

WORKING PAPER

Explaining integration policies  
and processes of post-2014  
migrants in SMsTRA in Europe.  
A Whole of Community  
approach

WORK PACKAGE 2

June 2024



By  
Tiziana Caponio and  
Andrea Pettrachin  
(Collegio Carlo Alberto)

WORKING PAPER

<https://whole-comm.eu>



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101004714



## Document information

<b>Project acronym:</b>	Whole-COMM
<b>Project full title:</b>	Exploring the Integration of Post-2014 Migrants in Small and Medium-sized Towns and Rural Areas from a Whole-of-Community Perspective
<b>Grant agreement ID:</b>	101004714
<b>Call topic:</b>	H2020-SC6-MIGRATION-2020
<b>Project Start Date:</b>	1 January 2021
<b>Duration:</b>	42 months
<b>Deliverable number:</b>	D2.2
<b>Deliverable title:</b>	Working Paper on the WoC approach to integration 'Explaining integration policies and processes of post-2014 migrants in SMsTRA in Europe. A WoC approach'
<b>Due date of deliverable:</b>	Month 42
<b>Authors:</b>	Tiziana Caponio and Andrea Pettrachin (CCA)
<b>Work Package:</b>	WP2 – Theory Lab. Integration as Whole-of-Community
<b>Work Package leader:</b>	CCA
<b>Dissemination level:</b>	Public
<b>Type:</b>	Report
<b>Version:</b>	1.0

### TARGET AUDIENCE

This working paper is primarily targeting the academic community and expert public. The final Whole-COMM policy brief targeting, available at [www.whole-comm-eu](http://www.whole-comm-eu), elaborates on the policy implications of the findings of the Whole-COMM project outlined in this report and makes a number of policy recommendations targeting specifically the European Commission.



## Executive summary

In this final Working Paper of the Whole-COMM project we aim to put together key research results produced throughout the different work packages and to assess key findings in light of our ‘whole-of-community’ (WoC) approach to study migrant integration at the local level. We specifically aim to answer the two main research question of the project, namely: first, how do the various actors whose actions affect local communities decide, implement and/or act upon local policies related to the integration of post-2014 migrants (henceforth: migrants) in small and medium-sized towns and rural areas (SMsTRAs)? And, second: which kind of outcomes in terms of local communities’ ‘quality of social life’ emerge in SMsTRAs? The working paper is organized as follows. In the first part of the paper we recall the theoretical framework informing the Whole-COMM project, explaining how our WoC approach contributes to this debate, and illustrate our case selection and methodology. In the second part of the working paper, we illustrate our findings. We initially discuss local inclusion policies, frames held by actors involved in integration governance, governance relations, and migrants’ access to services. We then move to discuss outcomes related to social cohesion, exploring local residents’ attitudes to migrant integration, social relations between migrants and long-term residents and migrants’ experiences. In conclusion we aim to put together insights generated by previous sections and identify five key obstacles that, our research suggests, are preventing the emergence of more robust and inclusive responses on migrant integration in SMsTRAs.

# Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgement</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>2. Integration as whole-of-community</b> .....	<b>3</b>
2.1. Theoretical approach .....	3
2.2. Methodological note .....	8
<b>3. Local policies and governance</b> .....	<b>10</b>
3.1. Governance relations .....	10
3.2. Frames .....	14
3.3. Policies and structures of support.....	17
<b>4. Access to housing and employment. Obstacles and enablers</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>5. Integration outcomes</b> .....	<b>26</b>
5.1. Local residents' attitudes to migrant integration .....	26
5.1.1. Local residents' perceptions of integration outcomes.....	26
5.1.2. Local residents' opinions on integration policies. ....	29
5.2. Social interactions between migrants and long-term residents and integration experiences .....	30
5.3. Which links between local inclusion policies and integration outcomes?.....	35
<b>6. Conclusion</b> .....	<b>38</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>42</b>

The content reflects only the authors' views, and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.



## Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank all the members of the Whole-COMM consortium who have directly contributed to the research that informs this final working paper and provided constant feedback on key project findings throughout the project.



# 1. Introduction

Over the last few years, and particularly since 2014, the EU has received unprecedented numbers of migrants and asylum-seekers, often in an unordered way. This has led to a growing presence of migrants and refugees in scarcely prepared small and medium-size towns and rural areas (henceforth: SMsTRAs). The way in which these local communities have been responding to challenges related to migrant integration will deeply shape the future of European societies and their relations with migration and diversity.

While SMsTRAs have become key destinations for migrants in Europe, the academic literature on migrant integration has not paid enough attention to these localities. Most of existing works (for an in-depth literature review see our first working paper: Caponio and Pettrachin 2022) tend to focus on big cities and metropolitan areas. The few works that focus on small European localities tend to focus on individual case studies, often ‘extreme cases’, such as localities characterised by particularly welcoming or hostile environments, or very small localities in isolated mountainous or rural regions (see, e.g., the H2020 projects MATILDE and WELCOMING SPACES). They rarely consider more ‘ordinary’ small- and medium-sized towns and rural areas, and no scholarly work, to the best of our knowledge, has developed comprehensive cross-country cross-locality comparative analyses on migrant integration in these localities.

Whole- COMM has aimed to fill this gap by developing an innovative Whole-of-Community (WoC) theoretical approach (see Caponio & Pettrachin, 2021) which conceives of migrant integration as a process of community-making that: takes place in specific local contexts characterised by distinct configurations of structural factors; is brought about by the interactions of multiple actors with their multilevel and multi-situated relations; and is open-ended and can result in either more cohesive or more fragmented social relations. In line with this approach, Whole-COMM conceptualized post-2014 arrivals as a ‘watershed’ for local communities in SMsTRAs, which had previously been exposed only to limited (if any) arrivals of humanitarian migrants. We therefore first of all ask, *How do the various actors whose actions affect local communities decide, implement and/or act upon local policies related to the integration of post-2014 migrants (henceforth: migrants) in SMsTRAs?* And, secondly: *Which kind of outcomes in terms of local communities’ ‘quality of social life’ emerge in SMsTRAs?*

In this final Working Paper of the Whole-COMM project we aim to put together key research results produced throughout the different work packages and to assess key findings in light of our WoC theoretical framework. The working paper is organized as follows. In the first section we present the theoretical and methodological background informing the Whole-COMM Project. More specifically, we discuss the main theories of migrant integration and how the WoC approach contributes to this debate. Second, we illustrate our case selection and methodology. In the second part of the working paper, we illustrate our findings. We initially



discuss local inclusion policies, actors' frames, governance relations, and migrants' access to services, and then move to discuss outcomes related to social cohesion, exploring local residents' attitudes to migrant integration, social relations between migrants and long-term residents and migrants' experiences.

## 2. Integration as whole-of-community

### 2.1. Theoretical approach

Since the late 1990s research on immigrant integration in Europe has experienced a 'local turn', which pushed scholars in Europe to look more carefully at the local level (Neymark, 1998; Penninx & Martiniello, 2004). Theoretically, this research has been largely grounded on conceptualisations of integration as a 'two-way process' of mutual adjustment between natives and locals. More recently, Garcés-Mascreñas and Penninx (2016) have proposed a 'three-way process' definition, which, along migrants and the host community, considers also the role of sending countries authorities in facilitating or hampering integration processes.

The definition of integration as a two or three-way process has, however, been criticised for failing to provide a realistic picture of national societies, and even more of local communities. Local policies have often been regarded as pragmatic and oriented towards accommodating immigrant needs, de facto assuming a virtuous link between local (pro-immigrant) policies, social cohesion and immigrant social integration (Penninx & Martiniello, 2004). However, this approach fails to acknowledge that, in local communities, locals and newcomers have unequal access to resources and power and hold different interests and resources (Schinkel, 2018). Moreover, mutual adjustment and social cohesion do not necessarily represent the overall rationale guiding policy actors' efforts. In fact, as already shown by research on migration in mainly big cities in Europe, local policies can also take exclusionary approaches (see e.g.: Ambrosini, 2013; Mahnig, 2004). In terms of integration outcomes, it follows that the interplay between integration policies pursuing different goals and actors having different interests and rationales, may lead either to a more cohesive and integrated local communities or to more fragmented ones, reinforcing existing inequalities and forms of exclusion (Collyer et al., 2020).

The WoC approach to study local migrant integration policy and governance builds on – but also aims to move beyond – the existing literature on local migration policymaking. Reminiscent of the 'whole-of society-approach' proposed by Papademetriou and Benton (2016, p. 26), and underlying the 2018 Global Compact on Migration, such approach acknowledges that a wide variety of actors are de facto involved in addressing the 'challenges' of migrant integration, including not only governmental actors but also 'people outside of insular policy communities and the political establishment'. Whereas the whole-of-society approach implicitly assumes the 'national society' to be the locus of integration, in the WoC perspective migrant integration is conceptualised as a process of community-making that:



- takes place in specific local contexts characterised by distinct configurations of structural factors in terms of i) local economy and the labour market, ii) demographic composition and trends, and iii) levels of socio-cultural diversity and historical relations with migrant-related groups;
- is brought about by the interactions of multiple actors– as individuals, organisations, institutions and/or corporate entities – who shape the local community with their multilevel and multi-situated relations, networks, interests and resources;
- whose outcomes are open-ended, and can result in either more cohesive or more fragmented social relations.

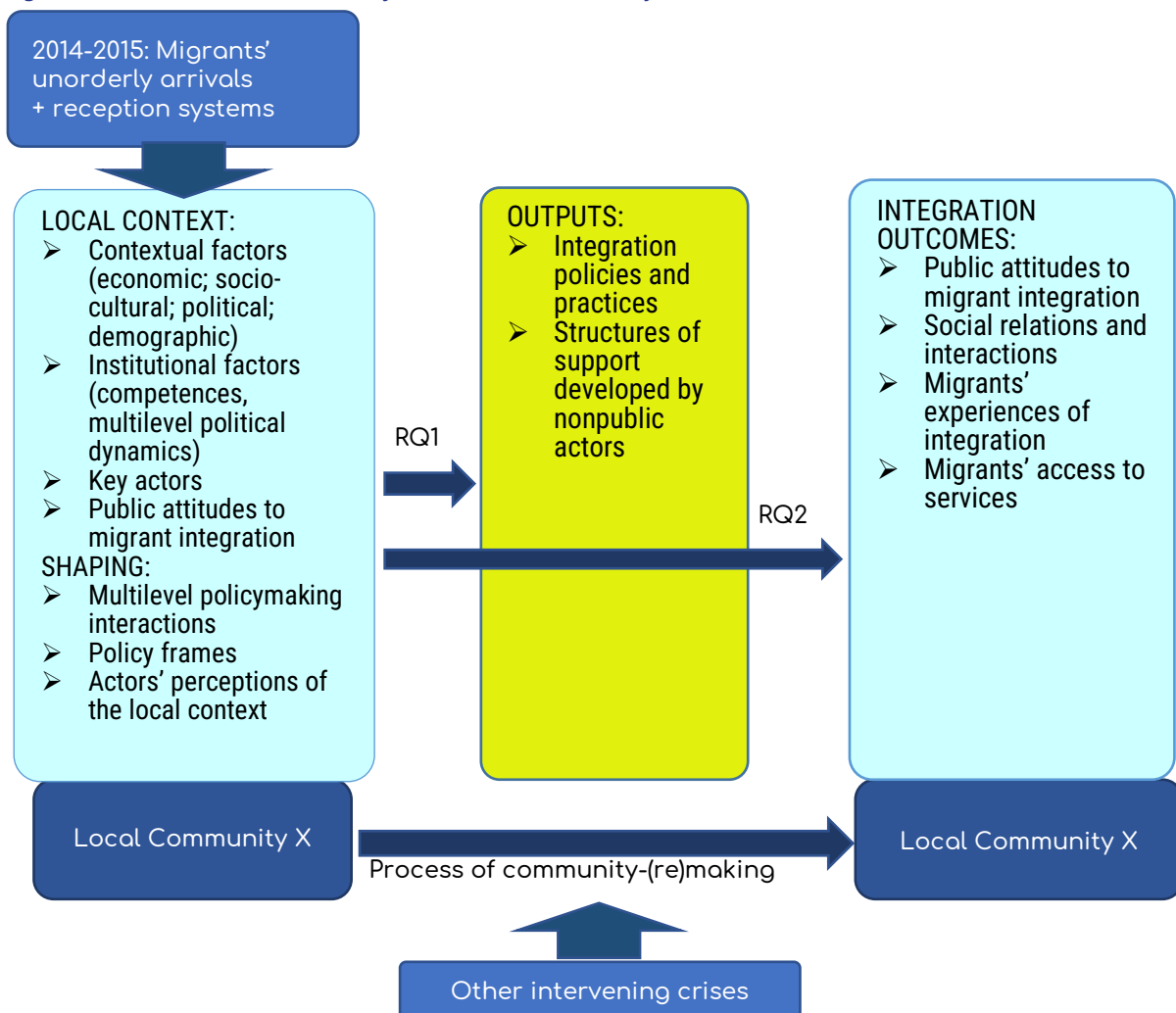
This definition reflects notions of migrant integration which have been developed by geographers, sociologists and anthropologists in qualitative research addressing specifically migration in small localities, as in the case of the literature on New Immigrant Destinations and that on ‘migrant emplacement’ (see Box 1). Unlike these existing works, the WoC approach emphasizes the central role of local policy, governance relations and policymakers’ perceptions in shaping community-making processes around migration-related challenges.

### Box 1. New Immigrant Destinations and Migrants emplacement

Since 2005, following debates on New Immigrant Destinations (NIDs) in the US (for a review see: Winders, 2014), small localities and rural areas started to attract increasing attention also from European migration scholars, especially with respect to processes of social change brought about by the arrival of economic migrants in these areas (for a review see: McAreavey 2017; see also the more recent literature on migration in remote localities: Laine et al., 2023). This (qualitative) literature, mainly conducted on small samples of localities or case-studies, illuminates migrants’ processes of encounter with local communities, including their ways of navigating local structures of support (see e.g. McAreavey, 2012) and/or resisting precarization and segregation (Górny & Kaczmarczyk, 2018; Papadopoulos et al., 2018). In the NIDs perspective, immigrant integration is conceptualised as a dynamic and fluid phenomenon shaped by the social interactions that happen in specific places, characterised by different social-structural features, cultural legacies and legal frameworks (McAreavey, 2012). More recently, in the context of the H2020 project Welcoming Spaces (2021-2024), the notion of ‘emplacement’ has been used to emphasise the relational and space dimensions of processes of encounter between migrants and ‘local residents’ in small localities. Following Glick Schiller & Çağlar (2016), emplacement can be defined as ‘the social processes through which a dispossessed individual builds or rebuilds networks of connection within the constraints and opportunities of a specific city [hence, it is] a processual concept that links together space, place and power’ (p. 21). Following on these footsteps, scholars in the Welcoming Spaces project have introduced the more specific concept of ‘social emplacement’, to refer to those social elements that appear to be particularly relevant in influencing interactions in rural areas and small localities, and more specifically path-dependency, choice, social capital, and access to services and housing (Moralli et al., 2023).

Moving from the assumptions and rationale of the WoC theoretical framework, the Whole-COMM Project has asked: 1) which kind of responses to the challenges related to post-2014 migrants' integration emerged in SMsTRAs in the aftermath of the so-called European 'refugee crisis'? and 2) which kind of outcomes in terms of social interactions, attitudes and levels of social cohesion emerged in these localities? As illustrated in figure 1, it is assumed that the massive arrivals between 2014 and 2015 of migrants from areas of political and humanitarian crisis represented a watershed for local communities in SMsTRAs, many of which had previously been exposed only to very limited arrivals of asylum seekers. The WoC framework hypothesises that the activation of multiple actors to face the new challenge will lead eventually to the emergence of specific integration policies and measures, depending on broader contextual factors and policies from other levels of government. The everyday implementation of these policies and interaction with the structures/networks of local support and services for asylum seekers put forwards by the market and civil society will result in an overall process of community-(re)making which can lead to either more cohesive social relations and positive attitudes or to societal fragmentation and hostility.

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework of the Whole-COMM Project.





As pointed out by Figure 1, the arrival of migrants around 2014/15 in SMsTRAs either spontaneously or through the operating of national redistribution policies, has taken place in local contexts characterised by distinct configurations of structural factors in terms of (i) the local economy and the labour market, ii) demographic composition and trends, and iii) levels of socio-cultural diversity and historical relations with migrant-related groups. We hypothesise that these factors are crucial in order to understand the mobilisation processes and policy responses deployed at T1, as well as the more long-term processes of community making taking place at T2. By combining the structural-demographic (i and ii) and the socio-cultural (iii) dimensions of local immigrant integration, in figure 2 we identify four types of local contexts, which provide the background for the formulation of specific theoretical hypotheses on modes of community mobilization around integration issues and processes of immigrant integration and social cohesion.

*Table 1. The Whole-COMM typology of local contexts.*

		STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS	
		+	-
EXPERIENCE WITH CULTURAL DIVERSITY	+	Revitalising/better-off	Marginal
	-	In Transition	Left-behind

**Revitalising localities** are characterised by a recovering local economy and an improving demographic profile, as well as by a recent history of migrants' settlement. In this context, we should expect a high level of mobilisation by local actors, with local policymakers, civil society organisations and other key stakeholders like the business community, actively engaged around the challenges of post 2014-migrant integration in an accommodative and pro-active manner. In terms of outcomes related to social cohesion, we should expect to find a receptive community, characterised by prevailing positive attitudes towards migrants, lively interactions among local residents and migrants reporting overall positive experiences of integration.

The opposite situation is likely to be found in **left-behind localities**, characterized by economic and demographic decline and previous experience with migration. Here we expect local political authorities to resist national redistribution plans and oppose spontaneous settlement; policies will be somewhat reactive and restrictive; civil society organisations and/or business will eventually mobilise but in a fragmented and sporadic manner. These conditions in the policymaking sphere will hamper the emergence of positive attitudes and interactions, leading to potentially divided local communities and negative migrants' experiences.



Two intermediate configurations are **marginal localities**, where demographic and economic decline combines with the presence of migrants' settlements before 2014; and **localities in transition**, characterised by an improving economic and demographic situation in the lack of migration-related diversity prior to 2014. Regarding marginal communities, we expect local political actors to show ambivalent attitudes towards newly arrived migrants, whereby integration initiatives will be dependent upon the mobilisation of stakeholders in the economy and civil society. In contrast, communities in transition are likely to be characterised by a higher level of mobilization on the part of local policymakers and stakeholders, also in multilevel policymaking processes, and therefore we should find some pro-active integration policies. These different configurations in terms of governance relations and policies will imply two different scenarios in terms of social interaction and community cohesion, leaning more towards the receptive community in former case and, conversely, the divided community in the latter.

As mentioned above, the relationship between integration policy (or lack thereof) and outcomes has been conceived in the WoC approach as open-ended, and, as such, a matter of empirical analysis. It follows that the typology presented in Figure 2 and the hypotheses illustrated above have to be understood as providing a heuristic framework, which should be considered by no means as deterministic.

More specifically, two key factors are likely to mediate all the expectations formulated above: the **size of the municipality** and the **political affiliation of local governments**. With respect to size, we do expect policymakers and communities in medium-sized localities to adopt more proactive approaches, either in support or in opposition to migrants' integration, due to the presumably higher levels of administrative capacity, and to the presence of a more structured civil society and business sector. In contrast, small towns and rural areas will adopt more passive approaches. With respect to political factors, we expect that political ideology of local executives and other local political factors (e.g., the local presence of radical right parties or dynamics of multilevel party politics) will influence policymaking processes on migration in the different configurations of localities identified in figure 2. Such influence of political factors is likely to be remarkably stronger in medium-sized towns, where, as mentioned above, characterized by the presence of a higher number of actors. In small towns and rural areas, we can expect a major role of mayors and/or political leadership (independently on political affiliations) in establishing the overall approach of the local community to migrants' integration.

Through in-depth research on policymaking processes and governance networks, practices of access to the labour market and housing, social relations and migrant experiences, and local residents' attitudes towards migrant integration in SMsTRAs (compared to big cities), Whole-COMM has aimed to provide **a new understanding of integration as a WoC process**. To this end, an articulated case-selection strategy and mixed-methods methodological design were elaborated, as illustrated in the section below.



## 2.2. Methodological note

The methods applied in the Whole-COMM project to analyse the key research questions described above are illustrated in depth in the first Whole-COMM working paper (see Caponio & Pettrachin, 2021). The selection of the localities which have been the object of analysis, illustrated in detail in the above-mentioned working paper, was conducted by rigorously applying a ‘diverse case selection strategy’ (Gerring & Cojocaru, 2016). An overview of the selected localities is described in Table A1 in the Appendix, while Table 2 provides a synthetic overview of the methods of data collection and data analysis that were applied, and of the data that were collected throughout the project. Additional methodological information can be found in the other comparative working papers of the Whole-COMM project.

*Table 2. Methods of data collection and data analysis*

OBJECT OF RESEARCH	METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION	METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS
Integration policies and practices and structures of support developed by nonpublic actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Semi-structured interviews with 696 actors involved in integration governance</li><li>• Expert survey filled in by researchers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• qualitative content analysis</li><li>• development of local policy index (MIPEX-L)</li></ul>
Policymaking relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Semi-structured interviews with 696 actors involved in integration governance</li><li>• Small-N structured survey filled in by the same governance actors.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Qualitative content analysis</li><li>• Multilevel regression analysis</li><li>• Social network analysis</li></ul>
Policy Frames	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Semi-structured interviews with 696 actors involved in integration governance</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Qualitative content analysis</li><li>• Quantitative frame analysis and multilevel regression analysis</li></ul>
Actors’ perceptions of the local context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Semi-structured interviews with 696 actors involved in integration governance</li><li>• Small-N structured survey filled in by the same governance actors.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Qualitative content analysis</li><li>• Multilevel regression analysis</li></ul>
Public attitudes to migrant integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Large-N survey on public attitudes to immigration in Italy, Germany, Austria, Sweden (16,000 respondents – see our WP6 report for more information)</li><li>• Quasi-experiments in 4 localities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quantitative analyses</li></ul>
Social relations and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participant observation</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Qualitative analyses</li></ul>

interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with migrants</li> <li>Focus groups with local residents (and migrants)</li> <li>Large-N survey on public attitudes to immigration in Italy, Germany, Austria, Sweden (16,000 respondents)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantitative analyses</li> </ul>
Migrants' experiences of integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with migrants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative content analysis</li> </ul>
Migrants' access to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Semi-structured interviews with 696 actors involved in integration governance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative content analysis</li> </ul>

Figure 2. Countries and regions where the Whole-COMM localities are situated.



## 3. Local policies and governance

### 3.1. Governance relations

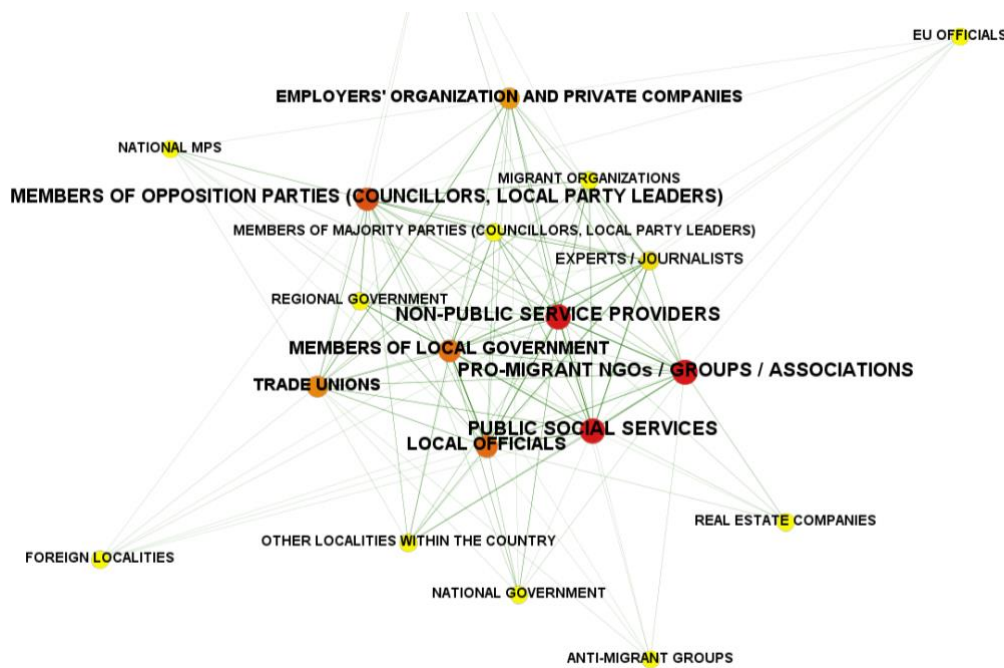
Which kind of governance relations and interactions among actors involved in migrant integration policymaking emerged in the Whole-COM localities? Analyses of governance relations within our Whole-COMM localities have been conducted in the framework of the third WP of the project (see Schiller et al., 2022; see also the following scientific articles based on Whole-COMM findings: Caponio & Pettrachin, 2023; Pettrachin, 2024; Pettrachin and Solano, *Forthcoming*). They produced two main overarching findings, related to: 1) the isolation of SMsTRAs from multilevel governance structures and venues and the scarce potential for policy diffusion that such isolation implies; 2) the key role played by political factors in influencing the emergence of governance relations between local governments and nonpublic actors and between local governments and higher-level governments.

Both these major findings are illustrated by Figure 3 below, which illustrates governance networks in our Whole-COMM localities. More specifically, by combining quantitative data on the frequency of governance actors' interactions or exchanges on migrant integration within our localities, we reconstructed the features of integration policy networks within two 'average localities' within our sample: an average locality with progressive local executive and an average locality with conservative local executive (for more information about the methodology through which such networks were created, see: Caponio & Pettrachin, 2023).

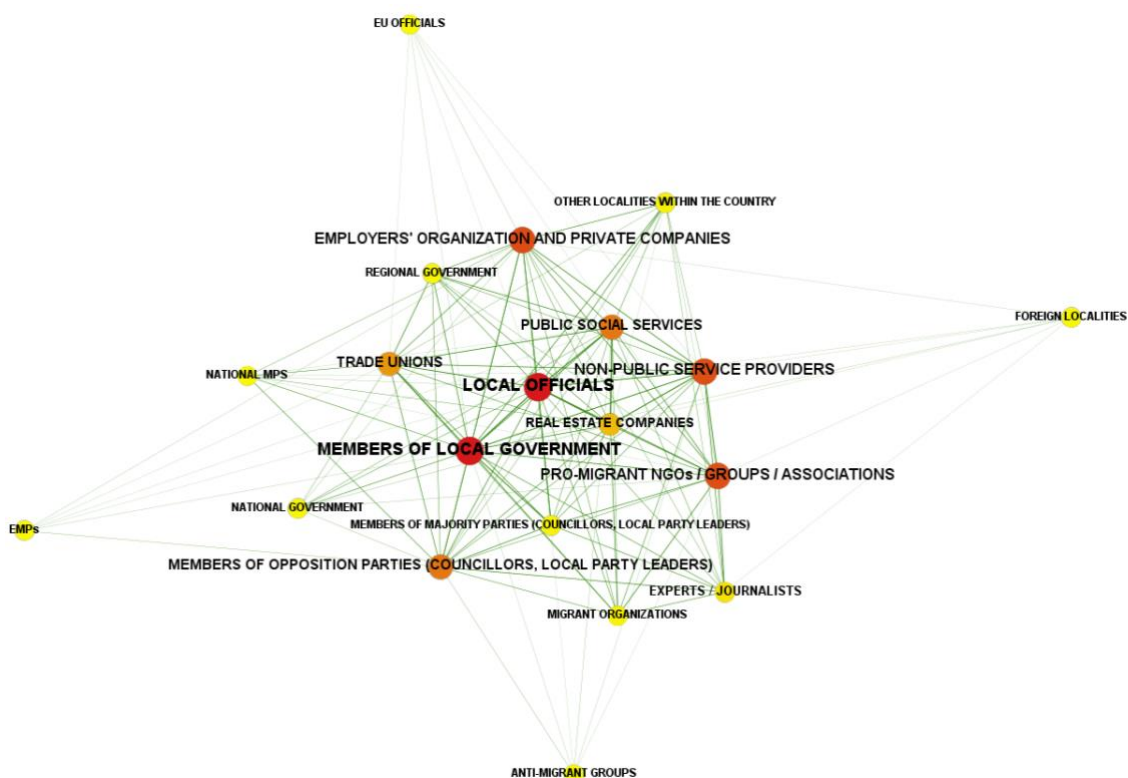
It is interesting to look first at the similarities between the two networks. In both types of localities, civil society actors are very central in the policy network. Conversely, interactions between local actors and governmental policymakers at higher levels of governance are rather rare, particularly those with EU officials and members of the European Parliament, but also those with national governmental actors.

Nodes' size in the figure is proportional to the centrality of actors within the network, which provides information about the role these actors play within the network. Here some remarkable differences emerge between centre-right and centre-left localities. In centre-left localities, the network is dominated by local governments – i.e. local officials and elected members of local executives – which are the most central actors within the network. Following network analysis theories (e.g., Castells, 2009), centre-left local governments are therefore the dominant actor of the network, i.e., the actors that mediate interactions within the network itself and proactively set the network's goals. In the case of centre-right localities, overall, local governments are much less central in the network (in statistical terms: their betweenness centrality and weighted degree are much lower) and develop much less interaction related to immigrant integration with other actors. Nongovernmental actors such as nonpublic service providers and pro-migrant NGOs instead emerge as the most central actors.

Figure 3. Network charts mapping the frequency of interactions within the integration policy network in an average centre-left and centre-right locality. Nodes indicate groups of actors. Edges represent interactions between them. The weight of edges is proportional to the frequency of exchanges. Nodes' size is proportional to their weighted degree (nodes with highest weighted degree are marked in red).



Panel a. Average centre-right locality



Panel b. Average centre-left locality

Figure 4 – Frequency of interactions between local governments in Whole-COMM localities and other actors.

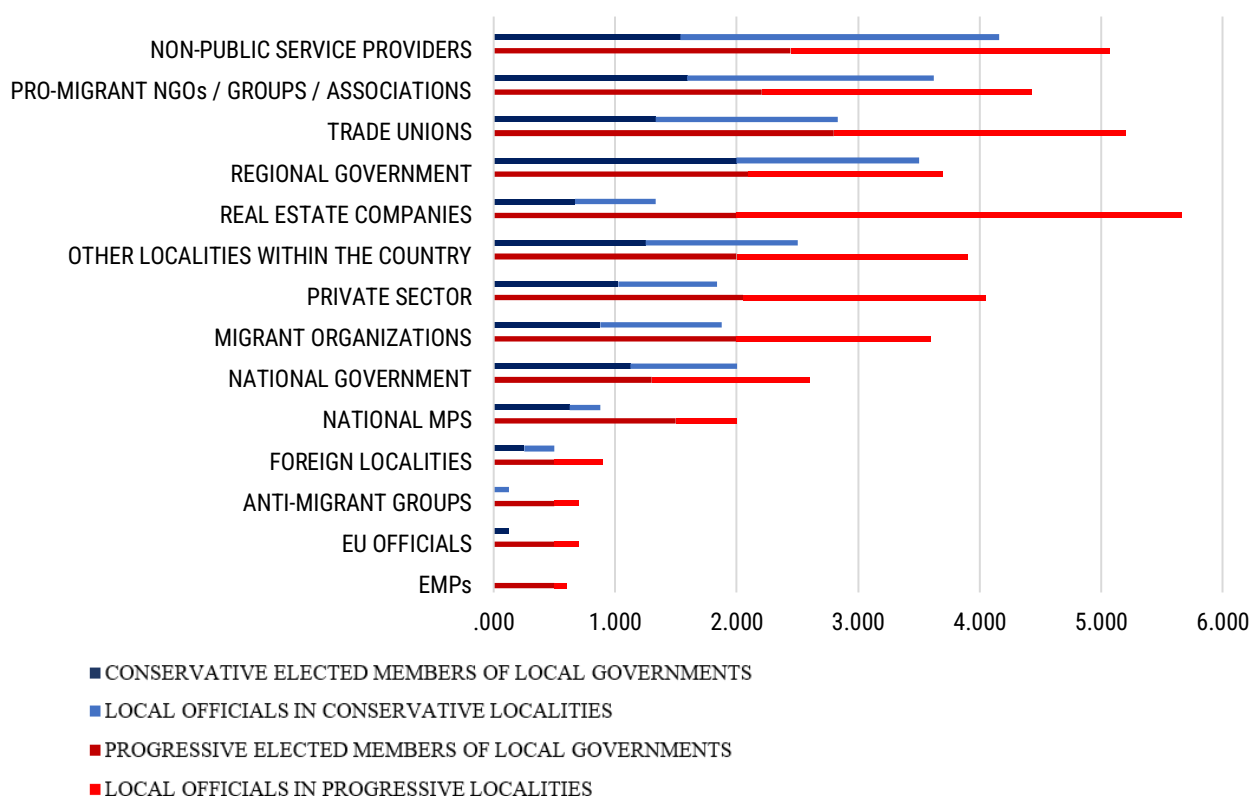


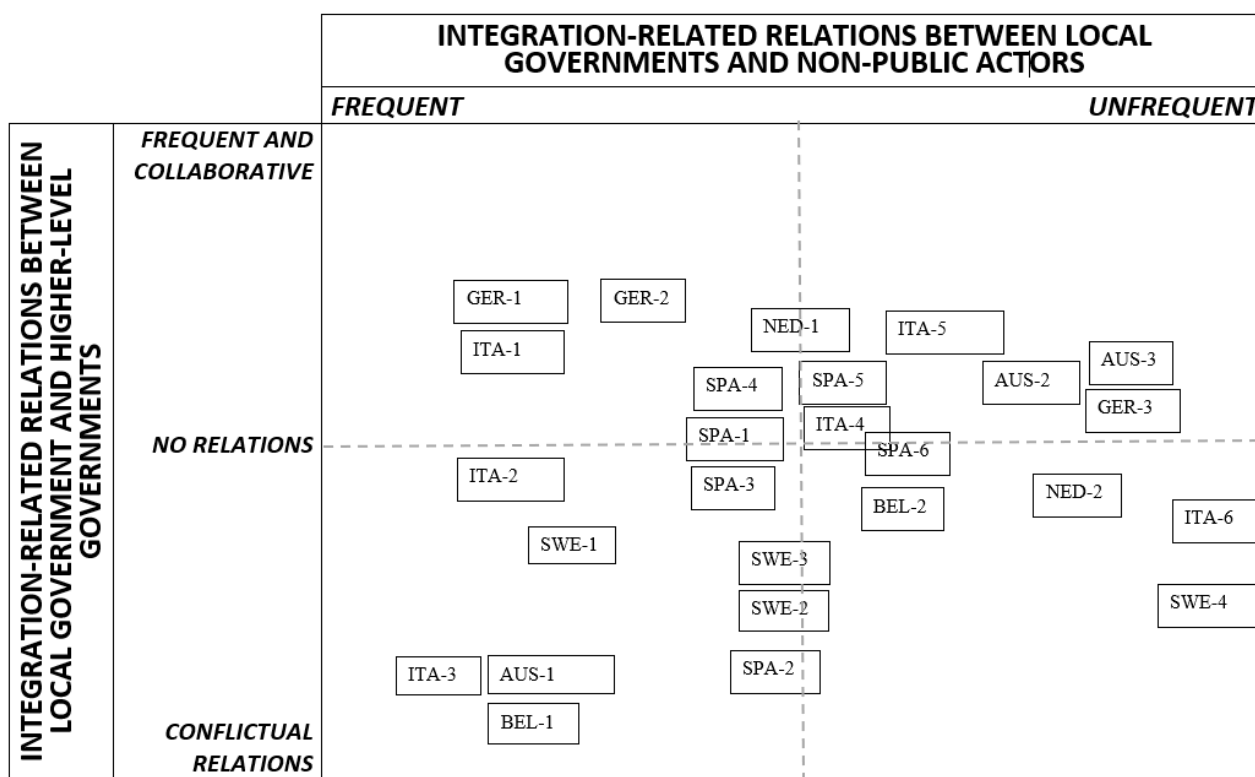
Figure 4 zooms in on the different types of interactions of local governments in different types of localities. We include in this analysis the relations developed by both elected politicians (e.g. mayors and other elected members of LG) and high-level local officials, with the aim of capturing the overall relations of LGs. As highlighted by the figure, there is little difference between local officials' and elected policymakers' relations, suggesting that in SMLs, contrary to what has been observed in big cities (see e.g. Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008; Schiller, 2015), relations developed by local officials are largely agreed upon with elected politicians. The figure suggests that, overall, LGs' vertical interactions are very infrequent. In the case of horizontal interactions with nongovernmental local actors, major differences emerge between centre-right and centre-left LGs. Compared to centre-right ones, centre-left LGs have more frequent interactions with all actors. Differences are very high for trade unions, migrant organisations, and nonpublic service providers, but centre-left policymakers also have much more frequent interactions with estate companies and private companies.

The same analyses have been replicated with data collected about the 2017–2019 time period. Overall, similar patterns emerge compared to 2020–2021, but with a remarkable decrease (of around 1 point in our temporal scale) in the frequency of all integration-related interactions (regardless of LGs' political affiliation), presumably due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Analysis of the qualitative interviews conducted with local governance actors largely support this key finding, showing that local political factors decisively shaped integration policymaking processes in SMsTRAs. More specifically, our qualitative analysis (for a more in-depth analysis, see: Caponio & Pettrachin, 2023) show that not only LGs' political affiliation but also the presence of RRP in local councils and – to some extent – in regional/national governments contributes to the emergence of different types of vertical and horizontal relations in our SMsTRAs.

Figure 5 provides a synthetic overview of our findings by positioning 26 of the analysed SMsTRAs on a conceptual space made by two axes representing, respectively, relations between local governments and nonpublic actors, and relations between local governments and higher-level governments responsible for migrant integration (mostly regional governments, except for centralised states like the Netherlands and Sweden). The majority of our localities are located close to the centre of the figure and are therefore characterised by some horizontal networking but scarce (if any) relations with governmental authorities at higher levels. None of our localities is characterised by the presence of frequent and collaborative governance relations on both the horizontal and vertical axes.

Figure 5. Modes of governance in 26 Whole-COMM localities in Western Europe (partially derived from: Caponio and Pettrachin, 2023).





## 3.2. Frames

How do actors involved in the governance of migrant integration in SMsTRAs understand migrant integration? Who do they think should be primarily responsible for achieving such integration? Understanding more about this dimension seems crucial, considering that several scholars have shown that diagnostic and prognostic frames often play a key role in shaping actions of policy actors (for a comprehensive review see Pettrachin et al., *Forthcoming*).

To answer these questions, we rely on the semi-structured interviews we conducted with policy actors. As part of these interviews, interviewees were asked several questions conceived to grasp their understanding of migrant integration and responsibilities in this field. These interviews have been transcribed and analysed applying a systematic frame analysis organized in three steps. First, each partner of the Whole-COMM project identified frames inductively. Second, the WP leaders and project coordinators came up with a uniform final list of frames (which was discussed and validated with all country partners during the Whole-COMM mid-term partners' meeting). Third, the frame analysis was replicated with the common list of frames. We allowed association of each interviewee with more than one frame. Overall, ten diagnostic frames were identified (related to how actors conceptualise integration) and four prognostic frames (related to how actors conceptualise responsibilities in this field). The frames are described in table F1 below.

Table 3. Frames identified

DIAGNOSTIC FRAMES	PROGNOSTIC FRAMES
1. Integration as active social and civic participation, participation in the social life of the local community	1. Integration is a process that concerns migrants only
2. Integration as a sense of belonging, or "a feeling of affinity and acceptance"	2. Integration is a process that concerns migrants and institutions (or only institutions)
3. Integration as adjustment to majority society and national laws and rules	3. Integration is a process that concerns locals and migrants
4. Integration as the individual achievement of self-sufficiency (economic integration?)	4. Integration is a process that concerns the whole community (e.g., migrants, locals, institutions, other governance actors).
5. Integration as migrants' access to basic services (and legal status) and equal opportunities for all	
6. Integration as Whole of community, i.e. as a process involving all members of the community and creating something new, e.g., new ways of living together, structures in local administration and policy, concepts of belonging.	



7. Integration as a two-way process (mutual adaptation, mutual learning, mutual exchange)	
8. Integration as social cohesion, absence of conflicts, positive relations between natives and newcomers, mutual respect/acceptance	
9. Critique/Refusal of the term integration	
10. Hands-off frame (migrants should not be integrated)	

Overall, as figure 6 suggests, the majority of our interviewees conceptualised integration primarily as ‘economic inclusion’, i.e., inclusion in the labour market and the achievement of self-sufficiency. Several interviewees also seem to conceptualise integration as participation in the social life of the community and as social cohesion or absence of tensions between migrants and locals.

*Figure 6. Diagnostic frames (interviewees in the 7 Western EU countries only). Individual interviewees could be associated to more than one frame.*

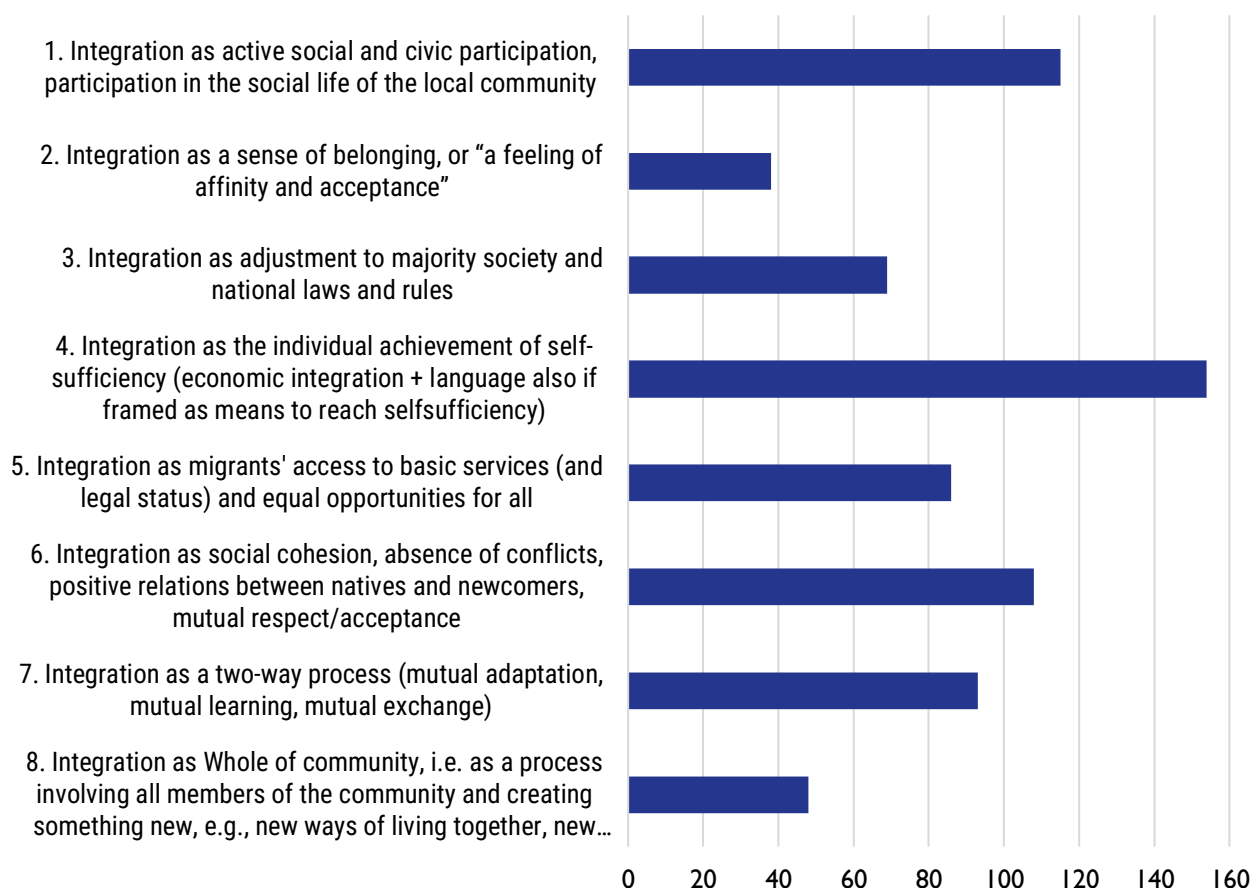
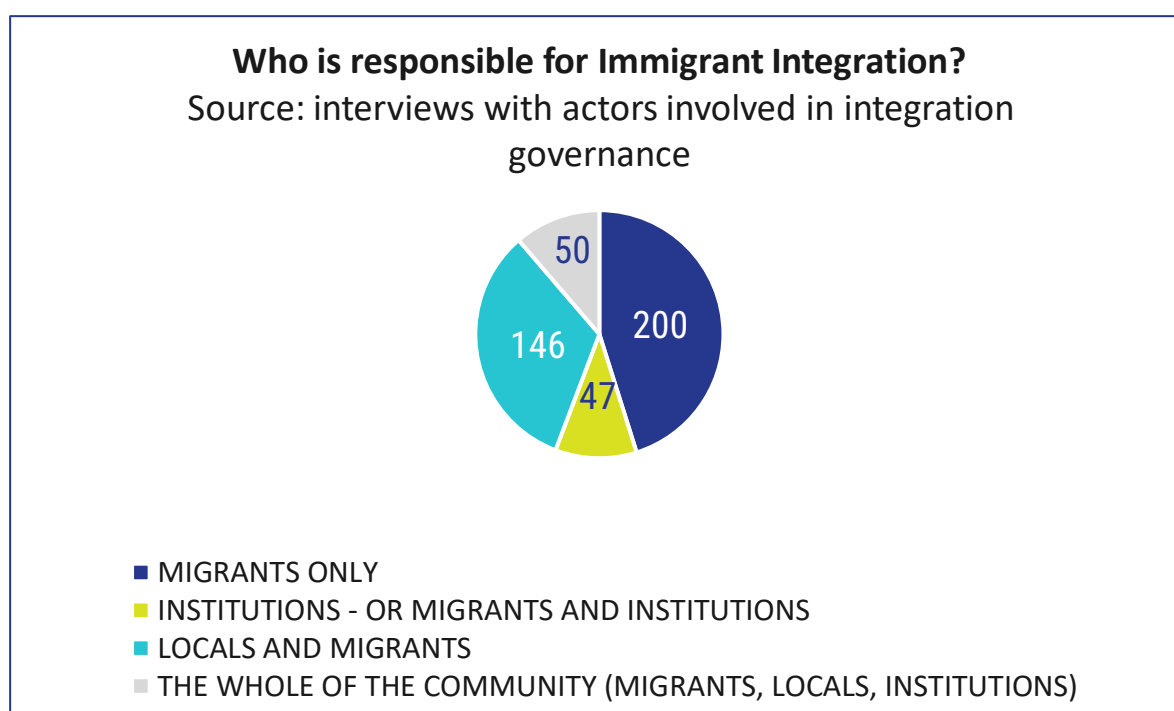


Figure 7 instead shifts the focus to prognostic frames, suggesting that almost half of our respondents conceptualise integration as a process that concerns only migrants. Only a minority of interviewees conceptualises migrant integration as a process that also involves other actors within the local community. In particular, the whole-of-community frame – related to broad conceptualisations of integration as a process that concern the whole community – emerged in only 50 interviews.

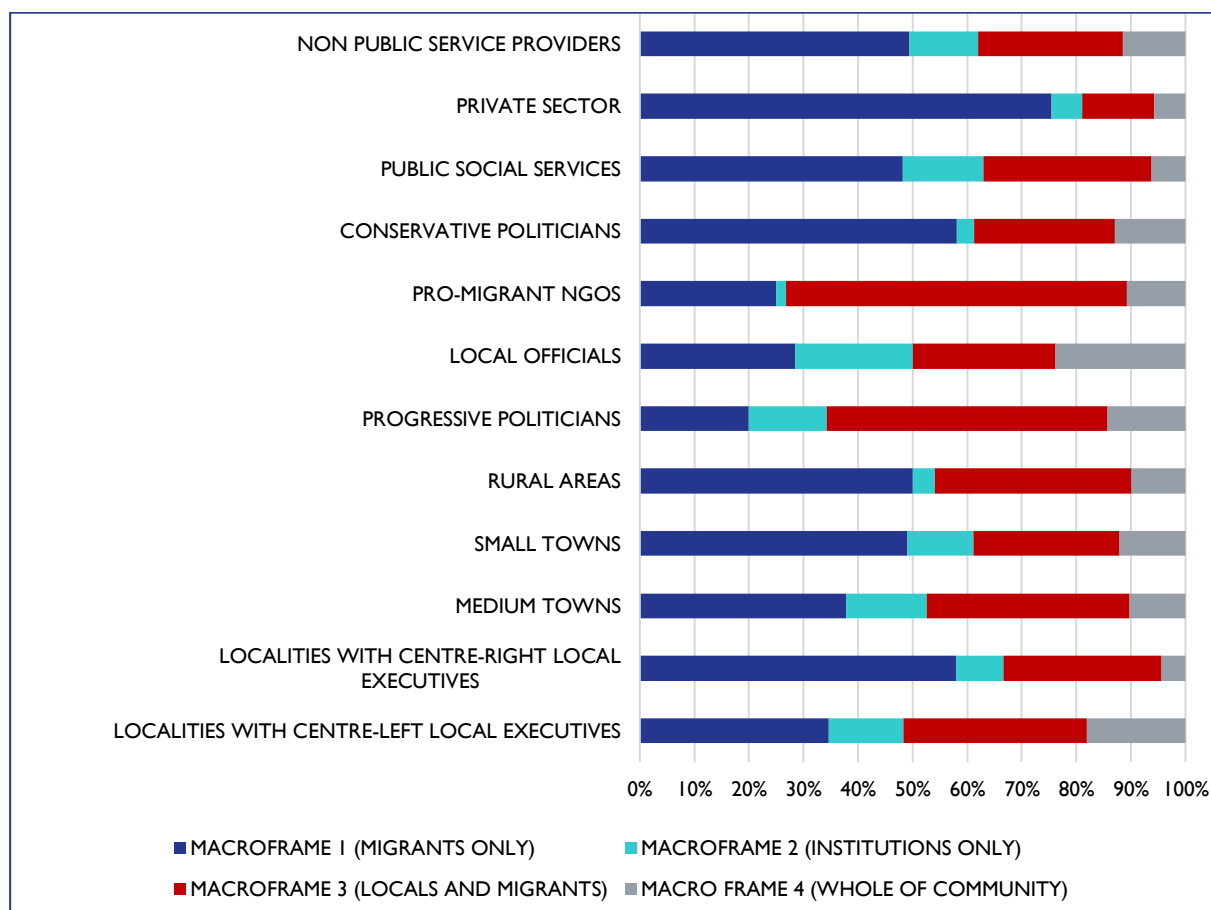
Figure 7. Prognostic frames



We conducted some additional analyses (including quantitative multilevel regression analyses, see: Pettrachin et al., *Forthcoming*) to understand variation in frames used by policy actors of different types and across different types of localities and identify possible drivers of frame emergence (see figure 8 for a descriptive overview). These analyses suggest that, on the one hand, and not surprisingly, different types of actors tend to use different types of frames. Private actors and local politicians affiliated to conservative parties tend to use the first prognostic frame (integration as a process that concerns migrants only) more frequently than other actors. The ‘whole-of-community frame’ is used more frequently by local officials and progressive politicians. More surprisingly, our regression analyses also suggest that part of the variation observed in our dataset seems to be explained by the characteristics of the localities where actors operate. As the descriptives in figure 8 suggest, actors operating in localities with centre-right local executives use more frequently frame 1 than actors operating in centre-left localities. This finding holds also when controlling for all of the other variables, and seems to concern particularly actors that work in direct contact with the local executive

(bureaucrats, nonpublic service providers, local officials). This suggests that ideas and understanding circulate within localities and that the local executive might play a role in shaping understandings of other actors.

Figure 8. Variation in prognostic frames across types of actors and local contexts.



### 3.3. Policies and structures of support

In two different work packages the Whole-COMM project has analysed integration policies developed by local governments in the Whole-COMM localities and structures of support in such localities developed by nonpublic actors. The underlying decision to focus on both policies developed by governments and initiatives in support of migrant integration developed by nongovernmental actors is in line with the whole-of-community approach adopted in the project. In the first part of this section, we illustrate findings of the MIPEX-L index developed by the Whole-COMM project (see Irastorza et al. 2023 for more details). In the second part of the section, we illustrate key insights from the comparative analysis of local responses to



migrant integration developed in the third WP of the project (see Schiller et al., 2022 for more details).

To measure and score the Whole-Comm municipalities on their migrant integration policies, the Migration Policy Group in collaboration with all the other partners of the Whole-COMM Consortium developed a policy index composed of several dimensions and indicators (for more details on the rigorous methodology through which the index was developed, see: Irastorza et al., 2023). The final scores that Whole-COMM municipalities were finally assigned on the different dimensions of their migrant integration policies are reported in table 4 below.

As the table suggests, we observed a remarkable variation in the integration policies developed in different types of localities. One common characteristic of the localities with the relatively favourable policy frameworks is that they have drawn up a clear strategy of migrant integration with specific goals and objectives. Regarding the policy processes and involvement of different stakeholders in the policy making, the decision-making scope is the most developed subdimension in the selected Whole-Comm municipalities, while a strong consultative structure and municipal body dealing with integration related measures seem rather weak across the board. One area where most municipalities covered could improve considerably is monitoring. Except for the Dutch towns and some medium sized German, and Swedish municipalities, there is limited policy development in monitoring policies and their effectiveness. When it comes to specific policy areas, healthcare, language, labour market inclusion and education are areas of at least some engagement from the municipalities. On the other hand, there is limited policy development regarding promotion of migrant political participation, intercultural communication.



Table 4. MIPEx-L scores for Whole-comm localities (Source: MPG, deliverable 6.2: Irastorza et al., 2023)

	ITALY						GERMANY						BELGIUM				AUSTRIA			
	Piedmont, Rural	Piedmont, Small	Piedmont, Medium	Sicily, Rural	Sicily, Small	Sicily, Medium	Saxony, Small	North Rhine W, Small	Lower Saxony, Rural	Saxony, Rural	Mecklenburg, Medium	Lower Saxony, Medium	Wallonia, Small	Wallonia, Medium	Flanders, Medium	Flanders, Small	Tyrol, Medium	Lower Austria, Small	Tyrol, Rural	Lower Austria, Rural
<b>Governance System</b>	53,25	79,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	42,83	61,50	11,46	0,00	8,33	75,96	67,63	0,00	0,00	69,13	45,67	77,38	12,50	13,75	0,00
<b>Actors and Relations</b>	37,50	40,63	9,38	8,25	6,25	18,75	42,63	53,13	15,63	9,38	68,75	34,38	3,13	3,13	57,38	60,50	43,75	55,13	27,00	20,75
<b>Monitoring</b>	41,67	25,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	25,00	16,67	0,00	0,00	0,00	58,33	16,67	0,00	0,00	0,00	16,67	16,67	0,00	0,00	0,00
<b>Implementation</b>	50,00	68,75	25,00	33,33	20,83	47,92	79,17	47,92	35,42	43,75	70,83	62,50	27,08	27,08	75,00	68,75	85,42	64,58	33,33	62,50
<b>Labor Market</b>	31,25	37,50	0,00	6,25	0,00	50,00	56,25	12,50	31,25	0,00	62,50	25,00	0,00	0,00	75,00	75,00	12,50	6,25	0,00	0,00
<b>Education</b>	0,00	43,75	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	18,75	12,50	18,75	18,75	43,75	25,00	18,75	18,75	25,00	18,75	75,00	68,75	6,25	0,00
<b>Language</b>	50,00	50,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	75,00	75,00	75,00	50,00	100,00	100,00	0,00	0,00	100,00	50,00	0,00	50,00	0,00	0,00
<b>Social Services</b>	58,33	30,56	25,00	25,00	25,00	36,11	33,33	25,00	41,67	41,67	36,11	41,67	0,00	0,00	41,67	19,44	19,44	25,00	0,00	8,33
<b>Housing</b>	25,00	37,50	0,00	12,50	0,00	75,00	37,50	0,00	25,00	25,00	37,50	25,00	0,00	0,00	12,50	0,00	25,00	37,50	0,00	25,00
<b>Political Participation</b>	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	25,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	25,00	12,50	25,00	25,00	62,50	25,00	12,50	25,00	0,00	0,00
<b>Health</b>	75,00	75,00	75,00	75,00	75,00	100,00	37,50	37,50	33,00	33,00	50,00	87,50	33,50	33,50	33,50	33,50	33,00	33,00	33,00	33,00
<b>Antidiscrimination</b>	0,00	62,50	50,00	12,50	0,00	25,00	50,00	25,00	0,00	0,00	25,00	37,50	0,00	0,00	100,00	50,00	100,00	100,00	0,00	0,00
<b>Interculturalism</b>	47,75	51,75	16,50	16,50	22,75	41,50	31,25	25,00	0,00	18,75	41,50	64,25	12,50	12,50	60,25	22,75	31,25	41,50	29,00	16,50
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>36,13</b>	<b>46,30</b>	<b>15,45</b>	<b>14,56</b>	<b>11,53</b>	<b>35,55</b>	<b>43,43</b>	<b>25,00</b>	<b>21,21</b>	<b>19,12</b>	<b>53,48</b>	<b>46,12</b>	<b>9,23</b>	<b>9,23</b>	<b>54,76</b>	<b>37,39</b>	<b>40,92</b>	<b>39,94</b>	<b>10,95</b>	<b>12,78</b>



	SWEDEN						NETHERLANDS				SPAIN						TURKEY		
	Skana, Small	Blekinge, Rural	Småland, Medium	Gävleborgs, Small	Dalarna, Rural	Gävleborgs, Medium	Utrecht, Medium	Zuid-Holland, Small	Overijssel, Small	Drenthe, Rural	Cataluna, Small	Castilla, Small	Cataluna, Medium	Valenciana, Rural	Andalucia, Medium	Andalucia, Small	South, Small	Marmara, Medium	Middle, Small
<b>Governance System</b>	38,04	21,38	18,63	24,13	24,13	22,75	84,38	56,67	0,00	25,50	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	13,13	0,00	0,00
<b>Actors and Relations</b>	6,25	12,50	53,13	18,75	54,25	21,88	63,63	48,88	40,63	40,63	6,25	11,38	14,50	3,13	15,63	3,13	30,13	6,25	18,75
<b>Monitoring</b>	66,67	0,00	50,00	0,00	16,67	33,33	91,67	100,00	66,67	91,67	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
<b>Implementation</b>	12,50	12,50	81,25	52,08	79,17	68,75	50,00	52,08	58,33	58,33	50,00	72,92	58,33	33,33	58,33	50,00	18,75	12,50	12,50
<b>Labor Market</b>	37,50	0,00	25,00	18,75	50,00	25,00	56,25	37,50	50,00	87,50	0,00	0,00	12,50	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
<b>Education</b>	37,50	25,00	50,00	50,00	50,00	75,00	87,50	62,50	43,75	50,00	18,75	12,50	12,50	12,50	12,50	12,50	0,00	0,00	0,00
<b>Language</b>	100,00	100,00	100,00	100,00	100,00	100,00	50,00	50,00	50,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
<b>Social Services</b>	55,56	61,11	56,25	63,89	63,89	63,89	80,56	75,00	75,00	72,22	25,00	25,00	36,11	27,78	25,00	8,33	0,00	5,56	0,00
<b>Housing</b>	25,00	25,00	50,00	25,00	25,00	25,00	75,00	75,00	62,50	75,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
<b>Political Participation</b>	25,00	25,00	25,00	50,00	25,00	25,00	50,00	37,50	25,00	37,50	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
<b>Health</b>	100,00	100,00	100,00	75,00	100,00	100,00	58,00	58,00	58,00	58,00	58,00	33,00	45,50	33,00	33,00	33,00	45,50	33,00	33,00
<b>Antidiscrimination</b>	0,00	0,00	25,00	50,00	25,00	37,50	62,50	25,00	0,00	25,00	12,50	0,00	25,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
<b>Interculturalism</b>	0,00	18,75	31,25	31,25	50,00	31,25	60,25	43,75	0,00	35,25	41,50	12,50	41,50	35,25	18,75	12,50	29,00	16,50	6,25
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>38,77</b>	<b>30,86</b>	<b>51,19</b>	<b>42,99</b>	<b>51,01</b>	<b>48,41</b>	<b>66,90</b>	<b>55,53</b>	<b>40,76</b>	<b>50,51</b>	<b>16,31</b>	<b>12,87</b>	<b>18,92</b>	<b>11,15</b>	<b>12,55</b>	<b>9,19</b>	<b>10,50</b>	<b>5,68</b>	<b>5,42</b>



In line with our whole-of-community approach we have complemented information on local policies on migrant integration developed by local governments with information about structures of support developed by other actors within the local community. In some localities, indeed, the lack of action by local governments might be due to highly proactive actions by nonpublic actors within the local community, which make governmental initiatives in some areas unnecessary. Overall, by combining information on local policies and structures of support, we found that of our 49 Whole-COMM localities only 11 localities had inclusive measures in place and specific actors dealing with migrant inclusion, while 13 had no inclusive measures and actors in place or had restrictive policies or disengaged actors. 25 localities were positioned somewhere in between these two extremes.

*Table 5. Integration measures and responses in Whole-COMM localities (red=progressive local executives; blue=conservative local executives; grey= mixed local executives).*

Inclusive measures in place, local actors in place and engaged	Mixed	Lack of policies or restrictive/exclusionary policies, local actors missing or disengaged
ITA (Piedmont) ITA (Sicily) ITA (Piedmont) SE (Jonköping) BE (Flanders) NED (Utrecht), AUT (Lower Austria) CAN (Quebec) BE (Flanders) AUT (Tyrol) SE (Dalarna)	GER (Lower Saxony) GER (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) GER (North-Rhine Westfalia) SE (Gävleborg) SE (Gävleborg) SE (Blekinge) SP (Valencia) SP (Andalusia) SP (Castile&Leon) CAN (Ontario) CAN (British Columbia) ITA (Sicily) SE (Scania) NED (South Holland) CAN (British Columbia) CAN (Ontario) CAN (Quebec) NED (Overijssel) AUT (Tyrol) SP (Catalonia) SP (Andalusia) SP (Catalonia) GER (Saxony-Anhalt) GER (Lower Saxony) NED (Drenthe)	BE (Wallonia) AUT (Lower Austria) BE (Wallonia) TUR (Central Anatolia) ITA (Sicily) ITA (Piedmont) POL (Lower Silesia); GER (Saxony) TUR (Eastern Marmara Region) TUR (Mediterranean Region) POL (Greater Poland); POL (Lower Silesia); POL (Greater Poland);

Starting from this overall picture, we have tried to assess which specific factors account for the observed differences. While our sample includes localities of very different size, we did find that rural areas have considerably lower scores as compared to small and medium towns in our policy index. In some contexts, it seems, however, that the lack of official policies was (partially) compensated by the activation of some local nonpublic actors, while the difference between small and medium towns are rather negligible. We also found that (as expected) revitalizing municipalities had a more accommodative and inclusive approach to migrant integration compared to other types of localities. The patterns for the other types were a bit more mixed, with some of our findings on economically stagnating municipalities showing a more active approach than we had expected, particularly for what concerns local policies developed and implemented by local governments (for more details, see: Irastorza et al., 2023). Overall, this is consistent with the literature pointing out to the fact that limited funding may affect the effectiveness of policymaking whereas developed economic structure allows better employment opportunities for immigrants.

Finally, and most importantly, we found that political orientation matters significantly to explain both the overall integration measures developed in the locality and, specifically, the types of integration policies developed by local governments. We found that localities with progressive local executives often developed a more accommodative and inclusive approaches. The importance of political factors in shaping local policymakers' and other local actors' decisions related to integration policy was also confirmed by findings of our small-N survey with local policymakers. On the one hand, the policymakers interviewed reported that political ideologies, public opinion and pressure from political parties supporting the local executive were the three most important factors that drove their decisions to develop (or not) integration policies. On the other hand, multi-level regression analyses we conducted using data collected through the same survey suggest that the presence of anti-immigration parties in local councils decisively decreased the propensity of local actors involved in integration governance (meaning: public actors, nonpublic actors, private actors) to develop actions on migrant integration (see Pettrachin, *Under Review*).

Clearly, it might well be that different factors interact in explaining the approaches to migrant integration adopted in our localities. For instance, it seems that smaller and more economically struggling localities with conservative local executives had consistently a lack of policies and actors to deal with post-2014 integration of immigrants. Political affiliation is particularly crucial to explain mobilization of small and medium-sized towns.

Overall, we conclude that local characteristics (size, economic development, political orientations) do play a role in explaining the preparedness and responsiveness of SMsTRAs in accommodating the arrival of newcomers, together with national institutional frameworks (unitary state or federalist systems, centralization or decentralization of integration policies) and European policies and funding (with currently a rather generic approach of 'the local level'). Exceptions exist and leadership of local policymakers apparently could tilt a policy situation into one way or another.

## 4. Access to housing and employment. Obstacles and enablers

Housing and employment represent key resources for the realization of migrants' fundamental rights as well as for achieving integration in a WoC perspective. In fact, the quality of life within local communities is likely to be affected in a negative way if the refugees that have received first accommodation in that locality cannot become local residents on equal terms, implying access to remunerated work and autonomous housing. Therefore, this section of the report aims to answer three key research questions:

- What are reported to be the major obstacles/challenges that are reported to exist in the analysed Whole-COMM localities with respect to migrants' access to employment and housing?
- Which concrete local policies, initiatives and practices have been put in place to help mitigate/overcome the reported obstacles/challenges?
- Which actors (public, private and civil society) are involved in enabling post-2014 migrants' access to employment and housing at the local level and what is their role?

To answer these questions, we relied on the 600+ interviews conducted with key informants in the Whole-COMM localities (see above). Despite reflecting the perceptions of policy actors, rather than of those of affected migrants, it must be stressed that interviewees included representatives of local NGOs and migrant-led organisations (61 interviews), as well as street-level bureaucrats working in public social services (127) and non-profit service providers (95). These are the actors that are traditionally at the frontline in dealing with migrants' integration challenges at a local level, and are therefore familiar with the difficulties that they face.

With respect to the first question regarding the obstacles/challenges, from the analyses carried out within WP4 (see Schweitzer & Garcés-Mascreñas, 2022), structural factors emerged as the most relevant ones in determining the conditions of access to housing and employment in SMsTRAs. The general picture emerging from the 40 localities across the 8 EU countries considered by Whole-COMM is that of a relatively easy access to employment, due to general labour shortages especially in the non-qualified positions, but of a difficult access to housing due to a general housing crisis. It follows that, as shown by figure 9, favourable local economic conditions tend to make it more difficult for migrants to find a place to live. In contrast, in localities facing negative structural conditions, finding housing for refugees can be relatively easy, yet access to employment appears more troublesome. However, our analyses also show a remarkable influence of the size of the locality: *ceteris paribus*, access to housing is easier in small towns and rural areas (red colour), than in medium-sized cities, while the reverse is true for access to employment.

With respect to the second question regarding the concrete local policies, initiatives and practices put in place in order to mitigate/overcome the reported obstacles in access to

employment and housing in SMsTRAs, our research findings suggest that measures, when in place, do not regard generally refugees or post-2014 migrants, but specific sub-groups like seasonal workers or unaccompanied minors in the case of housing, young migrants or women in that of employment. Overall, our analysis suggests that 42% of the researched SMsTRAs developed specific measures in relation to housing and 47% with respect to employment.

Figure 9: 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	Extremely difficult	SE-5				Access to Employment	Extremely difficult		GE-2 BE-3	SP-5
	Relatively difficult	GE-6 IT-3 NL-2		BE-1 SE-3 SP-3			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	PL-1 PL-2 NL-1	SP-2	AT-1 GE-4 IT-1 SP-1 AT-2 GE-5 IT-2 BE-2			Relatively easy	SE-2 PL-3 GE-3 IT-4	PL-4 AT-3	IT-6
Positive structural conditions	Relatively easy	Relatively difficult	Extremely difficult		Negative structural conditions	Relatively easy	Relatively difficult	Extremely difficult		
Access to Housing					Access to Housing					

In slightly fewer localities post-2014 migrants' access to housing and/or employment is considered as being addressed through mainstream local policies (like social/subsidized housing or general employment programs) that regard disadvantaged or "at risk" groups, like unemployed youth, people with low qualifications, homeless people, etc. Furthermore, in almost two thirds of all localities (25 of 40) interviewees see the issue of migrants' labour market access as matter of (mainstream) regional or national employment policies, while, in relation to housing, this is the case in only 10 localities. In relation to both housing and employment, initiatives by private actors and civil society actors are considered as a crucial resource for post-2014 migrants. The figure also highlights that housing is very often perceived as "not being addressed at all", and therefore simply left to local housing markets and the migrants' own efforts and personal networks.

Furthermore, figure 10 also highlights that national and regional policies can play an important role in making access to housing and employment more or less easy at a local level. The capacity of local municipalities and other local actors 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.

Regarding the factors that seem to account for SMsTRAs engagement in promoting targeted policies, research findings suggest that two factors seem to matter: the size of the locality and local politics. With regard to locality size, larger localities (medium-sized towns) appear to have more capacity to implement targeted measures in relation to both housing and employment. In fact, out 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, the main expectation was that governments formed or led by progressive parties would be more likely to set up targeted measures for post-2014 migrants. Our analysis suggests that political orientation indeed seems to have an influence. More than half of the localities with a conservative-led government did not take any targeted measures. Local governments with executives supported by progressive parties (either alone or in coalition with the centre-right), seem to have been more likely to develop targeted measures in relation to migrants' labour market access.

The third question regards the mobilisation of non-public actors and their role in favouring post-2014 migrants' access to the labour market and housing. Our research findings show that

private and civil society-led initiatives are primarily a response to a lack of targeted public policies, especially with respect to access to housing. In fact, out of the 18 localities 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 (78%) non-state initiatives have been identified, which presumably make up for a lack of public engagement. There are only four localities in which neither (targeted) public nor private measures have been taken, and seven where both the local government and non-state actors have become active in facilitating housing access for post-2014 migrants. In terms of 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 compensate for this lack. In this case, there are also only four localities without any targeted public measures nor private initiatives, but as many as 13 where private or civil society actors took initiatives in addition to (local or regional/national) targeted measures. Hence, whereas in regard to housing private and civil society actors primarily become active because of a lack of public action, in the case of employment non-public actors seem more often to intervene in order to complement the offer of services provided by local authorities. However, different patterns of non-public actors intervention appear also to reflect different national traditions in terms of welfare states and role of public services. In fact, whereas non-public initiatives are almost absent or play a minor role in (most) localities in Belgium, the Netherlands, and Sweden, their presence is particularly relevant in the German and Polish localities, as well as most of the Spanish and Italian ones (for more details see: Schweitzer & Garcés-Mascreñas, 2022).

## 5. Integration outcomes

### 5.1. Local residents' attitudes to migrant integration

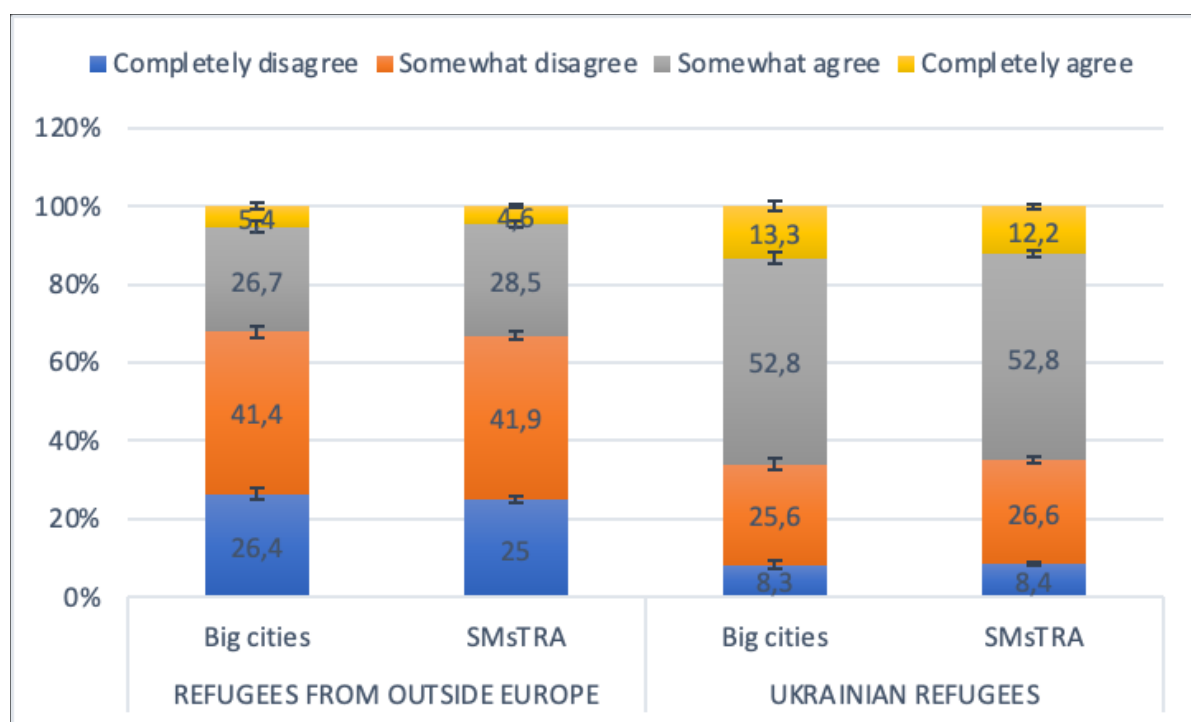
As part of our WP6, we conducted a large-N survey on local residents' attitudes and opinions on migrant integration. More information about the survey can be found in our comparative working paper (Irastorza et al., 2023). The target group consisted of a representative sample of 16,000 local residents, equally distributed across Austria, Germany, Italy and Sweden. Quotas were set for age, gender and size of the municipality of residence (for each country we had 1,000 respondents in big cities and 4,000 respondents in SMsTRAs). The survey provides highly relevant insights about several issues, including: 1) local residents' perceptions of integration outcomes and key obstacles to migrant integration; and 2) local residents' opinions on integration policies. We summarise the key findings along these two main dimensions in the subsections that follow.

#### 5.1.1. Local residents' perceptions of integration outcomes.

Survey respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with the statement "In COUNTRY, refugees are well integrated" concerning refugees from outside Europe and

Ukrainian refugees. Figure 11 illustrates answers to this question by size of municipality and country. Findings clearly suggest that there are more people who think that Ukrainians are well-integrated than people who think that non-European refugees are well-integrated. Such differences could be explained by several factors, including the high employment rate of Ukrainians (UNHCR, 2023), or feelings of “cultural proximity”. Remarkably, there are no differences in the response to this question between people living in SMsTRAs and big cities.

Figure 11: Public opinions on refugees’ integration by size of municipality.



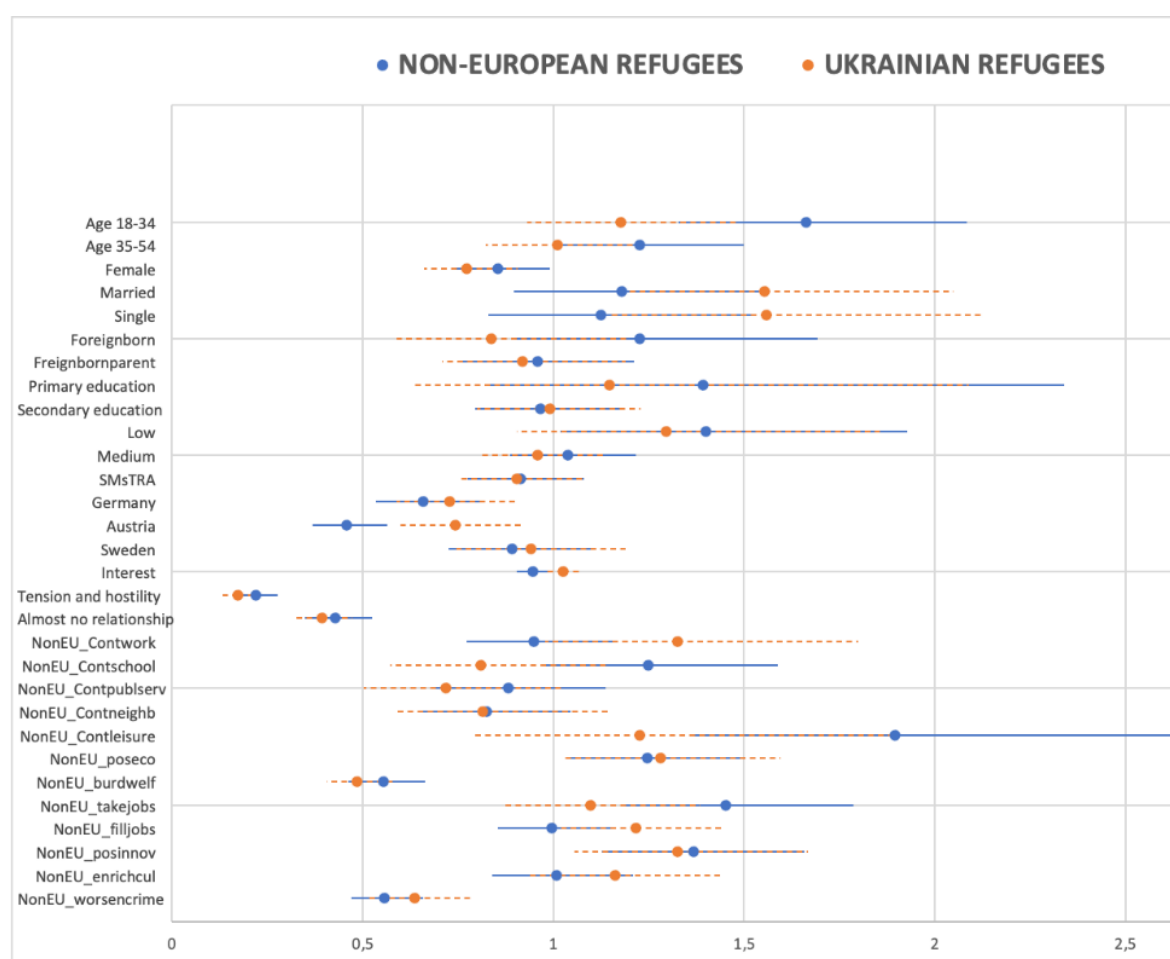
Regression analyses conducted as part of our WP6 provide further details about the drivers of residents’ perceptions of integration outcomes (see Irastorza et al. 2023). Figure 12 depicts odd ratios – and confidence intervals – for variables explaining opinions on the integration of non-European refugees or Ukrainian refugees in the four countries where the survey was conducted. Overall, these findings confirm previous studies that show a correlation between attitudes towards migration and attitudes towards integration (see OECD, 2020). As expected, there is a negative correlation between perceptions on lack of inter-group relationships or bad relationships, refugees being a burden for the welfare state and worsening crime, and opinions of both groups of refugees as being well integrated. On the contrary, thinking that refugees promote innovation or are good for the economy, in general, is associated to positive perceptions on integration for both groups.

Evidence for other variables related to threat and contact hypotheses is more mixed: people who think that Ukrainian refugees (but not those from outside Europe) fill jobs where there is

a shortage of labour are positively correlated to opinions on integration; ideas about non-European refugees (but not Ukrainians) taking jobs away from long-term residents increases people's likelihood of considering that their integration is going well; whereas having contact with refugees from outside Europe (but not Ukrainian refugees) during sports, volunteering or cultural activities, that is, leisure time, increases people's likelihood of thinking that integration is going well for this group.

Regarding socio-demographic variables, women are less likely to think that refugees are well integrated than men. Younger people and people who work in highly skilled occupations are more likely to think that non-European refugees are well-integrated, whereas age and occupation are not significantly correlated to opinions on the integration of Ukrainians. People who are single or married are more likely to consider that Ukrainian refugees are well integrated compared to people who are separated, divorced or widowed. Finally, being more interested in or better informed about the topic of migration and integration is negatively associated to having positive opinions on the integration of refugees from outside Europe.

Figure 12: Odd ratios for public opinions about non-European and Ukrainian refugees as being well-integrated.



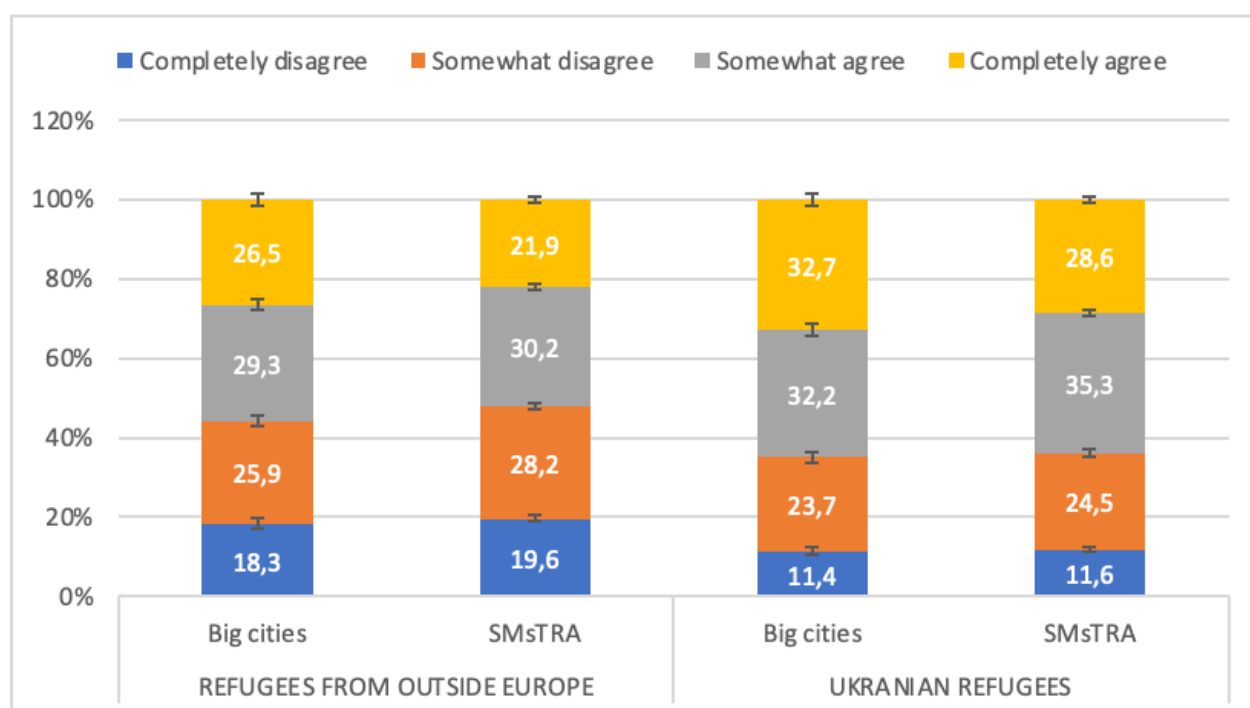
### 5.1.2. Local residents' opinions on integration policies.

Our survey also investigated local residents' opinions on integration policies. In particular, respondents were asked where integration policies should provide full support to refugees and if governments should provide more support to refugees.

Overall, the majority of the respondents think that policies should fully support refugees (figure 13). However, they are more likely to think so when it comes to Ukrainian refugees compared to non-European refugees. Remarkably, the share of respondents who think that policies should provide full support to refugees is higher in cities compared to SMsTRAs, but the majority of respondents also in SMsTRAs think that policies should fully support refugees (both non-EU and Ukrainian refugees).

Similarly, the majority of the respondents think that their national government should provide more support to refugees in the future (for the full data see: Irastorza et al, 2023). As in the case of the role of policies, interviewees are more likely to think so when it comes to Ukrainian refugees compared to non-European refugees.

*Figure 13: Public opinions on the role of integration policies to support refugees from Ukraine and outside Europe*



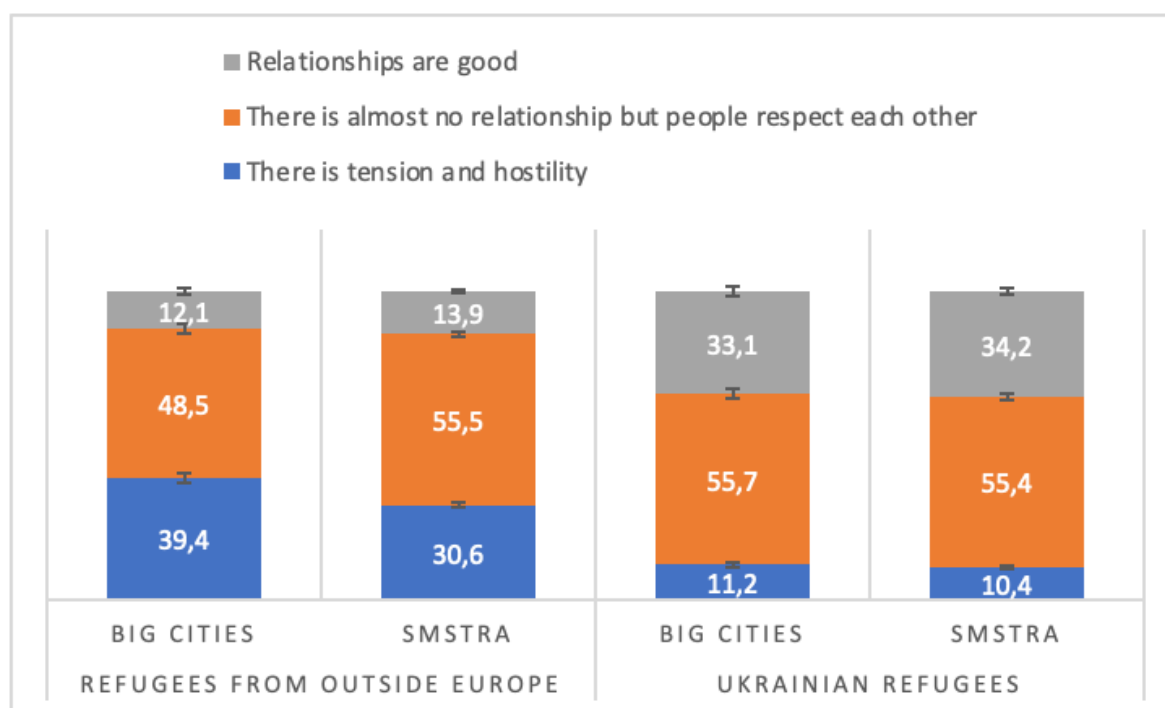
Quite remarkably, these findings, suggesting that only a narrow minority of local residents in SMsTRAs opposed more integration measures by the government, seems very much

decoupled from local policymakers' perceptions of public opinion. We gathered data about such perceptions through our semi-structured interviews and the small-N survey with local policy actors. Analyses of these data suggest that, overall, local policy actors, and particularly policymakers, seem to perceive public opinion to be much more hostile to more integration measures and to migration more broadly. Such perceptions are more pronounced in the case of conservative policymakers and in rural areas, compared to other types of localities.

## 5.2. Social interactions between migrants and long-term residents and integration experiences

The Whole-COMM project has analysed social interactions between local residents and migrants in two different work packages (WP5, see Hadj Abdou & Katsiaficas, 2023; and WP6, see Irastorza et al., 2023), applying a range of different methodologies, ranging from participant observation, focus groups, interviews with migrants (in the Whole-COMM localities) and the above-mentioned survey on local residents' attitudes to migrant integration (in the four countries: Italy, Austria, Germany and Sweden).

Figure 14: Public opinions on relationships between refugees and long-term residents



Overall, the work done suggests that there are very few social relations between local residents and migrants in SMsTRAs. Starting from the survey, more than half of respondents reported that there is almost no relationship between refugees and long-term residents (see figure 14). Remarkably, respondents reported to have more and better interactions with Ukrainian refugees than with non-European refugees. Crucially for this study, relations

between non-European refugees and local residents in SMsTRAs are reported to be slightly better and less tense compared to big cities (while no difference emerges considering Ukrainian refugees).

Similar findings emerged from our qualitative study. In the vast majority of the localities analysed very few (meaningful) social interactions were reported by migrants and local residents who took part in focus groups and observed during participant observation research. In the German case study localities, for example, both local and migrant interviewees referred to a “silent majority” of the population that would not oppose migration, but also don’t interact with refugees. Various refugee interviewees described how they failed to establish social relations with people beyond a small circle of engaged volunteers (Enßle-Reinhardt et al., 2023, p. 10). In Sweden, few migrant interviewees reported meaningful encounters with hostility. Instead, what characterizes most of their interactions is a sense of indifference, as long-term residents will either ignore them altogether or treat them instrumentally (e.g. as clients, recipients of aid, etc.).

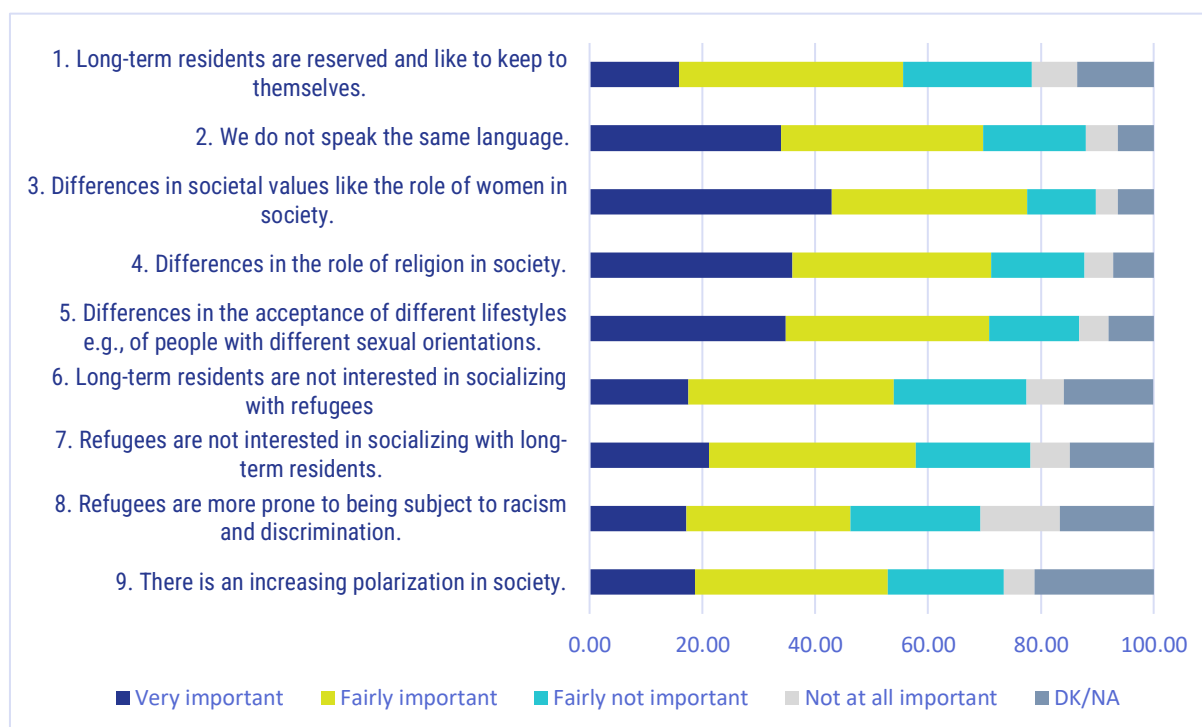
This lack of meaningful interactions between post-2014 migrants and long-term residents could be observed in the majority of localities studied, often independently of whether or not this locality had previous experience with migration and related diversity. The scarcity of meaningful relations is partly more emphasized in localities with economic and demographic decline, although there was no uniform pattern across all countries according to type of locality. The degree of social interactions, however, differed according to different areas of life, with intergroup contacts being more pronounced in the area of work (for adults) and school (for minors).

We also tried to identify key factors that are obstructing the development of more social interactions between long-term residents and migrants.

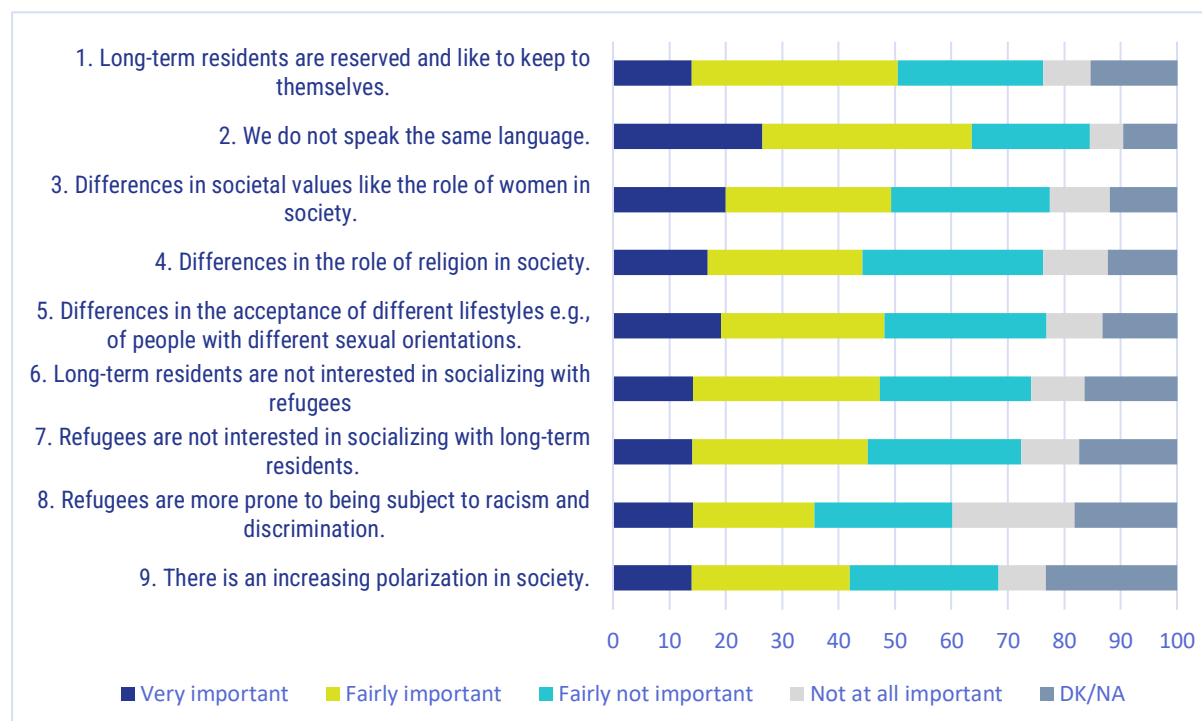
As part of our large-N survey, local residents were asked the following question: “Thinking about social integration between refugees and long-term residents in your municipality, how important is each of the following obstacles to closer relationships?”. Items and survey responses are illustrated in figure 15. The most salient differences in long-term residents’ perceptions about obstacles to social integration between them and the two refugee groups are related to differences in societal values like the role of women in society, in the role of religion in society and in the acceptance of different lifestyles, for example, regarding people with different sexual orientations. People tend to think these are either very important or very important regarding non-European refugees and either fairly important or fairly not important regarding Ukrainians. More people think that racism and discrimination, as well as an increasing polarization in their countries, are very or fairly important obstacles for social integration between them and non-European refugees while less people think so for their relations with Ukrainian refugees. It is also interesting to see that not speaking the same language is perceived as being more of a problem for people’s relationships with non-European refugees than with Ukrainians.



Figure 15. Descriptives of survey responses to the question “Thinking about social integration between refugees and long-term residents in your municipality, how important is each of the following obstacles to closer relationships?”



Panel a. About relationships with non-European migrants



Panel b. About relationships with Ukrainian refugees.



Since our survey was only conducted on opinions of locals/natives (long-term residents), it is impossible to conclude from these data whether and to what extent local residents' perceptions of the obstacles mentioned correspond to real, existing obstacles. It is also impossible for us to make any conclusions on the extent to which locals' perceptions of migrants' values and views correspond to the actual values and views of migrants.

It is interesting to see how the factors obstructing social interactions between locals and migrants identified by migrants (as emerged from our interviews with migrants, see Hadj Abdou & Katsiaficas, 2023) largely differ from those identified by local residents in the survey. Migrants interviewed reported the lack of meaningful relations with locals emphasizing expressions of profound feelings of loneliness and through description of the environments in their new communities as unfriendly. The scarcity of social contacts is negatively associated by post-2014 migrant interviewees themselves with a variety of other integration outcomes, such as language acquisition, the ability to access information, and labour market opportunities.

Among the factors that obstruct the emergence of social interactions, from migrants' point of view, a key role is played by feelings and perceptions of discrimination. The feeling of social isolation and a lack of meaningful interactions were exacerbated in cases where post-2014 migrants felt overt forms of discrimination and marginalization. Whilst in most localities the feeling of locals being indifferent to post-2014 migrants and more subtle forms of rejection prevailed, experiences of overt hostility also stood out in some. In most localities, albeit to differing degrees, post-2014 migrants described incidents of discrimination in public spaces, on public transport, between neighbours, at the workplace, and in educational institutions – even in state-funded integration courses. Interestingly, the expression of prejudices against migrants occurred in localities independent of whether or not these places had prior experiences with migration and related diversity. In several instances in the EU countries analysed, experiences of racism were explicitly associated by post-2014 interviewees with attitudes against Muslims. Post-2014 migrants repeatedly gave testimonies as to how wearing a veil affected integration experiences. Overall, these experiences affected the extent to which people felt accepted in public spaces.

Perceptions of discrimination by post-2014 migrants were exacerbated by the arrival of considerable numbers of Ukrainian refugees from 2022 onwards in all EU countries analysed. Interviewed post-2014 migrants from non-European countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq emphasized their empathy with refugees from Ukraine but also expressed a strong awareness that refugees from Ukraine are treated differently than they are. This perception has led to frustration and disappointment among many, which in turn could hinder their willingness to integrate in the medium and long term. The differential treatment significantly impacted the extent to which (non-Ukrainian) post-2014 migrants felt welcome and accepted in Europe, shaping their experiences in their local communities in a negative way, even as some became engaged in their communities to welcome these newcomers.

Other key factors that influenced social relations and migrants' integration experiences. These include structural/contextual, group-level and individual-level factors.

Among the contextual elements, the first relates to who arrives in a particular locality and why – and, more particularly, whether newcomers chose a certain locality, were placed there and wanted to stay, or were placed there and were looking to move on. Migrants who did not arrive in a particular locality by choice may not have had an interest in settling in a SMsTRA, and a smaller-size destination may not be the ideal fit whether in general or for a particular individual's profile. Nevertheless, with asylum procedures often lasting a considerable length of time and with, in some instances, other mobility restrictions in place, migrants may decide to stay in the area upon receiving a protection status, even if this was not their initial preference. This was especially true for families whose children had since enrolled in local schools. Thus, national immigration policies play an important role in setting the stage for what comes next. Relatedly, the reception phase influences integration via the quality of services available. The quality of reception services offered has influenced language and other skills – in other words, it has had important implications for integration trajectories. Another way in which national migration policy influences integration comes with regard to family reunification: Feelings of anger and loneliness were exacerbated by family reunification regulations and waiting times that often-delayed reunion with family members still abroad.

Secondly, the size and location of the locality is often connected to the robustness of its public infrastructure, whether this relates to integration-specific services like language courses or mainstream services like education, health, and public transportation (as well as travel time needed to access services). It also has implications for the range of employment and educational opportunities available for residents and the number of public spaces where people can interact. This includes infrastructure and opportunities most relevant for particular age groups, such as children, young adults, and the elderly. Furthermore, it may be connected to the diversity of the community and past migration. Migrants do not necessarily view SMsTRAs as bad places to live: Some reported preferring smaller places due to their dense support network, sense of calm and safety, slower pace of life, and perception of these places as good for raising a family. While the integration of migrants in SMsTRAs can provide an opportunity for local development (Perlik & Membretti, 2018), these smaller locales may come with particular integration-related challenges when compared to large cities, including fewer employment opportunities and more limited support structures.

Among the other structural and contextual factors that largely shaped integration experiences and social interactions between local residents and migrants (analysed in depth in our WP5 comparative report, see Hadj Abdou & Katsiaficas, 2023) it is relevant to mention: civil society action; engagement by local authorities; narratives in media and politics; the politicization of migration; social networks; the presence of places for encounter. Individual factors also played a role (see Hadj Abdou & Katsiaficas, 2023).

Finally, it is important to note that migrant experiences, as well as attitudes and the state of intergroup relations, are not static but rather exhibit a temporal dimension. Time can have

both a positive or negative effect on integration experiences and the related issues of attitudes and intergroup relations. On the one hand, in most cases, the longer that post-2014 migrants had lived in the community, the more social interactions and overall experiences improved. Many explained that living in the new country/locality had become easier over time. On the other hand, in some areas, as time passed, what were previously welcoming attitudes and proactive support by locals subsequently decreased. The decrease in support is also reflected increasingly restrictive border policies (Czaika et al., 2021, p. 15), and rising contestation of migration (Dennison and Geddes 2019).

### 5.3. Which links between local inclusion policies and integration outcomes?

Answering the third main research question of the Whole-COMM project – about the links between local inclusion policies and integration outcomes – proved to be highly challenging, for a number of reasons related to limitations in the data available.

Particularly concerning public attitudes to migration and integration and social relations, our analyses of the links between such outcomes and integration policies are very much affected by the very limited number of responses to our large-N survey collected in the Whole-COMM localities in Austria, Germany, Italy and Sweden (and the unavailability of any survey company to create ad hoc panels in the 22 sampled SMSTRAs). In our WP6 comparative study (Irastorza et al., 2023) we have tried to study correlations between the few data available and our MIPEX-L policy index. Due to the very limited number of observations, it was not possible to develop a proper multilevel model, and hence they only allowed us to probe the plausibility of our expectations about links between policies and public attitudes to migration in a suggestive manner. Such analyses (for more information see: Irastorza et al. 2023) anyway seem to support the above-mentioned expectation as favourable integration policies – our data suggest – seem to go hand in hand with favourable opinions of local residents on refugees' integration as well as less pronounced differences in local residents' opinions on the integration of Ukrainians and non-European refugees. It must be noted that this does not necessarily have to be seen as an effect of policies on public attitudes to migration, as the relationship might also be the other way round, i.e., more inclusive policies might be developed in contexts where local residents' attitudes towards migrants are more positive. Similar patterns seem to emerge when looking at survey questions on social interactions between migrants and locals.

As to links between inclusion policies and other integration outcomes we had to deal with the unavailability of data on integration outcomes at the local level (see our data inventory: Yilmaz et al. 2022), which prevented any meaningful analysis at the local level.

We therefore tried to develop an alternative strategy to study links between policies and integration outcomes, combining data collected in WP6 and WP3. More specifically, in

addition to the MIPEX-L index, we used data on the perceptions of integration outcomes by local governance actors collected through our small-N WP3 survey. As part of this survey, governance actors interviewed were asked to assess the integration of post-2014 migrants in their locality on a scale of 1=very unsuccessful to 5=very successful. No specific information was provided about which specific integration outcomes we were interested in or about how we conceptualised ‘integration’ (we do know that most of the actors interviewed conceptualised integration as either economic integration or social integration; see section 3 above). Similarly, actors were asked to assess local residents’ attitudes towards post-2014 migrants in their locality (on a scale of 1 to 5).

*Table 6. MIPEX-L and local governance actors’ perceptions of integration outcomes and public attitudes to migration*

Case localities	MIPEX-L (index on local inclusion policies)	Governance actors’ perceptions of post-2014 migrants’ integration in their locality (scale 1-5; AVERAGE RESPONSES)	Governance actors’ perceptions of local residents’ attitudes toward post-2014 migrants in their locality (scale 1-5; AVERAGE RESPONSES)
Wallonia, Small	9,04	3,08	3,33
Wallonia, Medium	9,04	2,90	2,90
Sicily, Small	11,27	3,00	3,10
Lower Austria, Rural	12,44	3,09	3,09
Tyrol, Rural	12,90	2,85	3,15
Sicily Rural	15,25	3,14	3,00
Piedmont, Medium	15,96	2,85	2,62
Lower Saxony, Rural	19,76	3,00	3,56
Saxony, Rural	19,94	3,40	2,60
North Rhine W, Small	24,39	3,75	3,88
Flanders, Small	31,48	2,92	2,33
Sicily, Medium	31,91	3,10	3,40
Blekinge, Rural	33,44	3,06	3,12
Piedmont, Rural	35,85	3,50	4,10
Saxony, Small	38,27	3,25	2,75
Overijssel, Small	38,51	2,67	3,33
Skana, Small	38,88	2,50	2,00
Tyrol, Medium	39,81	3,13	3,13
Lower Austria, Small	41,96	3,30	3,10
Gävleborgs, Small	42,23	3,17	3,25
Piedmont, Small	43,04	2,75	2,58
Lower Saxony, Medium	44,50	3,33	3,56
Drenthe, Rural	45,95	2,67	2,83
Gävleborgs, Medium	46,46	2,27	2,91
Småland, Medium	48,95	3,00	3,58
Flanders, Medium	49,52	3,36	3,91
Dalarna, Rural	50,06	2,64	2,64
Mecklenburg, Medium	51,51	3,08	3,08
Zuid-Holland, Small	54,68	3,00	2,86
Utrecht, Medium	67,88	3,75	4,29

Table 6 reports average values for governance actors' perceptions of integration and perceptions of public attitudes for each of the Whole-COMM localities in the 6 EU countries that received the highest number of non-European migrants since 2014 (excluding Spain and Poland), and the corresponding values of the MIPEX-L index for the same localities. The table does not provide an extremely clear picture but suggests some interesting patterns. For instance, it shows that in the eight localities with the lower MIPEX-L scores (<20) governance actors tend to perceive integration as rather unsuccessful. In the 12 localities that received the higher MIPEX-L scores (>40) instead perceptions of integration are more mixed: in some of these localities interaction is perceived to be highly successful, in some of these localities governance actors perceive integration to be less successful. No clear pattern emerges also in respect to governance actors' perceptions of local residents' attitudes to migration.

It is therefore interesting to explore which of the different policy components analysed in the MIPEX-L index correlate with more positive perceptions of integration by local governance actors. Table 7 displays correlation coefficients among these variables.

*Table 7. Correlation coefficients among policy components of the MIPEX-L and integration outcomes (as perceived by governance actors)*

POLICY COMPONENTS (MIPEX-L)	Governance actors' perceptions of integration outcomes in their locality on a scale of 1 to 5 (AVERAGE RESPONSES)	Governance actors' perceptions of local residents' attitudes toward post-2014 migrants in their locality on a scale of 1 to 5 (AVERAGE RESPONSES)
Local measures on Access to Health	-0,37	-0,10
Monitoring	-0,17	0,03
Local measures on Education	-0,14	0,02
Local measures on Social Services	-0,10	0,15
Local measures on Housing	-0,01	0,16
Local measures on Political Participation	0,00	0,13
Local measures on Language	0,01	0,08
MIPEX-L	0,04	0,18
Local measures on Access to Labour Market	0,16	0,16
Local measures on antidiscrimination	0,22	0,10
Governance	0,25	0,15
Actors	0,27	0,28
Local measures fostering social interactions (intercultural measures)	0,36	0,38
PERCEIVED RESIDENTS' ATTITUDES	0,67	1,00
PERCEIVED INTEGRATION OUTCOMES	1,00	0,67

Once again, due to the very limited number of observations, it was not possible to develop a proper multilevel model, and hence these coefficients only allow us to make an explorative and suggestive analysis. The table however suggests the policy component “local measures fostering social interactions (intercultural measures)” is the dimension of the index that is more strongly correlated with positive perceptions of integration outcomes by governance actors. This is followed by the components “actors” and “governance”, which are largely related with the presence of specialised bodies on integration in the local government and the development of a comprehensive integration strategy by the local government. These highly explorative analysis therefore tends to suggest that the development of measures to stimulate interactions between migrants and locals and of comprehensive local integration strategies (with specific bodies devolved to its development and implementation) might lead to better integration outcomes at the local level.

While the table suggests that there is a negative correlation between perceived integration outcomes and measures taken by local governments related to migrants’ access to health, education and social services, such negative correlation might well be explained by the fact that our MIPEX-L index focuses on policies and measures developed by local governments and does not capture the existence of measures in these policy areas developed by higher level governments (e.g., very rarely health is a policy area which is typically under the competence of regional or national authorities).

The overall picture is very similar when one looks at correlation coefficients between policy components and governance actors’ perceptions of local residents’ attitudes to migration.

## 6. Conclusion

The analysis conducted in this working paper – building on insights produced by the main work packages of the Whole-COMM project – leads us to make a number of conclusive remarks.

First, Whole-COMM hypothesised that migrant integration responses and processes were influenced by the specific characteristics of local contexts, and specifically by several structural factors such as i) local economy and the labour market, ii) demographic composition and trends, iii) levels of socio-cultural diversity and historical relations with migrant-related groups, and iv) the size of localities. The analysis conducted throughout the project suggest that it is indeed paramount to take these structural and contextual factors into account when examining migrant integration. As Table 8 suggests, particularly economic and demographic factors and the size of localities seem to play a key role in shaping responses and processes of migrant integration. Unexpectedly, it seems that localities’ previous experience with migration plays a minor role in this respect.

Despite this interesting variation, we also observed some common trends, such as the generalised lack of proactive inclusive integration policies and measures in the vast majority of the localities we examined. Some SMsTRAs developed integration policies in the areas of

language courses, healthcare, labour market and education but the adoption of such measures is far from uniform. Furthermore, only in very few localities any policies were developed aimed to promote migrants' political participation and intercultural communication and contrast discrimination. Moreover, only very few SMsTRAs adopted a strategy of migrant integration with specific rationales, goals, scopes and targets. Finally, with limited exceptions, we observed very limited efforts in SMsTRAs to monitor policies and their impact.

Second, Whole-COMM hypothesised that migrant integration responses are the result of interactions of multiple actors– as individuals, organisations, institutions and/or corporate entities – who shape the local community with their multilevel and multi-situated relations, networks, interests and resources. Our analysis confirms that a mere focus on structures and institutions is definitely insufficient to capture local responses to the challenges of migrant integration. A narrow focus on local governments and public actors seems equally insufficient to capture local responses to migrant integration. On the one hand, local governments, civil society, the private sector etc. may not activate if initiatives on migrant integration are taken by other actors within the local community. On the other hand, the presence of specific actors within the community (particularly political actors with different ideological profiles – see table 8) and patterns of interaction among actors remarkably influences and shapes the responses of local governments in many respects. Also, in the case of integration outcomes, such as social interactions, our analysis has revealed a key role of individual policymakers or individual policy entrepreneurs. We therefore invite future research on local integration policies to move beyond a narrow focus on local governments and take in due consideration the role played by all actors within local communities in shaping responses to migrant integration.

*Table 8. Overview of impact of different types of contextual factors on integration-related responses and societal outcomes in the Whole-COMM localities*

	Structural conditions (economic and demographic factors)	Experience with migration	Size of localities	Political factors
Governance relations	X	X	(✓)	✓
Frames	X	X	X	✓
Policies and structures of support	✓	X	X	✓
Migrants' access to services	✓	X	✓	(✓)
Social interactions and migrants' experiences	(✓)	X	(✓)	(✓)
(Policy actors' perceptions of) local residents' attitudes to migration	(✓)	X	X	✓

Third, Whole-COMM hypothesised that migrant integration had to be intended as a process the outcomes of which are open ended and can result in either more cohesive or more fragmented social relations. Our analyses largely confirm this expectation, identifying a variety of different societal outcomes in the analysed localities. For instance, it seems that local residents' attitudes to migrant integration are perceived by actors involved in integration governance very differently across different localities. At the same time, we did identify a number of common trends in most of the SMsTRAs analysed in the Whole-COMM project. Particularly, we observed a generalised lack of social interactions between locals and migrants in local communities.

Overall, such lack of social interactions between migrants and long-term residents, the several challenges identified when examining migrants' access to local services, the generalised perceptions by the public that migrants are not well-integrated, and the generalised lack or scarcity of integration measures, particularly by local governments, call for more proactive and inclusive local integration responses (see also our final policy brief).

Our analysis suggests that, in the current situation, six key factors are obstructing the development of more robust and effective integration responses in SMsTRAs.

First, the lack of capacity, funding, expertise and resources in many of the analysed localities. The lack of capacity of SMsTRAs is well-known and also applies to other policy fields. In SMsTRAs, unlike in bigger cities, specialised municipal bodies on integration are often missing. In most of the analysed localities no local official or elected policymaker is formally assigned specific competence on integration and responsibility for migrant integration is (de jure or de facto) delegated to officials responsible for social services. Furthermore, very rarely these officials received specific training on – or have any expertise about – integration-related issues.

Second, SMsTRAs are highly isolated from multilevel governance structures, which prevents policy diffusion (see section on governance relations above). Local governments in SMsTRAs have extremely rare (if any) interactions related to migrant integration with the EU level, highly occasional interactions with the national level, and non-regular (and often conflictual) relations with the regional level. Interactions on migrant integration among different SMsTRAs are also extremely rare, and interactions with foreign localities – which might favour the spread of good practices – are almost absent. Even within localities, interactions between local governments and key stakeholders are often segmented and conflictual.

Third, SMsTRAs keep having a very limited weight at the EU level. The involvement of SMsTRAs in policy debates and frameworks at the EU level remains, currently, negligible. Supranational policy documents on migrant integration policy do not differentiate between localities with different size (nor on other factors such as economic development) and very rarely provide examples from SMsTRAs. The several transnational networks and fora on migrant integration at the EU level either do not include local authorities at all or merely include (or are led by)



large cities, and very rarely discuss the needs and challenges faced by SMsTRAs. Because of this lack of attention to SMsTRAs, the local level becomes a uniform category in EU policy debates and frameworks. Therefore, the EU level, while emphasizing the role of the local level, tends to base its policies on the realities of larger cities and metropolises.

Fourth, local governance actors' narrow understandings of responsibilities for migrant integration seem to represent another major obstacle (see section on frames above). Widespread conceptualisations of integration as a process that primarily concerns migrants clearly represents an obstacle for more initiatives by local actors in the integration policy field.

Fifth, and very importantly, we did observe a growing politicisation of integration policymaking at the local level, which seems to be playing a key role in preventing the development of more inclusive and robust local responses. Our findings suggest that political factors such as the political affiliation of local executives and the share of seats held by anti-immigration parties in local councils play a crucial role in influencing local policies and the policymaking interactions that local governments develop with other local stakeholders and higher-level governments (see sections on policies and governance relations above). Remarkably, we asked local policymakers to evaluate the importance of a wide range of factors that influenced their decisions to develop (different types of) integration policies and the three factors that were mentioned as the most influential on policymaking were policymakers' values and ideas; public opinion; and exchanges or pressure from the political parties that support the local executive.

Finally, and related to the fifth point above, policymakers' perceptions of local residents as highly hostile to the development of more measures on integration also seem to play a key role in preventing the development of more inclusive responses. Results of our survey investigating public attitudes to migrant integration however challenge the idea that residents in SMsTRAs have more negative attitudes to migrant integration compared to residents in big cities. Furthermore, they suggest that people living in cities perceive more tension and hostility in the relationships between non-EU migrants and local residents. Remarkably we also found relatively little opposition among local residents towards more developed integration measures in SMsTRAs (more than half of respondents support such measures, only 21 percent of respondents are convincingly against such measures).

Future research should further investigate such challenges and obstacles, further enhancing our understandings of the drivers and effects of local integration policymaking in small localities and how such drivers differ with those shaping responses in bigger cities.

## References

- Ambrosini, M. (2013). ‘We are against a multi-ethnic society’: Policies of exclusion at the urban level in Italy’. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36(1), 136–155.
- Caponio, T., & Pettrachin, A. (2021). *A whole-of-community approach to study post-2014 migrants’ integration in small and medium sized towns and rural areas* [Whole-COMM Working Paper]. Available at: [www.whole-comm.eu](http://www.whole-comm.eu)
- Caponio, T., & Pettrachin, A. (2023). ‘Neither multilevel governance nor battleground. Understanding the politics of immigrant integration in small and medium European localities’. *Governance*, Online First. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12833>
- Castells, M. (2009). *Communication power*. Oxford University Press.
- Collyer, M., S. Hinger & R. Schweitzer (2020) ‘Chapter 1: Politics of (Dis)Integration – An Introduction’, in S. Hinger and R. Schweitzer (eds.), *Politics of (Dis)Integration*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 1–18.
- Czaika, M, Bohnet, H, & Zardo, F. (2021). ‘Disentangling the European Migration Policy-Mix since 1990’. QuantMig Report, available at: [http://www.quantmig.eu/res/files/Quantmig%20D5.5%20Background%20paper\\_final\\_submitted.pdf](http://www.quantmig.eu/res/files/Quantmig%20D5.5%20Background%20paper_final_submitted.pdf).
- Dennison, J. & Geddes, A. (2019). ‘A Rising Tide? The Salience of Immigration and the Rise of Anti-Immigration Political Parties in Western Europe’. *The Political Quarterly* 90: 107–116.
- Drazanova, L., Liebigii, T., Migaliiiii, S., Scipioni, M. and Spielvogeli, G. (2020). *What are Europeans’ views on migrant integration?: An in-depth analysis of 2017 Special Eurobarometer “Integration of immigrants in the European Union”*. OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 238, OECD Publishing, Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/f74bf2f5-en>
- Enßle-Reinhardt, F. Schneider, H. & Glorius, G. (2023). *Country report on social relations, individual attitudes and migrant integration experiences in Germany*. Whole Comm Working Paper. Available at: [www.whole-comm.eu](http://www.whole-comm.eu).
- Garcés-Mascareñas, B., & Penninx, R. (2016). *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe: Contexts, Levels and Actors*. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Gerring, J., & Cojocar, L. (2016). ‘Selecting Cases for Intensive Analysis: A Diversity of Goals and Methods’. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 45(3), 392–423.
- Glick Schiller, N., & A. Çağlar (2016) ‘Displacement, Emplacement and Migrant Newcomers: Rethinking Urban Sociabilities Within Multiscalar Power’. *Identities* 23 (1): 17–34.
- Górny, A., & Kaczmarczyk, P. (2018). ‘A Known but Uncertain Path: the Role of Foreign Labour in Polish Agriculture’. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 64, 177–188.



- Hadj Abdou, L., & Katsiaficas, C. (2023). *Attitudes, intergroup relations, and post-2014 migrant integration experiences in small- and medium-sized towns and rural areas: A cross-country perspective* [Whole-COMM Working Paper]. Available at: [www.wholecomm.eu](http://www.wholecomm.eu)
- Irastorza N., B. Yavcan, A. Faustman, A. Kraler, A. Pettrachin, F. Enssle Reinhardt & G. Solano (2023) *Public Opinions and Policy Impact on Integration and Social Cohesion* [Working Paper]. Available at: <https://whole-comm.eu>
- Laine, J., Rauhut, D., & Gruber, M. (A c. Di). (2023). *Assessing the social impact of immigration in Europe: Renegotiating remoteness*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Mahnig, H. (2004) 'The Politics of Minority-Majority Relations: How Immigrant Policies Developed in Paris, Berlin and Zurich', in R. Penninx, K. Kraal, M. Martiniello and S. Vertovec (eds.), *Citizenship in European Cities. Immigrants, Local Politics and Integration Policies*. Ashgate: Aldershot, pp. 17–37.
- McAreevey, R. (2012). 'Resistance or Resilience? Tracking the Pathway of Recent Arrivals to a 'New' Rural Destination'. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 52(4), 488–507.
- McAreevey, R. (2017). *New Immigration Destinations. Migrating to Rural and Peripheral Areas*. New York: Imprint Routledge.
- Moralli, M., Musarò, P., & Parmiggiani, P. (2023). 'From social integration to social emplacement: Perspectives from Italian rural areas'. *International Review of Sociology*, 33(3), 565–586.
- Neymark, K. (1998). *Immigrants, Integration and Cities: Exploring the Links*. OECD Publishing. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264162952-en>
- Papademetriou, D. G., & Benton, M. (2016). *Towards a Whole-of-Society Approach to Receiving and Settling Newcomers in Europe*. 43.
- Papadopoulos, A. G., Fratsea, L.M., & Mavrommatis, G. (2018). 'Governing migrant labour in an intensive agricultural area in Greece: Precarity, political mobilization and migrant agency in the fields of Manolada'. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 64, 200–209.
- Penninx, R., & Martiniello, M. (2004). 'Integration processes and policies. State of the art and lessons'. In K. Kraal, S. Vertovec, & R. Penninx (A c. Di), *Citizenship in European cities: Immigrants, local politics and integration policies* (pp. 139–164). Aldershot Ashgate.
- Perlik, M. & Membretti, A. (2018). 'Migration by Necessity and by Force to Mountain Areas: An Opportunity for Social Innovation'. *Mountain Research and Development* 38(3), 250-264.
- Pettrachin, A. (2024). 'Understanding the failure of integration policy diffusion in small European localities: a comparative network-centred perspective'. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice*. In Press and Forthcoming.



- Poppelaars, C., & Scholten, P. (2008). 'Two Worlds Apart: The Divergence of National and Local Immigrant Integration Policies in the Netherlands'. *Administration & Society*, 40(4), 335–357.
- Schiller, M. (2015). 'Paradigmatic pragmatism and the politics of diversity'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 38(7), 1120–1136.
- Schiller, M., Pettrachin, A., Scholten, P., Caponio, T. and Jonitz, E. (2022). *Local Integration Policies and Multi-Level Policymaking Interactions in Small- and Medium-Sized Towns and Rural Areas* [Whole-COMM Working Paper]. Available at: [www.whole-comm.eu](http://www.whole-comm.eu)
- Schweitzer, R. & Garcés-Mascreñas, B. (2022). *Migrants' and Refugees' Access to Housing and Employment in Small and Medium-Sized Towns and Rural Areas: Barriers, Opportunities, and Local Support Measures* [Whole-COMM Working Paper]. Available at: [www.whole-comm.eu](http://www.whole-comm.eu)
- Schinkel, W. (2018). 'Against 'immigrant integration': For an end to neocolonial knowledge production'. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 6(1), 31.
- UNHCR (2023). *Lives on Hold: Intentions and Perspectives of Refugees from Ukraine #3*. Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/99072> (accessed 24 October 2023).
- Yilmaz, S, Solano, G. and Irastorza, N. (2022). *Data Inventory on Integration Policies, Outcomes, Public Perceptions and Social Cohesion at National and Sub-national Levels*. [Whole-COMM Report]. Available at: [www.whole-comm.eu](http://www.whole-comm.eu)
- Winders, J. (2014). 'New Immigrant Destinations in Global Context'. *International Migration Review*, 48(1), 149–179.



## Appendix

Table A1. Characteristics of Whole-COMM case localities

CASE NUMBER	COUNTRY	MACROREGION	LOCALITY SIZE Rural areas=7,000- 30,000 inhabitants, low population density; Small towns= 30,000-1000 inhabitants; Medium towns= 100.000-250.000 inhabitants)	POLITICAL AFFILIATION OF THE LOCAL EXECUTIVE	SHARE OF SEATS FOR RADICAL RIGHT PARTIES IN THE LOCAL COUNCIL (as defined by the PopuList 2023)	SHARE OF NON- EU FOREIGN RESIDENTS 2019	UNEMPLOYMENT 2019
C01	ITALY	North	SMALL TOWN	progressive	between 1% and 10%	5% < X < 10%	1% < X < 5%
C02	ITALY	South	RURAL AREA	conservative	0	10% < X < 15%	15% < X < 20%
C03	ITALY	North	MEDIUM TOWN	conservative	more than 30%	10% < X < 15%	5% < X < 10%
C04	ITALY	South	SMALL TOWN	conservative	0	1% < X < 5%	15% < X < 20%
C05	ITALY	North	RURAL AREA	progressive	0	1% < X < 5%	5% < X < 10%
C06	ITALY	South	MEDIUM TOWN	progressive	0	1% < X < 5%	20% < x < 25%
C07	SPAIN	Centre/South	SMALL TOWN	progressive	0	5% < X < 10%	5% < X < 10%
C08	SPAIN	North/Autonomías	SMALL TOWN	conservative	0	10% < X < 15%	5% < X < 10%
C09	SPAIN	North/Autonomías	MEDIUM TOWN	conservative	0	10% < X < 15%	10% < X < 15%
C10	SPAIN	South	SMALL TOWN	conservative	0	1% < X < 5%	15% < X < 20%
C11	SPAIN	North/Autonomías	RURAL AREA	progressive	0	5% < X < 10%	10% < X < 15%
C12	SPAIN	South	MEDIUM TOWN	progressive	0	1% < X < 5%	25% < x < 30%
C13	SWEDEN	South	SMALL TOWN	conservative	between 20% and 30%	1% < X < 5%	5% < X < 10%
C14	SWEDEN	South	RURAL AREA	progressive	between 20% and 30%	5% < X < 10%	5% < X < 10%
C15	SWEDEN	South	MEDIUM TOWN	progressive	between 10% and 20%	5% < X < 10%	1% < X < 5%
C16	SWEDEN	North	SMALL TOWN	progressive	between 10% and 20%	5% < X < 10%	5% < X < 10%
C17	SWEDEN	North	RURAL AREA	mixed	between 10% and 20%	10% < X < 15%	5% < X < 10%
C18	SWEDEN	North	MEDIUM TOWN	progressive	between 10% and 20%	5% < X < 10%	5% < X < 10%
C19	NETHERLANDS	West	SMALL TOWN	conservative	0	1% < X < 5%	1% < X < 5%



C20	NETHERLANDS	East/North	RURAL AREA	mixed	0	1% < X < 5%	1% < X < 5%
C21	NETHERLANDS	West	MEDIUM TOWN	progressive	0	1% < X < 5%	1% < X < 5%
C22	NETHERLANDS	East	SMALL TOWN	conservative	between 1% and 10%	1% < X < 5%	1% < X < 5%
C23	AUSTRIA	West	RURAL AREA	conservative	between 10% and 20%	1% < X < 5%	1% < X < 5%
C24	AUSTRIA	West	MEDIUM TOWN	mixed	between 20% and 30%	10% < X < 15%	1% < X < 5%
C25	AUSTRIA	East	SMALL TOWN	progressive	between 1% and 10%	10% < X < 15%	5% < X < 10%
C26	AUSTRIA	East	RURAL AREA	conservative	between 1% and 10%	5% < X < 10%	1% < X < 5%
C27	BELGIUM	Flanders	MEDIUM TOWN	progressive	between 20% and 30%	10% < X < 15%	1% < X < 5%
C28	BELGIUM	Flanders	SMALL TOWN	mixed	between 20% and 30%	5% < X < 10%	10% < X < 15%
C29	BELGIUM	Wallonia	SMALL TOWN	mixed	0	1% < X < 5%	10% < X < 15%
C30	BELGIUM	Wallonia	MEDIUM TOWN	progressive	between 1% and 10%	5% < X < 10%	20% < x < 25%
C31	GERMANY	West	SMALL TOWN	progressive	0	5% < X < 10%	1% < X < 5%
C32	GERMANY	West	RURAL AREA	progressive	0	5% < X < 10%	5% < X < 10%
C33	GERMANY	West	MEDIUM TOWN	mixed	0	10% < X < 15%	5% < X < 10%
C34	GERMANY	East	SMALL TOWN	mixed	between 10% and 20%	5% < X < 10%	5% < X < 10%
C35	GERMANY	East	RURAL AREA	mixed	between 20% and 30%	1% < X < 5%	1% < X < 5%
C36	GERMANY	East	MEDIUM TOWN	progressive	between 1% and 10%	1% < X < 5%	5% < X < 10%
C37	POLAND	Lower Silesia	SMALL TOWN	mixed			
C38	POLAND	Greater Poland	RURAL AREA	conservative			
C39	POLAND	Lower Silesia	SMALL TOWN	mixed			
C40	POLAND	Greater Poland	RURAL AREA	mixed			
C41	TURKEY	Yalova (West)	SMALL TOWN	progressive			
C42	TURKEY	Aksaray (Centre)	MEDIUM TOWN	conservative			
C43	TURKEY	Mersin (East)	RURAL AREA	progressive			
C44	CANADA	Ontario	MEDIUM TOWN	progressive			
C45	CANADA	Ontario	SMALL TOWN	conservative			
C46	CANADA	Quebec	MEDIUM TOWN	progressive			
C47	CANADA	British Columbia	MEDIUM TOWN	mixed			
C48	CANADA	Quebec	SMALL TOWN	mixed			
C49	CANADA	British Columbia	SMALL TOWN	mixed			



Research  
Education  
Outreach

CCA

Università del Piemonte Orientale  
Università del Piemonte Orientale



Researching Migration and Society  
TORINO



UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY  
IN THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE  
CHEMNITZ

CIDOB

BARCELONA  
CENTRE FOR  
INTERNATIONAL  
AFFAIRS

Erasmus  
University  
Rotterdam



Uniwersytet  
Wrocławski



Sabancı  
Universitesi



MALMÖ  
UNIVERSITY  
MIM — MALMÖ INSTITUTE  
FOR STUDIES OF MIGRATION,  
DIVERSITY AND WELFARE



YORK U

<https://whole-comm.eu>



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101004714