that more people with migrant background will own property and be more willing to rent to newcomers; and (more generally) because ethnic networks are an important channel through which migrants find housing (as well as employment). Finally, also structural conditions play a role, in the sense that economically thriving municipalities will have resources to fund dedicated personnel (which only some of them do, however)[28].

Whether or not **specific policies are put in place, or other (including informal) measures or initiatives are taken** by local actors to facilitate post-2014 migrants' housing access seems to depend, at least partly, on locality size. In Austria, for example, the capacity to develop housing policies beyond initial reception significantly varies between the selected localities, with the two larger municipalities (locality AT-1 and AT-3) having more capacity to respond to this challenge. Also in the Swedish context, a municipality's ability (and/or willingness) to act seems to depend on its population size (rural localities often lack the necessary means and expertise) as well as political leadership (as also highlighted in the German country report). Especially in rural localities (like SE-2) with relatively few refugees, local governments find it difficult to maintain comprehensive provision of housing and related support services. Hence, also the rate and timing of refugee arrivals in a locality is relevant, since (national) funding is often tied to the number of arrivals and a sudden decline makes comprehensive policies and interventions economically unfeasible. Less clear is the influence of cultural diversity

[28] For more information regarding local integration policymaking and governance in each of the localities, see Schiller et al. (2022).

stemming from previous immigration. While a lack of such diversity might further residents' suspicion and ambiguous attitudes towards newcomers with a different cultural background (as noted in the Netherlands), it does not seem to explain the comprehensiveness of local policies or other (e.g., private) initiatives. Interestingly, also structural conditions alone do not seem to determine whether (nor which) local measures are taken to facilitate migrants' or refugees' access to housing. What does matter, at least in some countries, is a local government's political orientation: In Italy, for example, progressive municipalities are not only more pro/active themselves but in such localities also other support initiatives tend to be more systematic and interconnected than in localities governed by conservative parties[29]. Also in the Netherlands, Belgium and Austria, conservative-led municipalities (and regions) seem less willing to fund/provide specific (housing) support for post-2014 migrants.

3.4.2. Employment

The **main obstacles that tend to complicate post-2014 migrants' access to employment** are rather similar across the different contexts and clearly linked to structural conditions, while their relation to population size, experience of diversity, and local politics is less straight-forward. In NL, BE, GE, IT and SP the higher the labour demands in a locality, the lower the barriers to access employment. In other words, employers are more selective (in terms of language skills, qualifications, origin, etc.) when job opportunities are more limited. In contrast, the size of the locality does not seem to play a role, though it may shape the way barriers for accessing the labour market work. In rural areas and small towns in Belgium, Germany, and Italy poor public transport (thus not having a car) is a barrier to access employment. Like with housing, only one country report (GE) identifies localities' experience with cultural diversity as a relevant factor (big companies in urban areas are more international and therefore seem to be more willing to take refugees). The Italian report refers to previous social cohesion as a key facilitating factor for integration, but this does not necessarily relate to cultural diversity. Finally, no report suggests that the relative ease or difficulty with which migrants access employment has to do with the political orientation (conservative or progressive) of the local government in power.

In terms of the **relevant actors (and their relationship with each other)**, municipalities play a rather marginal role as employment is either a regional or national competence. The most important explanatory factor seems to be the national context, which determines the local competences (only relevant in Flanders and the Netherlands), the importance of non-profit organizations (present in all countries) and profit service providers (relevant in PL and IT) and the degree of formalization of the labour market, with informal networks playing different

[29] A difference was also identified in terms of how specific support measures are framed: in conservative(-led) localities, things like temporary housing solutions are (more) often justified in terms of public order than integration support.

roles (more important in PL, IT and SP). Local politics do not seem to play a key role in determining the actors' involvement in migrants' access to employment. As for housing, in progressive localities there may be more collaboration between NGOs and local authorities than in conservative ones. In contrast, in conservative localities NGOs and civil society associations may fill in the gap not covered by local policies. Cultural diversity does not seem to be particularly relevant, unless in more informal markets or contexts with more limited labour demands where informal networks of co-ethnic may play a more significant role. Finally, size seems to be the most relevant explanatory factor, in terms of the municipality capacity to develop complementary measures (greater in medium-size locality), the volume of post-2014 migrants and the presence of non-profit organizations that either work together with the municipality or complement its (lack of) policies.

Whether or not **specific policies are put in place, or other (including informal) measures or initiatives are taken** by local actors to facilitate post-2014 migrants' housing access seems to depend, at least partly, on locality size. Small localities are not likely to have developed specific policies or may have to shut down them due to the declining size of the target group. In this regard, as said for housing, the rate and timing of refugee arrivals is relevant. Less clear is the influence of cultural diversity to explain the comprehensiveness of local policies or other (private) initiatives. Structural conditions alone do not explain either whether local measures are taken or not. In contrast, political orientation seems to matter much more but in a double (opposite) way: while progressive localities are more prone to develop complementary initiatives for employment integration (sometimes together with NGOs and civil society groups), employment integration and therefore participation in specific programs can also become a duty for welfare recipients in more conservative towns. Finally, the geographic factor seems to be key in defining the local approach to migrants' (integration) integration, with important differences in Belgium, Italy, and Spain.

In general terms, we can conclude the following:

Regarding access: structural conditions are the key factor to explain access to housing and employment. In localities with a good economic situation housing is scarce and high rents are the major problem for migrants, while barriers to employment (due to huge labour demands) are lower. In contrast, in economically and/or demographically shrinking localities, it's the quality of available housing (rather than access) that constitutes a problem while barriers to employment tend to be much higher. Cultural diversity is only mentioned as a relevant factor in Germany, where it seems to facilitate access to housing (with landlords with an immigrant background) and employment (with international companies more prone to take refugees).

Regarding the (most) relevant actors: the main explanatory factors accounting for the role and relationship between the main relevant actors differ between housing and employment. As for housing, local politics seems to matter more than anything else with progressive localities more involved in facilitating migrants' access to housing. In contrast, local politics does not seem to account for differences with regard to employment, though progressive local authorities may have closer ties with NGOs and civil society organizations. The locality size is

relevant both with regard to housing and employment: in smaller towns contacts tend to be much more direct and personal. However, in smaller localities the presence of non-profit organizations may be much more limited. Cultural diversity does not seem to account for local differences in any of the two areas, unless in contexts with greater informal markets and low labour demands (due to the importance of informal networks of co-ethnics). Finally, structural conditions seem to be relevant only for housing, with economically thriving municipalities having more resources to fund (if considered necessary) dedicated personnel.

Regarding local policy and other responses: Size seems to be the most relevant factor with regard to both housing and employment. Bigger localities (with a higher number of recently arrived migrants) have more capacity and resources to intervene and set up specific measures. Cultural diversity and structural conditions do not seem to account for the comprehensiveness of local policies and other (private) initiatives. In contrast, local politics seems to matter in both cases, with progressive localities being more proactive in facilitating access to housing and employment. However, there are some slight differences: while for housing there is a more clear-cut distinction, with conservative-led municipalities (and regions) less willing to fund/provide specific (housing) support for post-2014 migrants, for employment conservative municipalities (like in Sweden) can also be proactive when labour integration is seen as a duty for welfare recipients.

4. Cross-local comparison

The analysis presented in this chapter goes beyond national contexts and instead draws comparisons between (groups of) localities that share various other characters, particularly population size, economic and demographic (a.k.a. "structural") conditions, experience with cultural diversity, and political orientation of local government. The analysis is structured around two central issues: the relative ease or difficulty with which post-2014 migrants can access housing and employment in each of the selected localities; and the (local) policies, initiatives, and practices through which public and non-public actors are trying (or not) to facilitate this access. For a brief description of how we constructed the underlying variables see chapter two of this working paper.

4.1. What explains the relative ease or difficulty of post-2014 migrants' access?

Figure 1 provides an overview of all 40 localities and shows in how many/which of them post-2014 migrants' access to housing and employment is seen as "relatively easy", "relatively difficult", or "extremely difficult" by local actors.

***Figure 1**: Relative ease/difficulty of access to housing and employment in all selected localities (n=40)*

Access to Employment	Relatively easy	Relatively difficult	Extremely difficult
Extremely difficult	SE-5	BE-3 GE-2	SP-5
Relatively difficult	NL-2 NL-3 NL-4 AT-4 GE-1 GE-6 SE-4 IT-3	BE-4 SE-1 IT-5 SP-4 SP-6	BE-1 SE-3 SE-6 SP-3
Relatively easy	PL-1 PL-3 PL-2 NL-1 GE-3 IT-4 SE-2	AT-3 SP-2 PL-4	GE-4 GE-5 AT-1 AT-2 IT-1 IT-2 SP-1 BE-2 IT-6
All localities (n=40)	Relatively easy	Relatively difficult	Extremely difficult
	Access to Housing		

One thing that the figure illustrates quite clearly is that overall, their access to housing is much more often "extremely difficult" than their access to employment. In fact, the latter is "relatively easy" in almost half (19) of all localities and only in four it is described as "extremely difficult". Housing access, in contrast, is "extremely difficult" in 14 localities. It should be noted that the 16 localities in which it is reported to be "relatively easy" include all four Dutch municipalities (marked red), where it is easy only for recognized refugees for whom the

municipality is obliged to provide housing, which means they are somewhat shielded from the severe housing crisis affecting the country as a whole[30]. Another interesting finding is that in more than half (9) of the localities where housing access is "extremely difficult", employment is "relatively easy" to find, indicating a significant imbalance between local housing and labour markets. This is supported by the fact that in half of the localities with "relatively easy" access to housing, employment is "relatively difficult" to find for post-2014 migrants.

The following subsections disaggregate this data in order to provide some clues as to which factors might explain this overall picture.

4.1.1. The relevance of locality **size**

There are many reasons why, and possible ways in which, the size of a locality – i.e., whether it is a rural area, small or medium-sized town – might influence how easy or difficult it is for newcomers to find work and a place to live. For instance, in several countries (NL, AT, SP), the larger (medium-sized) towns in the sample are more segregated and characterized by tighter housing markets than smaller towns and rural areas. Size may also shape the way barriers for accessing the labour market work, for instance with the lack of public transport being a barrier particularly in rural areas.

Figure 2: *Relative ease/difficulty of access to housing and employment in* ***rural areas*** *(n=13)*

Access to Employment	Access to Housing: Relatively easy	Access to Housing: Relatively difficult	Access to Housing: Extremely difficult
Extremely difficult	SE-5	GE-2	
Relatively difficult	NL-4 GE-6 IT-3 AT-4	SP-4 SP-6	
Relatively easy	SE-2 PL-2	PL-4	IT-6 AT-2

RURAL AREAS (n=13)

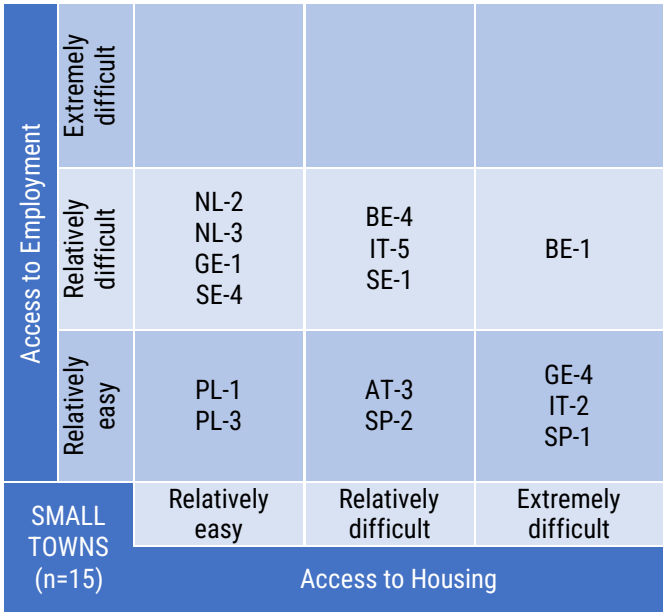
In **rural areas** (n=13), housing seems comparatively easy to access, while the situation regarding employment is mixed (see *figure 2*). In terms of housing, half of the rural localities

[30] For more information see section 3.2.1, as well as the national country report.

were categorized as providing "relatively easy" access for post-2014 migrants. In terms of employment, it is notable that two of the only four localities (in total) where access is "extremely difficult" are rural areas.

In the 15 **small towns** in the sample (see *figure 3*), access to employment seems somewhat easier compared to the rural areas (it is never rated as "extremely" difficult, and in half of the localities as "relatively easy"). Access to housing, in contrast, seems more difficult overall ("relatively easy" in only six localities and "extremely difficult" in four of them).

***Figures 3 & 4**: Relative ease/difficulty of access to housing and employment in **small towns** (left side, n= 15) and **medium-sized towns** (right side, n=12)*



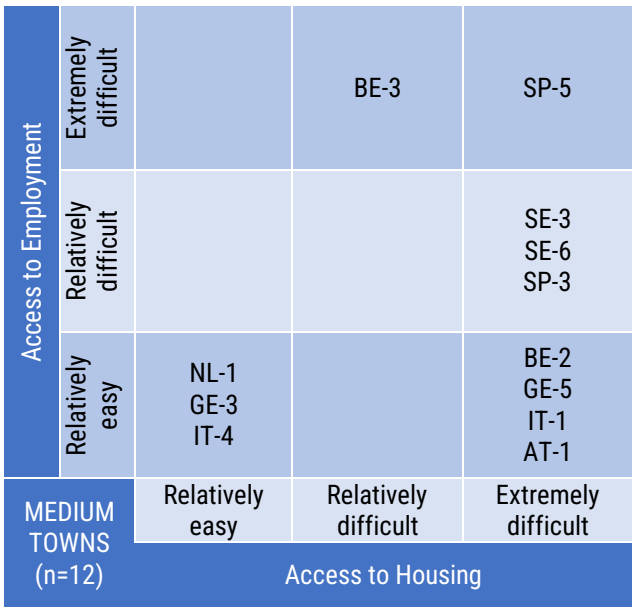


Figure 4 illustrates the results for the 12 **medium-sized towns**, which confirm the same overall trend, especially with regard to post-2014 migrants' access to housing, which is described as "extremely difficult" in two thirds (8) of these localities (in only three is it "relatively easy"). The results for employment are more mixed, but still: in more than half of these localities it is "relatively easy" for post-2014 migrants to find work. This overall picture suggests that many post-2014 migrants will have to commute to these larger towns in order to do the often very precarious jobs that locals refuse to do.

4.1.2. The relevance of local **structural conditions**

The relative ease or difficulty with which post-2014 migrants tend to access housing and employment in a particular locality can also be expected to vary depending on the local economy, labour market, and demographic development. The results of our cross-national comparative analysis suggest that in localities with a good economic situation access to housing is much more difficult (due to scarce and expensive housing) while access to employment tends to be much easier (given higher labour demands).

The results of our cross-local comparative analysis seem to confirm the expectation/s whereas favourable economic and demographic conditions (vibrant/growing local economy, low unemployment rates, growing local population) tend to play in favour of post-2014 migrants' access to employment, but make it more difficult for them to find a place to live (due to increased competition).

***Figures 5 & 6**: Relative ease/difficulty of access to housing and employment in **localities with positive structural conditions** (left side, n=19) and **negative structural conditions** (right side, n=21)*

Access to Employment	Relatively easy	Relatively difficult	Extremely difficult
Extremely difficult	SE-5		
Relatively difficult	GE-6 IT-3 NL-2		BE-1 SE-3 SP-3
Relatively easy	PL-1 PL-2 NL-1	SP-2	AT-1 AT-2 GE-4 GE-5 IT-1 IT-2 SP-1 BE-2
Pos. struct. Cond. (n=19)	Relatively easy	Relatively difficult	Extremely difficult
	Access to Housing		

Access to Employment	Relatively easy	Relatively difficult	Extremely difficult
Extremely difficult		GE-2 BE-3	SP-5
Relatively difficult	NL-3 NL-4 SE-4 AT-4 GE-1	SP-4 SP-6 SE-1 BE-4 IT-5	SE-6
Relatively easy	SE-2 PL-3 GE-3 IT-4	PL-4 AT-3	IT-6
Neg. struct. Cond. (n=21)	Relatively easy	Relatively difficult	Extremely difficult
	Access to Housing		

Accordingly, as illustrated in *figure 5*, in the vast majority (12) of localities characterized by **favourable economic and demographic conditions** (n=19), the labour market is described as "relatively easy" (and only in one case as "extremely difficult") to access. In eleven of these same localities, on the other hand, housing is described as "extremely difficult" to access (compared to seven where it is "relatively easy"). Interestingly, it is mostly these localities (all but one) with positive structural conditions, where labour market access is "relatively easy" but housing access "extremely difficult" for post-2014 migrants.

The localities characterized by **unfavourable economic and demographic conditions** (*figure 6*, n=21) offer a not completely but considerably different picture, particularly in terms of housing access: In only three of the 21 localities in this category is it "extremely difficult" for post-2014 migrants to find housing (in nine it is "relatively easy"). Employment, on the other hand, does seem to be somewhat more difficult to access in these structurally disadvantaged localities, but less than might have been expected: post-2014 migrants' labour market access is described as "extremely difficult" only in three cases, and "relatively easy" in seven (in the majority of these localities – 11 – it is "relatively difficult").

4.1.3. The relevance of **experience with cultural diversity**

As a third key factor that might have a bearing on how easy or difficult it is for post-2014 migrants to find and access housing and employment is the degree of previous immigration and the resulting cultural diversity in the locality that they moved (or, in the case of most asylum seekers, were assigned) to. Insights from the in-depth case studies suggest that cultural diversity is not a fundamental factor, except for the German case where landlords having a migrant background and international companies with previous experience with diversity would facilitate access to housing and employment respectively.

Figures 7 & 8**: Relative ease/difficulty of access to housing and employment in **more** (left side, n=24) and **less** (right side, n=16) **culturally diverse localities

Access to Employment	Relatively easy	Relatively difficult	Extremely difficult
Extremely difficult	SE-5	BE-3	
Relatively difficult	NL-3	BE-4 SE-1 SP-4	BE-1 SE-3 SE-6 SP-3
Relatively easy	GE-3 NL-1 SE-2 PL-1 PL-3	AT-3 SP-2	AT-1 GE-4 BE-2 IT-1 IT-2 IT-6 SP-1
More diverse (n=24)	Access to Housing		

Access to Employment	Relatively easy	Relatively difficult	Extremely difficult
Extremely difficult		GE-2	SP-5
Relatively difficult	AT-4 SE-4 GE-1 GE-6 IT-3 NL-2 NL-4	IT-5 SP-6	
Relatively easy	IT-4 PL-2	PL-4	AT-2 GE-5
Less diverse (n=16)	Access to Housing		

Figure 7 illustrates the situation in the more diverse localities and *figure 8* does the same for the less diverse localities. While there are notable differences, the overall picture does not precisely confirm all expectations. In fact, access to housing is much more often "extremely difficult" in the more diverse localities than those with little experience of immigration (which will largely be because more diverse localities are more often medium-sized towns and housing is more difficult to access in these, as discussed in section 4.2.1). Post-2014 migrants' access to employment, on the other hand, is "relatively easy" in less than one third (5 of 16) of the less diverse localities, but in almost two thirds (14 of 24) of the more diverse ones, which is in line with our expectations.

4.1.4. The relevance of local **political leadership**

Several (though not all) country teams have identified political leadership – that is, whether conservative or progressive parties constitute (a clear majority of) the local government – as a crucial factor that can explain some of the differences they found between the selected localities (in their respective countries). It is mostly found to affect governing relations as well as (integration) policymaking – including policies regarding access to housing and/or employment, as will be discussed in the following section (4.2.1.). Political leadership does not, however, seem to directly influence the ease or difficulty with which post-2014 find and access these resources.

***Figures 9 & 10**: Relative ease/difficulty of access to housing and employment in **localities with a conservative government/majority** (left side, n=13) compared to **localities with a progressive government/majority** (right side, n=19)*

Access to Employment	Relatively easy	Relatively difficult	Extremely difficult
Extremely difficult			
Relatively difficult	AT-4 NL-2 NL-3	IT-5 SE-1 SP-6	BE-1
Relatively easy	PL-2	PL-4	AT-2 IT-1 IT-6 SP-1

Cons. Gov. (n=13) — Access to Housing

Access to Employment	Relatively easy	Relatively difficult	Extremely difficult
Extremely difficult		BE-3 GE-2	SP-5
Relatively difficult	IT-3 SE-4	SP-4	SE-3 SE-6
Relatively easy	IT-4 NL-1 SE-1 PL-1 PL-3	AT-3 SP-2	BE-2 GE-4 GE-5 IT-2

Prog. Gov. (n=19) — Access to Housing

Also, the quantitative results, presented in *figure 9* (all localities with conservative governments) and *figure 10* (all localities with progressive governments[31]), suggest that there is no apparent relationship between political leadership and migrants' access to either housing or employment.

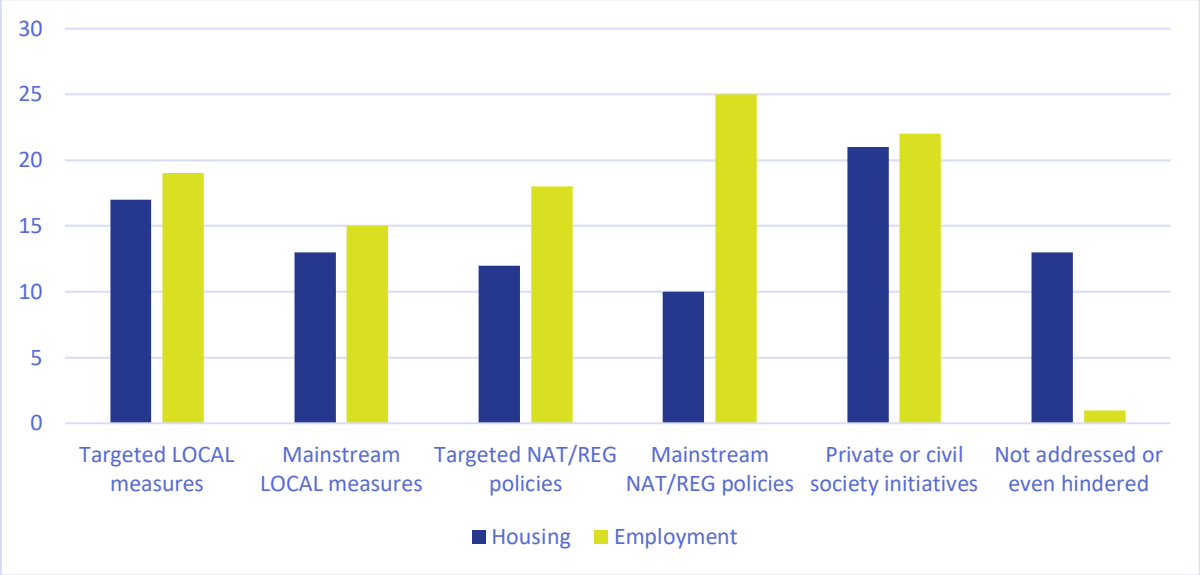
[31] Note that the eight localities with "mixed" governments have been left out of this analysis.

4.2. What explains the presence or absence of (local) policies, initiatives, and practices?

The second part of our more quantitative cross-locality analysis focuses on the question of whether public and/or private local actors in the selected municipalities specifically address the issues of post-2014 migrants' access to housing and employment, and under which conditions they thereby go beyond mainstream policies. Overall, the data collected by the different country teams and the findings presented in their country reports (all available on the project website) suggest that (local) policies or measures that explicitly target post-2014 migrants (or specific sub-groups/categories) are the exception rather than the rule. In order to substantiate this overall impression, we have to analyse this question in some more detail, and by looking at different kinds of localities.

Figure 11 presents the overall picture. The bars illustrate in how many of the 40 localities post-2014 migrants' access to housing and employment, respectively, is being addressed through different kinds of measures (targeted or mainstream) at different administrative levels (local of supra-local, i.e., either regional or national).

***Figure 11**: Number of localities in which post-2014 migrants' access to housing and employment is being addressed through different kinds of measures (taken by different actors / at different levels)*



According to the data reported by the country teams, in almost half of the selected localities, some targeted measure has indeed been taken by the municipal government (bars on the far left) in relation to housing (42%) and employment (47%), respectively. This finding might seem to contradict our earlier assessment whereas relatively few local governments take measures for migrants or refugees (especially in relation to housing, see p. 31/2). Instead, these measures or policies often target much more specific groups, like for example: temporary housing facilities for former unaccompanied minors or seasonal workers, or specific training courses for young migrants, migrant women, or highly educated migrants.

In slightly fewer localities, but again more often in relation to employment than housing, post-2014 migrants' access to these resources is being addressed through mainstream local policies (like social/subsidized housing or general employment programs) that are not specifically targeting migrants or refugees but, at least in theory, also benefit them – together with other disadvantaged or "at risk" groups, like unemployed youth, people with low qualifications, homeless people, and so on[32].

Particularly post-2014 migrants' access to employment is often described as being addressed through policies and measures taken at either the national or regional level. In almost two thirds of all localities (25 of 40) did local actors see the issue of migrants' labour market access as matter of (mainstream) regional or national employment policies. Notably, the situation is very different in relation to housing, where local actors in comparatively few localities identified targeted (12) or mainstream (10) policies at the regional or national level as relevant for post-2014 migrants. In relation to both housing and employment, local actors in more than half of the localities highlighted concrete initiatives by private and civil society actors as a crucial source of support for post-2014 migrants. Ultimately, the figure also highlights another notable difference between housing and employment: that the former is much more often perceived as "not being addressed at all". Instead, and this was also reflected in many interviews with public and private actors, it is simply left to local housing markets and the migrants' own efforts and personal networks to find a place to live within the locality (or otherwise move elsewhere).

In order to provide a more fine-grained picture and to better understand *why* (targeted) measures are being taken in some localities but not others, we have explored the relationship between some of the "structural factors" and the presence or absence of different kinds of measures. Instead of testing the influence of all four "structural factors" (as in section 4.1.) we thereby follow a set of concrete hypotheses (derived from our systematic cross-reading of the country reports, and presented in section 3.4) and focus on two questions: Under which conditions do local governments take targeted measures to support post-2014 migrants' access to housing and employment? And: under which conditions do private and civil society actors tend to take initiative?

4.2.1. When do local governments take targeted measures?

Figure 12 provides the overall picture regarding the question of whether or not any local targeted measures regarding post-2014 migrants access to housing and employment are in

[32] Note that while such policies (e.g., social housing) exist in almost all localities, they are often not perceived/presented by relevant local actors as a way of addressing/facilitating post-2014 migrants' access to housing, which makes this number less meaningful.

place in the selected localities, and the picture is very mixed: in 15 localities there are no such measures at all, whereas eleven localities have taken measures in relation to both issues.

***Figure 12**: Presence or absence of targeted local measures addressing post-2014 migrants' housing or labour market access in all selected localities (n=40)*

Targeted employment measures		Targeted housing measures: No	Targeted housing measures: Yes
	Yes	BE-4 GE-3 GE-4 GE-5 GE-6 SE-1 SE-5 AT-3	NL-1 NL-4 BE-2 AT-1 GE-1 GE-2 SE-3 IT-2 IT-3 IT-4 IT-6
	No	NL-3 AT-4 BE-1 SE-2 SE-4 IT-1 IT-5 PL-1 PL-2 PL-3 PL-4 SP-2 SP-4 SP-5 SP-6	NL-2 BE-3 SE-6 AT-2 SP-1 SP-3
All Loc. (n=40)		No	Yes

From reading the country reports we expect that both size and political orientation affect the likelihood of targeted measures being put in place locally. With regard to **locality size**, we expect larger localities (medium-sized towns) to have more capacity to implement targeted measures in relation to both housing and employment. *Figures 13-15* present the distribution of rural areas, small towns, and medium-sized towns in the sample, and seem to at least partly support this expectation:

***Figures 13-15**: Presence or absence of targeted local measures addressing post-2014 migrants' housing or labour market access in **rural areas** (left side, n=13), **small towns** (middle, n=15), and **medium-sized towns** (right side, n=12)*

Employment		Housing: No	Housing: Yes
	Yes	GE-6 SE-5	NL-4 GE-2 IT-3 IT-6
	No	AT-4 SE-2 PL-2 PL-4 SP-4 SP-6	AT-2
Rural (n=13)		No	Yes

Employment		Housing: No	Housing: Yes
	Yes	BE-4 GE-4 SE-1 AT-3	GE-1 IT-2
	No	NL-3 BE-1 SE-4 IT-5 SP-2 PL-1 PL-3	NL-2 SP-1
Small (n=15)		No	Yes

Employment		Housing: No	Housing: Yes
	Yes	GE-3 GE-5	NL-1 BE-2 SE-3 IT-4 AT-1
	No	IT-1 SP-5	BE-3 SE-6 SP-3
Med. (n=12)		No	Yes

Four (of 13) rural areas and only two (of 15) small towns have their own targeted policy in relation to both housing and employment, whereas almost half of the localities in either of these categories have no such measure at all. In contrast, of the 12 medium-sized towns in

the sample, more than one third (5) have taken targeted local measures regarding both issues, and another five of them address at least one of these issues through targeted local measures. Only two (one Spanish and one Italian town) have taken no targeted measure at all.

With regard to the effect of **political orientation**, our expectation was that governments formed or led by progressive parties would be more likely to set up targeted measures for post-2014 migrants and that progressive and conservative governments would be equally likely to implement employment integration measures, even though with different purposes (promoting rights the first, promoting autonomy from welfare benefits the second). As illustrated in *figures 16-18*, political orientation does seem to have an influence, but not as strong as expected: What is true is that localities with a conservative(-led) government are most likely to *not* take any targeted measures (this is the case for more than half of them, only one has measures in both areas). Interestingly, the data suggest that mixed governments seem particularly likely to take targeted measures in relation to migrants' labour market access (seven of eight "mixed" localities have targeted employment measures).

***Figures 16-18**: Presence or absence of targeted local measures addressing post-2014 migrants' housing or labour market access in **conservative** (left side, n=13), **mixed** (middle, n=8), and **progressive localities** (right side, n=19)*

CONS (n=13)			
Employment	Yes	SE-1	IT-6
	No	NL-3 AT-4 BE-1 SP-6 IT-1 IT-5 PL-2 PL-4	AT-2 NL-2 SP-1
		No	Yes
		Housing	

Mixed (n=8)			
Employment	Yes	BE-4 GE-3 GE-6 SE-5	AT-1 GE-1 NL-4
	No		SP-3
		No	Yes
		Housing	

PROG (n=19)			
Employment	Yes	GE-4 GE-5 AT-3	NL-1 BE-2 GE-2 SE-3 IT-2 IT-3 IT-4
	No	SE-2 SE-4 PL-1 PL-3 SP-2 SP-4 SP-5	BE-3 SE-6
		No	Yes
		Housing	

Ultimately, also the **perceived size and urgency of the problem** (i.e., the difficulty of post-2014 migrants' access to housing and employment, as discussed in section 4.1) might explain why some local governments decide to take targeted measures while others do not. This hypothesis is at best partly supported by the collected data: In nine of the 17 localities that have taken local targeted housing measures, 2014 migrants' access to housing is perceived as "extremely difficult"[33]. At the same time, in nine of the 14 localities where housing is "extremely difficult", targeted measures have been taken. There appears to be no clear relationship in the case of employment, access to which is only perceived as "extremely difficult" in four localities (see section 4.1): In fact, in 10 of the 19 localities that have taken targeted measures in this area, access is being described as "relatively easy". This might be

[33] This, however, is also the case in five localities where no targeted measures are being taken; whereas such measures are taken in six localities where housing access is seen as "relatively easy".

explained by the fact that measures regarding employment may target migrants in contexts where access is difficult or facilitate the match between migrant workers and employers in contexts of high labour demands.

4.2.2. When do non-state actors take the initiative?

With regard to the second question – *under which conditions do private and civil society actors tend to take initiative?* – our reading of the country reports suggested that this depends quite a lot on the national context. There are countries where private and civil society actors traditionally play a very important role (across all or at least most selected localities, and in relation to both housing and employment), and others where their role is generally much more limited. *Figure 19* provides the overall picture and thereby confirms this impression. It shows that private and civil society initiatives are usually either completely absent (in 16 localities) or they are relevant for both: migrants' housing and labour market access (in 19 of the 40 localities). It also shows that the former is true for (most) localities in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Sweden, whereas the latter characterizes all the German and Polish localities, as well as most of the Spanish ones.

***Figure 19**: Presence or absence of private or civil society-led initiatives addressing post-2014 migrants' housing or labour market access in all selected localities (n=40)*

Priv/CSO initiatives: employment	Private/CSO initiatives: housing: No	Private/CSO initiatives: housing: Yes
Yes	SE-4 IT-4 IT-6	AT-2 AT-4 GE-1 GE-2 GE-3 GE-4 GE-5 GE-6 PL-1 PL-2 PL-3 PL-4 SP-1 SP-2 SP-3 SP-5 SP-6 IT-1 IT-5
No	AT-1 AT-3 SP-4 BE-1 BE-3 BE-4 NL-1 NL-2 NL-3 NL-4 SE-1 SE-2 SE-3 SE-5 SE-6 IT-3	BE-2 IT-2
All Loc. (n=40)	No	Yes

In terms of other factors that might influence the likelihood of non-state actors taking the initiative in order to facilitate post-2014 migrants' access to housing and/or employment, we focus on locality size, local political leadership, and the presence or absence of public policies. More specifically, we expected that non-state actors would be more likely to take initiative in smaller localities (where they more easily play an intermediary role), in localities with progressive governments, and in situations where no *targeted* public policies are in place (neither at the local, nor the regional/national level).

Figures 20-22 illustrate the (limited) influence of **locality size:** they show the presence or absence of private or civil society-led initiatives addressing post-2014 migrants' housing or labour market access in all rural areas, small towns, and medium-sized towns, respectively. While the effect is less clear than expected (especially the difference between rural areas and small towns), it is true that the share of localities without non-state initiatives is highest (50%) among the medium-sized towns, only four (one third) of which have seen initiatives regarding both housing and employment.

***Figures 20-22**: Presence or absence of private or civil society led initiatives addressing post-2014 migrants' housing or labour market access in **rural areas** (left side, n=13), **small towns** (middle, n=15), and **medium-sized towns** (right side, n=12)*

Rural (n=13)	Housing: No	Housing: Yes
Employment: Yes	IT-6	AT-2 AT-4 GE-2 GE-6 PL-2 PL-4 SP-6
Employment: No	IT-3 NL-4 SE-2 SE-5 SP-4	

Small (n=15)	Housing: No	Housing: Yes
Employment: Yes	SE-4	GE-1 GE-4 PL-1 PL-3 SP-1 SP-2 IT-5
Employment: No	AT-3 BE-1 BE-4 NL-2 NL-3 SE-1	IT-2

Med. (n=12)	Housing: No	Housing: Yes
Employment: Yes	IT-4	GE-3 GE-5 SP-3 SP-5 IT-1
Employment: No	AT-1 BE-3 NL-1 SE-3 SE-6	BE-2

Figures 23 & 24 provides a similar picture regarding the influence of **local political leadership**: While there seems to be no clear relationship, the relative share of localities with no private or civil society-led initiatives is lower among progressive localities than conservative ones, which is in line with our expectation.

***Figures 23 & 24:** Presence or absence of private or civil society led initiatives addressing post-2014 migrants' housing or labour market access in **conservative** (left side, n=13) and **progressive localities** (right side, n=19)*

CONS (n=13)	Housing: No	Housing: Yes
Employment: Yes	IT-6	AT-2 AT-4 PL-2 PL-4 SP-1 SP-6 IT-1 IT-5
Employment: No	BE-1 NL-2 NL-3 SE-1	

PROG (n=19)	Housing: No	Housing: Yes
Employment: Yes	SE-4 IT-4	GE-2 GE-4 GE-5 PL-1 PL-3 SP-2 SP-5
Employment: No	AT-3 BE-3 NL-1 SP-4 SE-2 SE-3 SE-6 IT-3	BE-2 IT-2

In order to test our last hypothesis, whereas private and civil society-led initiatives are primarily a response to a **lack of *targeted* public policies** (i.e., an "absence of the state"), we must look at housing and employment separately. Of the 40 selected localities, there are 18

in which no targeted measures regarding post-2014 migrants' access to **housing** are in place (neither at the local nor any other administrative level). In 14 of these 18 localities (78%), non-state initiatives to facilitate housing access have been identified, which presumably make up for a lack of public engagement[34]. There are only four localities in which neither (targeted) public nor private measures have been taken in this regard, and seven where both the *local* government and non-state actors have become active to facilitate housing access for post-2014 migrants. In terms of their access to **employment**, there are 13 localities where no targeted measures have been taken (neither locally nor at a higher level) and in nine of these (69%) non-state initiatives are trying to make up for this lack[35]. In this case, there are also only four localities without any targeted public measures nor private initiatives[36], but as many as 13 where private or civil society actors took initiatives in addition to (local or regional/national) targeted measures. Hence, it is more with regard to housing than employment that the data support our expectation whereas private and civil society actors primarily become active where public authorities do not specifically address the issue.

[34] Note that this is the case in four German, (all) four Polish, and three Spanish municipalities.

[35] In (all) four Polish, three Spanish, and two Italian localities.

[36] Including two of the four Dutch cases.

5. Conclusion

Housing and employment constitute crucial foundations for the integration of newcomers, and post-2014 migrants are facing significant barriers and difficulties in accessing both. The purpose of this report was to explain not so much how many post-2014 migrants have struggled or are still struggling to find housing and/or employment but rather what they tend to struggle with or against, and who does what (and specifically for whom) to support them in this struggle. This has been considered from a cross-national (chapter 3) and cross-local (chapter 4) comparative perspective to be able to understand the role of the national and local contexts in explaining similarities and differences. Following the general approach of the project, the whole comparison has been designed to assess the explanatory weight of four key factors: locality size, structural conditions, experience with cultural diversity, and political leadership.

With regard to the first question, which refers to the **main factors that tend to either complicate or facilitate post-2014 migrants' access to housing and employment** (addressed from a cross-national comparative perspective in sections 3.2.1 and 3.3.1 and from a cross-local comparative perspective in section 4.1), the qualitative and quantitative analyses suggest that structural, policy, and societal factors are key. **Structural factors** are the most relevant ones simply because what primarily determines access to housing and employment are the housing and labour markets. The general picture for the eight selected countries is one with difficult access to housing (due to a general housing crisis) and relatively easy access to employment (due to general labour shortages). When zooming into local differences, our research confirms that indeed favourable local economic conditions tend to make it more difficult for migrants to find a place to live but play in favour of their access to employment. Interestingly, the quantitative analysis shows that also locality size matters: in medium-sized towns (compared to rural and small towns) access to housing tends to be (even) more difficult while access to employment is often comparatively easy.

But structural factors go much beyond the simple question of demand and supply. Indeed, the different national reports coincide in pointing out that also other characteristics of the housing and labour markets matter. As for **housing**, dynamics may be rather different depending on the housing ownership structure: having a greater share of public housing or private housing in the hands of individual citizens or large investment funds (often in a context of gentrification or under the impact of mass tourism) determines the degree of accessibility as well as the channels through which post-2014 migrants find a house. As for **employment**, three factors seem to be of extreme importance. The first is the degree of formalization of the labour market: the more formalized it is, the more difficult it may become to access employment, but the more labour rights migrants may have once they get in. The second factor has to do with the level of dependence on low-skilled workers: while in Sweden and Belgium the low demand for low-skilled workers hinders immigrants' employability, in Italy and Spain access is much easier but a highly segmented labour market channels immigrants into very specific (low-paid) segments. Finally, the third factor is related to the type of welfare state, which in

some cases pushes migrants into or out of the labour market. In Germany, for instance, some interviewees mentioned the paralyzing effects that activation activities of the Jobcentre can have. In the Netherlands, voluntary work programmes for welfare beneficiaries have been found to sometimes keep refugees out of paid work, either because they themselves feel comfortable (enough) in these settings or because they know that they would only find a paid job in less attractive sectors.

Apart from the structural factors, also **policies** are key when explaining access to housing and employment. Interestingly, the most relevant policies are not necessarily those that target migrants but rather social policies in general. National reports do also show that exclusionary policies are equally and sometimes even more important than those that aim to facilitate access. In this regard, national immigration and asylum laws are extremely relevant, since they determine who has the right to stay (residence permit) and who the right to work (work permit). While irregular migrants are excluded from both, family migrants and asylum seekers are often excluded from the latter (in Sweden, the Netherlands, and Austria). Social policies generally aim to be inclusive but can also exclude, for instance when access to services depends on a minimum time of residence or when welfare benefits are made conditional to good performance in particular (often employment and language related) integration indicators. Finally, labour policies may also have a double (opposite) effect: while on paper they tend to include (thus protect) all migrants irrespectively of their legal status, requirements (and particularly long and cumbersome procedures) regarding the homologation of titles may end up excluding the most high-skilled migrants, even in contexts where labour in general, and their specific skills in particular, are in high demand.

Finally, the **societal factor** is also key, again with inclusionary and exclusionary effects. On the one hand, both the qualitative and quantitative analyses show the role of informal networks (contacts with citizens in general or co-ethnics in particular) in facilitating access to housing and employment. This seems to be particularly true in smaller towns and in the absence of formal support structures, particularly in countries such as Poland, Italy, and Spain. On the other hand, in most localities across the eight selected countries interviewees refer to discriminatory practices as a key factor hindering migrants' access to housing and employment. Discrimination can be based either directly on ethnicity/origin or work via strict requirements in terms of income and job stability or concerns vis-à-vis very precarious and temporary legal statuses. Interestingly, (racial) discrimination seems to be more common regarding access to housing (with a higher demand than supply) than regarding access to employment (where in a context of labour shortages it is the other way around). In other words, discriminatory practices also depend (at least partially) on supply and demand.

When we look at local level responses, that is, **which concrete local policies, initiatives and practices exist at the local level (what is done, by whom and for whom)**, our findings suggest that there are two key determining factors: locality size and local politics (political orientation of the leading party forming the local government). More specifically, in relation to *who* are the **(most) relevant actors**, there are differences between housing and employment: As for housing, local politics seems to matter more than anything else with progressive localities

more often and more actively involved in facilitating migrants' access to housing. The relationship is somewhat less clear for the area of employment, although also here, progressive local authorities tend to have closer ties with NGOs and civil society organizations. Locality size, on the other hand, is relevant with regard to both housing and employment: in smaller towns, contacts between relevant (public and private) actors tend to be much more direct and personal, while the number (and degree of specialization) of non-profit organizations may be much more limited. Cultural diversity does not seem to account for local differences in any of the two areas, unless in contexts with greater informal markets and low labour demands (due to the importance of informal networks among co-ethnics). Finally, structural conditions seem to be relevant in some countries, and mostly for housing, with economically thriving municipalities having more resources to fund dedicated resources and personnel (if considered necessary).

In relation to the question of *what* is being done and *for whom*, i.e., **the concrete policies, measures or initiatives** taken in relation to post-2014 migrants' access to housing and employment, locality size (again) seems to be the most relevant factor regarding both housing and employment. Bigger localities (usually hosting a higher number of recently arrived migrants) have more capacity and resources to intervene and set up specific support measures. Cultural diversity as such, as well as economic and demographic conditions do not seem to account for the comprehensiveness of local policies and other (private) initiatives. In contrast, local politics seems to matter in both areas, and across all countries, with progressive localities being more proactive in facilitating access to housing and employment. However, there are some slight differences (as already noted above): while for housing there is a more clear-cut distinction, with conservative-led municipalities (and regions) less willing to fund or provide specific (i.e., targeted) housing support for post-2014 migrants, this is not always the case for employment-related measures. Presumably because labour market integration and therefore participation in specific employment or training programs can be framed as a duty for welfare recipients (and especially newcomers), such measures are also common in conservative-led localities (e.g., in Sweden).

It is also important to highlight, however, that **not everything can be explained by looking just at the local level**. The various local actors' concrete roles, responsibilities, and capacity to address these issues also significantly depend on the (vertical) distribution of competences within multilevel governance systems (which significantly differ from country to country, and between housing and employment) as well as on national and regional approaches to (and underlying framings of) migrant and refugee integration. For example, in Belgium there are very clear differences between Wallonia (much more centralized and with a colour-blind approach) and Flanders (where responsibilities are decentralized at the local level and with a more colour-conscious approach); and in Spain the two Catalan municipalities clearly differ from the rest, which at least partly reflects the Catalan government's much more active and inclusive approach to migrant integration.

A comprehensive understanding of these dynamics thus requires both contextual information (e.g., on national housing and labour markets, legal frameworks, the division of responsibilities

and competences between different actors and across administrative levels, etc.) and detailed knowledge of the particular characteristics of each locality. This is why the report combines both kinds of insights, by building on (qualitative) analysis of the different (national) contexts as well as more quantitative analysis that seeks to identify which other factors tend to help or hinder migrants' access and/or to determine the concrete responses at the local level. It is also worth noting that this (comparative) working paper should be read together with the individual country reports, which provide a much thicker description of each locality and of what it means to be looking for housing and/or employment within these contexts. At the same time, we hope that our findings will be a useful starting point for further qualitative and quantitative analysis within and beyond the Whole-COMM project.

Finally, as said in the introduction, the project fieldwork was carried out before the outbreak of the **war in Ukraine**. Therefore, this report does not take into account the current situation, with the arrival of millions of Ukrainian refugees in the EU and the consequent increasingly overburdened reception facilities in most of the selected countries. However, we believe our analysis can give some insights on the preparedness and capacity of SMsTRA for dealing with this latest influx of refugees and its consequences. Though these are presented in more depth in the WP4 Policy Brief, here we advance some of them. First, the imbalance between relatively easy access to employment and relatively difficult access to housing should be urgently addressed to guarantee fundamental rights, avoid social unrest, and reduce the possibilities for another refugee/migration reception crisis. Second, policies are key for migrants' reception and integration. This means not only to resize the national reception systems in line with the current numbers of asylum applications but also to reconsider those policies that go against migrants' integration, particularly considering that the majority of those who arrive in the EU will remain. Finally, civil society should be supported and reinforced by the different administrative levels since formal and informal networks with key local actors and citizens more broadly are fundamental to facilitate both immediate reception and long-term integration.

6. References

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7. Annex: Overview of selected localities

Country	Locality Code	Region	Whole-COMM Typology	Structural conditions (positive /negative)	Experience with diversity (more/less)	Locality size	Political orientation of local government
Sweden	SE-1	Scania	C	-	+	small	conservative
Sweden	SE-2	Blekinge	C	-	+	rural	progressive
Sweden	SE-3	Jönköping	A	+	+	medium	progressive
Sweden	SE-4	Gävleborg	D	-	-	small	progressive
Sweden	SE-5	Dalarna	A	+	+	rural	mixed
Sweden	SE-6	Gävleborg	C	-	+	medium	progressive
Netherlands	NL-1	Utrecht	A	+	+	medium	progressive
Netherlands	NL-2	Overijssel	B	+	-	small	conservative
Netherlands	NL-3	South Holland	C	-	+	small	conservative
Netherlands	NL-4	Drenthe	D	-	-	rural	mixed
Belgium	BE-1	Wallonia	A	+	+	small	conservative
Belgium	BE-2	Flanders	A	+	+	medium	progressive
Belgium	BE-3	Wallonia	C	-	+	medium	progressive
Belgium	BE-4	Flanders	C	-	+	small	mixed
Austria	AT-1	Tyrol	A	+	+	medium	mixed
Austria	AT-2	Tyrol	B	+	-	rural	conservative
Austria	AT-3	Lower Austria	C	-	+	small	progressive
Austria	AT-4	Lower Austria	D	-	-	rural	conservative
Germany	GE-1	Saxony-Anhalt	D	-	-	small	mixed
Germany	GE-2	Lower Saxony,	D	-	-	rural	progressive
Germany	GE-3	Lower Saxony	C	-	+	medium	mixed
Germany	GE-4	North-Rhine-Westfalia	A	+	+	small	progressive
Germany	GE-5	Mecklenburg-Vorpommerns	B	+	-	medium	progressive
Germany	GE-6	Saxony	B	+	-	rural	mixed
Poland	PL-1	Lower Silesia	A	+	+	small	progressive
Poland	PL-2	Lower Silesia	B	+	-	rural	conservative
Poland	PL-3	Greater Poland	C	-	+	small	progressive
Poland	PL-4	Greater Poland	D	-	-	rural	conservative
Italy	IT-1	Piedmont	A	+	+	medium	conservative
Italy	IT-2	Piedmont	A	+	+	small	progressive
Italy	IT-3	Piedmont	B	+	-	rural	progressive
Italy	IT-4	Sicily	D	-	-	medium	progressive
Italy	IT-5	Sicily	D	-	-	small	conservative
Italy	IT-6	Sicily	C	-	+	rural	conservative
Spain	SP-1	Catalonia	A	+	+	small	conservative
Spain	SP-2	Castile & Leon	A	+	+	small	progressive

Spain	**SP-3**	Catalonia	**A**	**+**	**+**	**medium**	**mixed**
Spain	**SP-4**	Valencia	**C**	**-**	**+**	**rural**	**progressive**
Spain	**SP-5**	Andalusia	**D**	**-**	**-**	**medium**	**progressive**
Spain	**SP-6**	Andalusia	**D**	**-**	**-**	**rural**	**conservative**

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