European Commission

CORDIS Results Pack on
migration

A thematic collection of innovative EU-funded research results

July 2023

New tools and perspectives to understand movement in Europe

Research and Innovation

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Editorial

New tools and perspectives to understand movement in Europe

In recent years, migration in Europe has dominated social and political discourse, driven by large-scale movements of people fleeing conflict, political persecution and natural disasters, as well as a rise in populist rhetoric fuelled by underlying economic stresses. This CORDIS Results Pack highlights the innovative EU-funded social sciences research helping us to better understand the complex challenges and opportunities surrounding migration.

Since time immemorial, humans have travelled from one place to another in search of safety, security, opportunity and prosperity. Yet the rapid increase in the number of people seeking refuge in Europe in recent years has exacerbated fears of social and economic repercussions.

The multifaceted nature of migration refuses easy classification. There is tremendous variety in both those who become expatriated – including refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants – and the forces that drive and shape these migration flows, encompassing civil unrest, climate change, financial incentives, legal structures, language, family and cultural connections, demographic patterns, and economic models reliant on the movement of people, such as seasonal work and remittances.

Far from being a problem to be halted, the flow of people across borders presents both opportunities and challenges that must be addressed by European policymakers. The arrival of migrants can help fill labour shortages, revitalise dwindling communities and regions, and provide labour for skilled and unskilled positions that would otherwise remain unfilled. If not managed properly, migration can also create uneven pressures on social services, and without supportive programmes to facilitate integration, social cohesion can become frayed and migrants left vulnerable to isolation and exploitation.

Understanding the nature of migration is essential if Europe is to effectively respond to both its positive and negative outcomes. The 13 EU-funded projects presented in this Pack reflect the broad manner of ways in which researchers are supporting Societal Challenge 6 of Horizon 2020: 'Europe in a changing world – Inclusive, innovative and reflective societies'.

The aim of this Pack is to contribute to a more evidence-based debate on the different aspects of the migration phenomenon. It provides succinct summaries of the main insights from the projects, to support the activities of an intended audience of academics, policymakers, CSOs and interested citizens.

Together, these research projects offer new insights into the phenomenon of migration, and how Europe can respond effectively to it for the benefit of all.

Ensuring principled migration policies are put into practice

Analysis of the gap between migration governance principles and practice carried out by the EU-funded ADMIGOV project could lead to more enlightened and effective policies for the benefit of all.

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Since the refugee crisis of 2015, the situation in the Mediterranean Sea has not only been disastrous for thousands of people fleeing war, but according to many migration experts, has also had a profound, negative impact on the quality of European policymaking.

"We felt that norms were fading in Europe, caused by a debate that focused only on stopping migration at any costs, while maintaining human rights standards seemed forgotten," explains ADMIGOV (Advancing Alternative Migration Governance) project coordinator Anja van Heelsum from the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. "We found this to be highly problematic. At the same time, UN standards provide a suitable policy framework to avoid such decline."

Problematic aspects of migration governance

The key objectives of the EU-funded ADMIGOV project were firstly to understand problematic aspects of migration governance on the ground, and secondly to develop a comprehensive tool to evaluate 'good' migration governance, meaning practice that is in line with current UN standards.

The starting points for this were two key UN documents: the Sustainable Development Goal 10.7 and the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants.

We hope that policymakers will realise that implementing UN standards will help Europe to maintain an acceptable standard of human rights internally.

The project next examined key moments and places where migration governance intervenes – such as entry and exit points – focusing in particular on problematic situations. "We worked in nine countries within Europe and six outside Europe," says van Heelsum. "For example, we investigated refugee reception in Greece, Lebanon and Türkiye."

Interviews with migrants, NGO workers and local government officials made clear that the living conditions for refugees in Türkiye and Lebanon were a key driver in them moving onwards to Greece. Afghans in Türkiye also had very little chance of gaining refugee status, and ran a high risk of being deported.

Combining case studies with UN principles

The next step was to combine findings from these migration case studies with insights into the two identified key UN principles. This resulted in a set of questions that the team used as a tool to evaluate good migration governance.

"Country experts fill in these questions for a specific country," explains van Heelsum. "This results in an overall score, but also gives scores per field or principle. The aim is to enable governments to identify specific aspects of migration policies where improvements are needed."

A central conclusion from all this work was that major policy gaps exist when it comes to addressing the needs of refugees and migrants. "We found them in all fields studied," adds van Heelsum. "The relationship between the UN principles and actual practices on the ground was nearly always problematic."

Particularly serious were gaps in implementing principles of protection with regard to migrants moving towards Europe, as well as the reception of refugees in Greece, Lebanon and Türkiye. The project team also found that not enough investment is made in the kind of sustainable development that would help to reduce the phenomenon of irregular migration. Instead, a current focus on deportation leads to an inefficient use of resources.

Tools to improve migration policy

Van Heelsum and her team of 54 researchers have since published a range of policy briefs and recommendations on the situation of refugees in Lebanon and Türkiye and all aspects of immigration studied in the project. The team has also developed a tool that national governments can use to examine and improve migration policies.

"We hope that policymakers will read our findings, and realise that implementing UN standards will help Europe to maintain an acceptable standard of human rights internally," remarks van Heelsum. "Secondly, policymakers should realise that migration towards Europe will not stop, unless the situation of migrants outside Europe improves."

At the UN level, van Heelsum and her team hope that the project's indicators will be used to evaluate the Global Compact for Migration, and that more countries will continue to use the tool to evaluate migration governance. "Facilitating orderly, safe and responsible migration is important for society, because it relates to a better implementation of basic human rights of people all over the world," she adds.

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PROJECT

ADMIGOV – Advancing Alternative Migration Governance

COORDINATED BY

University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands

FUNDED UNDER

Horizon 2020-SOCIETY

CORDIS FACTSHEET

cordis.europa.eu/project/id/822625

PROJECT WEBSITE

admigov.eu

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Linked-up policy is key to migration and rural development

Researchers in the EU-funded AGRUMIG project say strategies which support migrants as well as the communities they leave behind can benefit those in both origin and destination countries, as well as migrants themselves.

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The reasons people leave rural areas are complex. Lack of available work, a desire to escape poverty, youth aspirations and the impact of climate change are just some key motivating factors.

For agricultural communities experiencing outmigration, the impacts can be diverse and vary widely. Many of these communities are under-represented in policymaking and research, which is something that the project AGRUMIG ('Leaving something behind' – Migration governance and agricultural & rural change in 'home' communities: comparative experience from Europe, Asia and Africa), coordinated by the School of Oriental and African Studies in the United Kingdom, sought to address.

"We wanted to assess the consequences for those rural areas being left behind; to see if current programmes in place are a success, and to look at how – and if – migration can be a catalyst for rural transformation," explains AGRUMIG project member Alan Nicol, from the International Water Management Institute in the United Kingdom.

Understanding global demographic movement

When you have such enormous inequalities of wealth so close to each other, people are going to move.

The project set out to capture this broad picture of global demographic movement, with the aim of coming up with ideas and recommendations for how to better orient migration and rural development policies.

To achieve this, socio-economic contexts and policies across seven very different countries were examined – those in China, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Morocco, Nepal and Thailand – with a focus on economic migration.

"This is not just a question of people migrating to Europe," adds Nicol. "The Gulf countries are also destinations. When you have such enormous inequalities of wealth so close to each other, people are going to move."

The AGRUMIG project team used survey and participatory tools to examine the drivers of migration in these countries, and to analyse impacts on the rural sector. Policy dialogues were held, along with in-depth interviews with policymakers and practitioners.

Examining policy impacts on rural areas

The findings reflected the variety of situations. In China for example, government policy has resulted in agriculture being mechanised, and labour-saving technologies being introduced in response to rural-urban migration. One immediate impact of this could be to further reduce the availability of rural jobs, and encourage more farmers to move to the cities.

In Ethiopia, high population growth, low agricultural productivity and inadequate employment generation have resulted in substantial internal and international migration. Notable policy interventions have sought to better govern outmigration, including predeparture training programmes and rural job creation programmes.

Morocco, meanwhile, has seen many waves of outmigration over several decades. Recently there has been a growing interconnection between the EU and Morocco on migration matters – and Morocco has also found itself to be a transit country. The project found that stronger linkages could be made between rural development and outmigration, and encourage returnees' reintegration into the economy. However, the drivers of outmigration would continue.

How rational migration strategies benefit all

Nonetheless, parallels existed between the case studies. AGRUMIG found that in many countries, people often migrate simply to support their families in response to low income and rising prices.

An examination of all seven countries also enabled the project team to identify the kind of strategies that promote safer and more regulated migration. These more effective strategies focus less on controlling the movement of people, and more on harnessing the flows of knowledge and finance that come as a result of migration. The team notes that migration can and should be a net contributor to a nation's development.

Outmigration can also be leveraged to encourage agrarian development by countries of origin, and help tackle endemic social issues such as gender inequality and youth exclusion.

"Migration is often seen in a negative way, as something to control, organise and prevent," says Nicol. "The truth is that migration is a key part of development. The assumption that all people coming to Europe want to stay is not true. Many want to work, and then go home. Policies that allow this natural fluidity would be beneficial to everyone."

This is supported by the World Bank's latest World Development Report, which notes that, given Europe's ageing population and need for people of working age, many countries may start competing to attract more migrants.

"A more rational migration policy – in sending and receiving countries – is a win-win," remarks Nicol. "One thing that the COVID pandemic did was to underline the relentless logic of migration; even COVID didn't stand in the way of people's need to move. It just reinforced how structurally significant migration is globally."

PROJECT

AGRUMIG – 'Leaving something behind' – Migration governance and agricultural & rural change in 'home' communities: comparative experience from Europe, Asia and Africa

COORDINATED BY
School of Oriental and African Studies in the United Kingdom

FUNDED UNDER
Horizon 2020-SOCIETY

CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/822730

PROJECT WEBSITE
agrumig.iwmi.org

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Sharpening the EU's role in global asylum governance

A global analysis by the EU-funded ASILE project has underlined that Europe must do more to build trust with third countries, treat all asylum seekers equally and ensure that the UN Compact on Refugees is implemented.

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While many asylum instruments might at first seem promising or labelled as good practices, their implementation can be highly problematic over the medium and long term. Researchers from the ASILE (Global Asylum Governance and European Union's Role) project found that the application of these instruments, even if well-intentioned, can often undermine human rights and create further challenges down the line.

Project coordinator Sergio Carrera from the Centre for European Policy Studies in Belgium led a team examining countries including Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Jordan, South Africa and Türkiye. "We wanted to look at the experiences of non-European countries currently dealing with large-scale asylum movements, so that

lessons learned from these countries can be applied to the EU," he explains. "These are the countries facing most challenges of receiving and hosting asylum seekers at the largest scale."

Permanently temporary

A key finding of the ASILE project was that many displaced people seeking asylum in these regions have been given a 'temporary protection' or a 'forced migrant' status, rather than full refugee status. The project team noted that this practice is a sophisticated form of containment and exclusion.

"Some Syrian refugees in Türkiye, for example, have been under temporary protection for more than 10 years," notes Carrera. "They are trapped in a sort of 'permanent temporariness' and precarity."

He adds that the majority of people seeking asylum stay in their country as internally displaced people, or in neighbouring countries.

In South Africa for example, many displaced people from Zimbabwe have been given regularisation status through an amnesty programme. But this has now come to an end, which places thousands in legal uncertainty about their future.

Towards better asylum policy

The project also examined EU asylum arrangements with non-EU countries such as Niger, Serbia, Tunisia and Türkiye that aim to prevent migrants reaching Europe's borders. In all countries except Türkiye, ASILE found more EU resources are spent on containment than on refugee protection.

In Niger in particular, EU intervention to fight migrant smuggling has been seen as undermining free movement in the country. "As shown by the ASILE report 'Asylum for Containment', these asylum arrangements can create problems," says Carrera.

Through this work, ASILE hopes to assess the EU's role in implementing the UN Global Compact on Refugees, a framework for more equitable responsibility sharing by the international community.

The ASILE Global Portal has compiled lessons learned from ASILE's case studies, and the impact featured policies have on rights and the UN Compact commitments. Through this interactive web platform, users have direct access to the country-specific reports.

Treating asylum seekers equally

The project also examined asylum policy closer to home. Europe has activated the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) for those fleeing the war in Ukraine, and a recent book from the ASILE project provides a detailed examination of the first year of the Directive's implementation.

Highlighting the response of the EU to the Ukraine refugee crisis compared to previous waves of migration, the authors conclude that more effort is needed to ensure that the right to asylum in Europe is administered to individuals equally, irrespective of national or ethnic origin – in line with the Compact.

Some Syrian refugees in Türkiye have been under temporary protection for more than 10 years.

PROJECT

ASILE – Global Asylum Governance and European Union's Role

COORDINATED BY
Centre for European Policy Studies in Belgium

FUNDED UNDER
Horizon 2020-SOCIETY

CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/870787

PROJECT WEBSITE
asileproject.eu

A digital agent to help migrants navigate bureaucracy

Using artificial intelligence, the EU-funded EASYRIGHTS project has developed a number of solutions geared towards helping immigrants navigate the complex rules and administrative culture surrounding many public services.

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The integration of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers remains a challenge not only for the host communities, but also for the immigrants themselves. Knowing that the key to successful integration is having strong, vibrant and inclusive communities, the EASYRIGHTS (Enabling immigrants to easily know and exercise their rights) project is building technology-based solutions designed to overcome some of the hidden barriers to immigrant integration.

"A lack of information and low proficiency in the host country's language may lead to failures in a migrant's interaction with services and procedures and, consequently, to social exclusion," says Grazia Concilio, EASYRIGHTS project coordinator and professor of Urban Planning in the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies at the Politecnico di Milano in Italy.

Personalised, context-aware support

For many immigrants, accessing and using public services means navigating a complex web of administration. "While this bureaucracy can be challenging for anyone to navigate, it is particularly challenging for immigrants, who face not only a language barrier, but also complex rules and an administrative culture that they have no basis of familiarity with," explains Maryam Karimi, a project researcher and part of the coordination team at the Politecnico di Milano.

We developed a portfolio of solutions capable of providing personalised, context-aware support to users.

Complex problems such as this can't be solved using one-dimensional 'ad hoc' solutions. Ensuring that services respond to the very special needs of immigrants requires a collaborative approach, one that involves service providers, public authorities and end users alike – which is exactly what the EASYRIGHTS project did.

"Bringing together immigrants, the public sector and private organisations, we developed a portfolio of solutions capable of providing personalised, context-aware support to users," adds Karimi.

Simplifying complex documents

Among those solutions, all of which have been integrated within the easyRights agent, is the Pathway Generator. This artificial intelligence-based tool uses natural language understanding to automatically translate verbose and lengthy documents into easy-to-follow instructions. The result is a list of procedures that takes the form of steps, with information organised by 'what', 'how', 'where' and 'when'.

Following pilot programmes in Greece, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom, the easyRights agent is currently able to help migrants with asylum requests, acquiring work permits, submitting birth certificates, certifying one's nationality and registering at the local registry office. It can also help with job applications and accessing English as a second language courses. It is currently able to work in 10 languages: Arabic, Bengali, English, Farsi, French, Greek, Italian, Spanish, Ukrainian and Urdu.

"Public services play a crucial role in the successful integration of migrants, and the EASYRIGHTS project demonstrated that by facilitating this interaction, we can help improve immigrants' capacity to exercise their rights," concludes Concilio.

PROJECT

EASYRIGHTS – Enabling immigrants to easily know and exercise their rights

COORDINATED BY
n/a

FUNDED UNDER
Horizon 2020-SOCIETY

CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/870980

PROJECT WEBSITE
easyrights.eu

Predicting future patterns of migration to Europe

By focusing on the role local circumstances play in migration decisions, the EU-funded FUME project offers a better understanding of what movement to Europe might look like in the coming decades.

While migration is a constant phenomenon, it is often influenced by local and temporal forces. "Local circumstances play a major role in the entire migration process, starting from the decision to migrate and continuing through to the transit process and, finally, to where migrants settle in their destination country," explains Carsten Kessler, a professor of Geoinformatics at Aalborg University in Copenhagen and FUME (Future Migration Scenarios for Europe) project coordinator.

By studying the major factors impacting migrant movement patterns and analysing the regional and local circumstances that cause a migrant to move from one place to another, the project aims to determine future trends in migration.

"Understanding the regional socio-demographic, economic and environmental challenges that may shape future migrant movement patterns in Europe is the key to making informed decisions and implementing effective policies," adds Kessler.

New perspectives on migration drivers

To focus on the role local circumstances play in migration decisions, researchers selected a number of countries of origin with a history of migration to Europe, including Iraq, Senegal, Tunisia and Ukraine. The project also investigated the local effects of migration in four major EU cities: Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Krakow and Rome.

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Through interviews and surveys, researchers gained new perspectives on what drives residents to migrate. For example, researchers found that temporary migration and nomadic lifestyles are embedded in Senegalese culture, due to the country's geographical location, history and demography. Kessler explains: "In this case, migration is driven by environmental, economic and social dilemmas of Senegalese society."

Mapping future migration patterns

These insights were used to develop a set of scenarios describing what migration to Europe might look like in the coming decades. Returning to the Senegal case study, researchers found that future migration – and its regularity or abnormality – will depend on policies and relationships between West Africa and the rest of the globe. It will also depend on development within Senegal and whether the country can transform into a place where residents can live and work for their entire lives.

"Despite their rigid borders, Europe is likely to continue to be a key destination for Senegalese migrants, primarily due to the existing networks of the Senegalese diaspora," remarks Kessler.

Applying demographic modelling

The project succeeded at producing a large body of insights about migration propensity across different regions with a history of migration to Europe. Many of these results have been published as academic articles and reports.

But perhaps the project's biggest accomplishment is what it has accomplished in terms of demographic modelling.

"To the best of my knowledge, this is the first time migration models starting from the international and moving to the regional and, finally, the local level have been fully integrated," concludes Kessler. "As a result, we can now assess the effects that international migration has not only on the destination country but, perhaps more importantly, on the destination city."

To continue exploring migration at the local level, some of the FUME project partners have joined forces to conduct additional work via new EU-funded research.

Local circumstances play a major role in the entire migration process.

PROJECT
FUME – Future Migration Scenarios for Europe

COORDINATED BY
Aalborg University in Denmark

FUNDED UNDER
Horizon 2020-SOCIETY

CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/870649

PROJECT WEBSITE
futuremigration.eu

A data-driven approach to the migration challenge

Leveraging information from mobile phones, social media and remote sensing services, the EU-funded HumMingBird project is challenging perceptions about migration and broadening our understanding of this complex issue.

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Migration continues to dominate the media and political spotlight in Europe, generating headlines and policy debate in equal measure. However, these discussions are often driven more by rhetoric than facts.

"To be effective and constructive, debate and decision-making must be based on reliable evidence about the demographic, economic, environmental and political drivers of migration," says Tuba Bircan, an interdisciplinary researcher at VUB in Belgium.

With the support of the HumMingBird (Enhanced migration measures from a multidimensional perspective) project, coordinated by KU Leuven) in Belgium, Bircan is leading an effort to provide such evidence – and to do so, she's taking a deep dive into data.

New insights into migration

Using an interdisciplinary team and a multidimensional approach to research, the project garnered noteworthy new insights into the drivers, practices and consequences of migration.

By leveraging remote sensing analytics, researchers identified the impact that extreme weather events have on migration patterns. "In Somalia, where immediate internal displacement tends to occur in response to rapid-onset events such as high-impact floods, migrants are likely to eventually return," explains Bircan. "Conversely, individuals strive to resist the aftermath of slow-onset events such as droughts, and are less likely to return if displaced."

Integrating mobile phone data with social media and satellite data has proven to be invaluable in gaining a comprehensive understanding of complex migration indicators such as cross-border mobility and residential segregation.

Researchers also mined social media and mobile phone data to better understand migration indicators where official statistics are limited, along with air-traffic data to create estimates for seasonal migration. They also used Twitter data to create migrant friendliness indices for communities across various European regions.

"Integrating mobile phone data with social media and satellite data has proven to be invaluable in gaining a comprehensive understanding of complex indicators such as cross-border mobility and residential segregation," remarks Bircan.

Working in collaboration with the EU-funded OPPORTUNITIES project, the HumMingBird project conducted a comprehensive public opinion survey. The survey explores the dynamic interplay between how migrant groups are represented in the media and how government and society respond to immigration.

Informed, data-driven discussions on migration

The HumMingBird project's groundbreaking research challenges existing perceptions of migration. "Traditional research has failed to capture the diversity and dynamism of the migration experience, which ultimately undermines the agency of migrants," explains Bircan.

She notes that, contrary to popular belief, the majority of migrants do not have predefined notions of the specific country they aim to reach. Instead, the data shows that their destination is influenced by their experiences during the journey.

"With this evidence in hand, we can start to move beyond the rhetoric of 'sending countries' and acknowledge the significant role that the migration route plays and adjust our policies accordingly," she adds.

The project's results are met with great interest by policymakers, including those at the EU level. Furthermore, many of the project's findings, insights and advice will soon be published in a new book. Entitled 'Data Science for Migration and Mobility', the book offers an in-depth look at the use of these tools within the realm of migration and mobility.

"We are confident that this book will foster interdisciplinary collaboration and facilitate informed, data-based discussions on migration amongst researchers, practitioners and policymakers alike," concludes Bircan.

The research team is now turning its attention to exploring future migration scenarios and what they could mean for national and EU policies.

PROJECT

HumMingBird – Enhanced migration measures from a multidimensional perspective

COORDINATED BY
KU Leuven in Belgium

FUNDED UNDER
Horizon 2020-SOCIETY

CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/870661

PROJECT WEBSITE
hummingbird-h2020.eu

How migrants can help rejuvenate Europe's rural and mountain regions

The EU-funded MATILDE project explored the role migration can play in redeveloping areas that are often treated as marginal in socio-economic policies, with concrete tools and a rich set of data for practitioners on the ground.

While third-country national (TCN) migration to Europe's urban areas often dominates media coverage, flow to more rural regions is underexplored. Yet, in these places, immigration can meet economic needs and counter depopulation and dwindling birth rates.

"If development is to be balanced, integration and migration policies have to be tailored to the specificities of a place," says Jussi P. Laine, project coordinator of the EU-funded project MATILDE (Migration Impact Assessment to Enhance Integration and Local Development in European Rural and Mountain Areas).

To explore how TCN immigration influences local development in rural and mountain areas, MATILDE conducted 13 case studies across 10 countries. Using action research methods, the project co-created empirically grounded policy recommendations with local stakeholders, including migrants and integration workers.

"MATILDE offers pragmatic paths to achieve the EU's long-term rural vision for areas, making them more sustainable, equitable and resilient," adds Laine, a professor of Human Geography at the University of Eastern Finland.

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Mix-methodology to assess social impact

MATILDE investigated three key effects of TCN migration: impacts on the labour market and local economy, demographic and social revitalisation, and territorialisation and sense of belonging.

The project developed a toolbox of research methods, including quantitative and qualitative data collection and analyses, as well as participatory techniques such as mobility mappings and workshops.

MATILDE offers pragmatic paths to achieve the EU's long-term rural vision, making them more sustainable, equitable and resilient.

"Quantitative socio-economic indicators alone, such as employment rates, reveal little about the social impact of immigration on migrants or local communities," explains Laine. "This approach gave us a greater depth of analysis."

Influx and outflow

The 13 case study regions examined represent a range of geographies, historic characteristics, sociocultural norms and economic systems. All have faced different immigration phases, accompanied by economic and political transformations.

"Our regions have remarkably divergent local economies, where migrant profiles fit into the labour market differently. But all were embedded within national or international economic systems because of the centrality of farming, forestry and fishing to local economies," says Laine.

In Scotland's Outer Hebrides, though migrant worker numbers are small, MATILDE found them vital to the fishing industry. In South Tyrol, Italy, and Karacabey, Türkiye, agriculture is a key employer of foreign immigrants, resident or seasonal.

Other areas, including Germany's Bavaria region and Ostrobothnia in Finland, were found to have more diversified economies, with the industrial, manufacturing, handicraft and knowledge-based sectors also offering opportunities for qualified TCNs.

Depopulation, driven by young people emigrating to urban areas in search of better opportunities, was prevalent across all case studies, alongside ageing local populations. Both have created (often low-skilled) employment opportunities for TCNs.

"Despite the importance of foreign labour for these regional economies, it seems to be underappreciated, until COVID highlighted the socio-economic benefits," remarks Laine.

Co-created policy recommendations

Approximately 25 % of the EU's population live in rural areas. Their agriculture, forests, water reserves, cultural heritage, biodiversity and social diversity are protected under Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

Yet according to Laine, "none of MATILDE's regions have proper TCN employment programmes. More attention is given to limiting urban immigration rather than strategically tapping any development potential."

In response, MATILDE co-created policy recommendations, which incorporate integration concerns, political levels and different TCN groups (asylum seekers, refugees, migrant workers). The recommendations include 'quick wins' such as faster recognition of existing formal, informal and non-formal TCN qualifications, and long-term practices such as tailored training to fill skills gaps.

Collaborative research

MATILDE collaborated with three EU-funded 'migration projects': WELCOMING SPACES, MIMY and Whole-COMM. A final conference was held (website in German) in Villach, Austria, one of the MATILDE project case studies. The team are now involved in a newly created cluster of 39 EU-funded migration projects, designed to boost the coordination and impact of the research.

PROJECT

MATILDE – Migration Impact Assessment to Enhance Integration and Local Development in European Rural and Mountain Areas

COORDINATED BY
University of Eastern Finland in Finland

FUNDED UNDER
Horizon 2020-SOCIETY

CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/870831

PROJECT WEBSITE
matilde-migration.eu/

No place like home: innovative housing solutions to help migrants settle

Housing initiatives launched by the interdisciplinary MERGING project in three European cities are helping migrants gain access to services crucial to integration.

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Without a fixed address, migrants can struggle to access essential services such as healthcare, banking, education and employment.

"Precarious housing not only keeps people in limbo, unable to exert their rights, but also damages their physical and mental health," says Noémie Dominguez, Lyon-based researcher with the EU-funded MERGING (Housing for immigrants and community integration in Europe and beyond: Strategies, policies, dwellings, and governance) project.

Migrants often face discrimination from landlords due to their ethnicity or economic status. Furthermore, housing for vulnerable groups often sparks tension with locals who sometimes perceive newcomers as competing for scarce resources or 'spoiling' the neighbourhood.

The MERGING project is exploring different housing solutions that can increase local acceptance of migrants. "We are trialling co-creation and neighbour participation schemes, to see if shared activities can challenge stereotypes and break down barriers," adds Catherine Mercier-Suissa, MERGING project coordinator.

Innovative accommodation models

MERGING's action research approach was co-created through workshops with a range of social actors including NGOs, representatives of local citizen groups, policymakers and local authorities.

Following an analysis of reception and integration options for migrants in four countries (France, Italy, Spain and Sweden), the team identified suitable housing schemes to pilot. Feasibility studies were then carried out in Lyon, Valencia and Gothenburg, to be implemented this year.

Each pilot has been tailored to the local context. In Valencia, the project benefits from strong regional government support, including an offer of eight apartments and a space for project management and common space functions. All are located in the rapidly gentrifying historic city centre, within a 10-minute walk of one another.

You need to listen to beneficiaries and engage local community members in housing solutions if integration is to work.

The beneficiaries have recently been assigned to their flats following a participatory process involving 12 stakeholders (including NGOs and local and regional authorities) and should move in this summer.

Once the initial 3-year lease with the University of Valencia ends, beneficiaries who meet the social housing criteria can remain in place, paying a social rent to the local housing authority.

"We are proud to provide 18 people with a stable home in a neighbourhood currently lacking affordable housing and cultural diversity," remarks Carles Xavier Simo Noguera, Valencia team lead. "We are now co-designing their integration programme."

Floating a novel housing solution

In France, the pilot won the support of local authorities in Lyon to build seven 'tiny houses' and a common space on land belonging to Le Foyer Notre-Dame des Sans-Abri (website in French) (FNDSA), a local NGO. The houses will be built and installed by project partner Quatorze, with FNDSA managing the development, beneficiary selection and coordination of social support.

"It was challenging to get local community support, due to their prior experiences of squatting in the location," says Mercier-Suissa, from project host the University of Lyon. "But with mayoral support and by highlighting opportunities, such as getting involved in activities, we succeeded."

In Gothenburg, the reluctance of the local municipality, coupled with construction permit delays, led to the creation of a floating house in Ringön, an area known for its alternative character.

The pilot has been integrated into an urban project, Floating Lab, which responds to concerns about rising water levels. It is targeted at young asylum seekers interested in a 6-12 month shipbuilding industry training programme. Each house will be shared by up to four roommates.

Nancy Ottaviano, lead architect, explains: "This pilot tackles three concerns at the same time: housing shortages, protection of asylum seekers from expulsion and flooding risks."

Policy implications

MERGING's approach could inform implementation of the EU's action plan on integration and inclusion (2021-2027) which includes 'access to adequate and affordable housing', as one of its four central tenets.

The Gothenburg team has offered seven housing policy recommendations for better integration: context-aware solutions, linking to labour market integration, local social cohesion activities, diverse habitations, participatory governance, a social business model and governmental and non-governmental organisational collaboration.

Andrea Spehar, the project's research lead in Gothenburg, concludes: "We demonstrate that you need to listen to beneficiaries and engage local community members in housing solutions if integration is to work."

PROJECT

MERGING – Housing for immigrants and community integration in Europe and beyond: Strategies, policies, dwellings, and governance

COORDINATED BY
University of Lyon in France

FUNDED UNDER
Horizon 2020-SOCIETY

CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101004535

PROJECT WEBSITE
merging-housing-project.eu

Digital tools support migrant integration in European cities

A novel e-government solution for use by migrants, public administration and civil society organisations simplifies cooperation and information exchange.

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In recent years, the high rise in migrant flows, especially asylum seekers and refugees, has raised concerns about how best to integrate these groups across Europe. As a result, the topic has been high on the EU agenda since then.

Administrations faced challenges in several areas: how to improve the management of migrant integration into host communities, facilitate the opportunities for migrants to participate in society, and build up capacity for responding to future migration challenges on various levels.

Successful integration into European society

To address these issues, the EU-funded MICADO (Migrant Integration Cockpits and Dashboards) project developed an integrated, ready-to-use solution that can be adapted by local stakeholders to their respective challenges. The developed technical solution is well-documented. Information on the functions and implementation is accessible on an open-source basis. Additionally, a solutions exchange portal was set up to collect tutorials and descriptions of best practices in managing the integration of migrants into urban societies across the EU.

The solution supports public administrations in facilitating migrants' access to housing, education, healthcare and the labour market. These four social systems are widely considered as key to successful integration.

"Public administrations can easily, faster and more effectively welcome and integrate migrants into local communities by providing efficient integration procedures and enabling direct communication and exchange with civil society organisations (CSOs) and migrants

themselves," explains Jörg Noennig, project coordinator and professor at HafenCity University Hamburg in Germany.

Digital services for social integration and exchange

Three apps allow cooperation and information exchange between migrants, public administrations and CSOs. Each app offers easy access to many and varied services.

Migrants have at their fingertips a large amount of basic information covering topics such as applying for subsidised housing and residence permits, obtaining public health insurance and finding jobs.

MICADO will empower public authorities, local communities and migrants with more efficient and effective digital services and information dissemination.

Public administrations can access and share current migration statistics, disseminate information and step-by-step guides for integration processes as well as promote events and courses. CSOs can promote their services to migrants, share relevant information on local integration processes, and advertise courses and events.

Content is available in Arabic, Chinese, Dari, Dutch, English, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian and Urdu. A voice-over function enables inclusive access for users with limited literacy skills. A glossary explains key terms and a chatbot provides further assistance to users. Different cities can easily adapt the platform to local context, language and administrative procedures.

The digital tools were successfully piloted in Antwerp, Bologna, Hamburg and Madrid. They were then adapted by the local communities.

"MICADO will empower public authorities, local communities and migrants with more efficient and effective digital services and information dissemination," concludes Noennig.

By involving end users in the development of migrant integration services early on, MICADO will also help to strengthen cohesion in local societies and communities. In addition, it will build up trust and contribute to a perception of migration issues based on factual information.

PROJECT
MICADO – Migrant Integration Cockpits and Dashboards

COORDINATED BY
HafenCity University Hamburg in Germany

FUNDED UNDER
Horizon 2020-SOCIETY

CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/822717

PROJECT WEBSITE
micadoproject.eu

Predicting the flows of people across Europe, and their impact

The EU-funded QuantMig project created tools to help European policymakers make evidence-based decisions when it comes to anticipating and responding to migration.

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The movement of people offers both opportunities and challenges to the EU, so there is a need for comprehensive and sustainable migration policies. However, migration is an unpredictable phenomenon. The underlying factors driving people from one country to another are complex and diverse, making analysis difficult.

In the QuantMig (Quantifying Migration Scenarios for Better Policy) project, researchers created a series of tools to support European policymakers. The project aims to enable evidence-informed decision-making and foster a deeper understanding of migration dynamics.

"There are aspects of migration processes where uncertainty can indeed be reduced, and QuantMig has contributed the right

methodology to make this possible," says Jakub Bijak, QuantMig project leader and professor of Statistical Demography at the University of Southampton in the United Kingdom.

The intention of the project was to support decisions at the short-term operational level, as well as more strategic policies over the long term. "This would ultimately benefit the host societies, and the migrants themselves, by making sure that the resources are available when and where they are needed," adds Bijak.

Simulating migration

The suite of practical tools developed by QuantMig to help policymakers shape effective migration policies included

interactive models and visualisations, along with a range of simulations specifically designed for migration policy.

One major tool developed by QuantMig is a web tool that simulates different immigration scenarios, and allows users to explore the impacts of various migration events on population projections, for individual countries or the EU as a whole.

The tool uses the results of a microsimulation model created in the project that covers 31 European countries for the period 2020-2060. It presents the impacts of immigration on the labour force and its structure by age, gender, place of birth and educational attainment.

"Migration is highly uncertain and cannot be predicted, but our simulations can showcase what its impact can be under different assumptions," explains Michaela Potančoková, a demographer at the Vienna Institute of Demography and QuantMig team member.

Responding to humanitarian crises

The tools are particularly useful for analysing the impacts of major displacement events, such as natural disasters or war. "This is especially important during large-scale humanitarian crises, such as the wars in Syria or Ukraine, where high-volume migration happens in a very short time, and calls for rapid and adequate responses," says Bijak.

The project simulations focused on the long-term demographic impacts of these events, such as the exodus of migrants from Syria in 2015-2016. The results showed that they do not leave long-lasting impacts on population ageing or on the labour force.

"Only if migration persists for several years can we observe a small impact on the projected labour force size for the main immigration countries in north-western Europe," notes Potančoková.

The team also developed and published a set of educational materials and a quiz aimed at students, to spread knowledge about migration and its uncertainties.

The QuantMig researchers aim to make all outcomes openly available on the project website, including inventories of the data sources on migration flows and drivers, databases of migration estimates and the full suite of scenario tools.

"By developing and promoting these tools, we aim to draw the attention of policymakers to the importance of managing migration uncertainty in a systematic way," adds Bijak.

There are aspects of migration processes where uncertainty can indeed be reduced, and QuantMig has contributed the right methodology to make this possible.

PROJECT
QuantMig – Quantifying Migration Scenarios for Better Policy

COORDINATED BY
University of Southampton in the United Kingdom

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CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/870299

PROJECT WEBSITE
quantmig.eu

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Tailored integration brings benefits to refugees

Current approaches to dealing with refugees are suboptimal. EU-funded researchers have helped to reshape how we think about integrating forcibly displaced people, especially the most vulnerable.

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The scale and impact of forced displacements has grown continuously in recent years. The UNHCR reported in 2022 that more than 100 million people are currently refugees, mainly from countries such as Afghanistan, Myanmar, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Venezuela.

While most are hosted in neighbouring countries, high numbers still reach countries far beyond those.

Meeting needs of displaced people

"Host communities, authorities and the international community put in place different resources to help these people, from assistance to integration," explains RAISD (Reshaping Attention and Inclusion Strategies for Distinctively vulnerable people among the forcibly displaced) project coordinator Rubén Fuentes-Fernández from Complutense University of Madrid in Spain.

"However, resources are always scarce, public attention moves on to other issues, and forcibly displaced people are often left without hope or ways to move forward."

A key issue here is that assistance programmes tend to address common needs and are under-equipped to monitor particular needs of target groups or host communities. This situation is even more precarious in the case of the most vulnerable groups.

Taking account of vulnerable groups

To address this identified challenge, the EU-funded RAISD project focused on vulnerable groups such unaccompanied minors, women victims of violence, and people with disabilities.

"Our proposal was to define and characterise the novel concept of vulnerability context," says Fuentes-Fernández. "This is the context that leads to a certain group's vulnerability. This depends on their features, those of the host community, their history, their interactions, and their needs."

Out of this, the RAISD project team sought to devise specific Tailored Attention and Inclusion Strategies (TAISs). It was recognised that, to be effective, these strategies would require the active participation of all stakeholders, from forcibly displaced people to service providers and policymakers, from design through to implementation and evaluation.

The Spanish TAIS focused on promoting the economic autonomy of sub-Saharan women.

The project then conducted pilots in seven countries, all of which are transit and/or destination countries for displaced people in Europe and the Middle East.

The aim was to demonstrate that TAISs are a more effective way of dealing with the integration and inclusion of forcibly displaced people, and to then provide the methodological tools for others to follow suit.

Successes in tailored inclusion

In all case studies, actions were adapted to meet the needs of vulnerable people. In Lebanon for example, the designed TAIS was geared at addressing social, emotional and academic problems.

The programme had a positive impact on the Syrian people in camps, in addition to ensuring coronavirus awareness among pregnant women, elderly people and others at risk.

"The Spanish TAIS focused on promoting the economic autonomy of sub-Saharan women, some of them victims of trafficking," adds Fuentes-Fernández. "Stakeholders followed the guidelines of our methodology and designed the TAIS together.

"The TAIS was then adapted to two different subgroups of beneficiaries: those who wanted to start their own business, and those who needed basic training to understand the Spanish job market."

The success of these experiences demonstrated the effectiveness of the TAIS concept. "The TAISs specifically consider context, and provide continuous evaluation," he remarks. "This makes them better at meeting their objectives and making better use of resources."

A catalogue of recommendations, including policy recommendations, has been published, while an Observatory to continue dissemination and research has been established.

"This is the key element in our strategy to continue collaboration around this topic after the project finishes, and to create new opportunities," says Fuentes-Fernández. "These include ideas for social action, local knowledge bases for research exchange, and volunteer engagement."

Creating a migrant support network across Europe

Many organisations engaging directly with migrants can feel as though they are working in isolation. The EU-funded SPRING project aimed to foster connections between them, supporting the dissemination of best practices.

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There are many organisations across Europe all working to integrate new migrants into their respective countries. Yet these groups often work alone, focusing on their specific local issues without wider support from a pan-European community.

The SPRING (Sustainable PRactices of INteGration) project developed an online community network to help collaboration among integration researchers, think tanks and other practitioners across the region. SPRING aimed to help civil society organisations, public authorities, NGOs and anyone who works directly with migrants to improve integration practices, by sharing knowledge and best practices.

Mapping the landscape and fostering integration

The SPRING team first mapped out the landscape of migration integration practitioners all over Europe, which continued to

grow organically over the two years of the project. The team then ran engagement activities and workshops to connect these disparate groups.

"We had the clear impression that these organisations usually feel alone, like they are left behind from the entire system," says SPRING project coordinator Guia Gilardoni from the ISMU Foundation. "They often struggle to find solutions in hard times, and want to know other people doing the same work elsewhere to share suggestions, advice and networking."

The project also shifted focus toward eastern Europe after the start of the Ukraine crisis, as there were a lot of new yet untrained people working with migrants in this region. "That was another crisis that made what we were doing even more useful," remarks Gilardoni.

Co-designing best practices

SPRING then ran co-design sessions with around 40 people split into four groups, with the aim of identifying problems with their work integrating migrants and then finding shared solutions. Common problems include a lack of support, and the stop-start nature of projects due to intermittent funding.

Initially, the project was aimed at European countries. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the project moved online, allowing the SPRING team to target a range of practitioners from all over the world. "We had interested people from Africa, from Asia, from North and South America," says Gilardoni. "It was really unexpected, but good."

We had the clear impression that these organisations usually feel alone, like they are left behind from the entire system.

The findings have now been shared in a handbook designed to support practitioners across Europe. "These solutions aimed to empower the entire ecosystem," adds Gilardoni. "The co-design was indeed very successful because the idea was to support a community of practice.

"It was designed to be immediately accessible for practitioners, with a lot of tips and infographics and practical notes to collect all the academic knowledge in a usable way," she explains.

The SPRING project also created an online platform integrating already existing best practices. "The idea was to detect what is sustainable and transferable within our practice," remarks Gilardoni. "In this way we can avoid reinventing the wheel every time."

The final strand of the SPRING project targeted policymakers, and through a series of workshops provided a way for them to evaluate their own policies in relation to other ideas. "When you bring experts to the table, they all have their truth," Gilardoni explains. "The idea here is to challenge their mindset."

PROJECT
SPRING – Sustainable PRactices of INteGration

COORDINATED BY
ISMU Foundation in Italy

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CORDIS FACTSHEET
cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101004635

PROJECT WEBSITE
integrationpractices.eu

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Networks improve displaced people's self-reliance and resilience

As policies struggle to provide answers to forced displacement, solutions are needed that are better tailored to the needs and capacities of displaced persons.

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According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, about 16 million people worldwide remain in exile for years without the prospect of return, resettlement or local integration. This so called protracted displacement leads to economic instability, social marginalisation, legal insecurity and future uncertainty.

Policy solutions often fail to recognise displaced people's actual needs. They also limit their opportunities rather than broaden them.

Sustainable solutions for long-term displacement

To better understand these protracted displacement situations, the EU-funded TRAFIG (Transnational Figurations of Displacement: Connectivity and Mobility as Solutions to Protracted Refugee

Situations) project performed empirical research in Africa, Asia and Europe. Over 3 120 people were engaged during the 3.5-year period. Research centred around five factors that help or hinder people from moving out of protracted displacement: governance regimes; local social practices and livelihoods; cross-border networks and movements; intergroup relations between displaced people and hosts; and development incentives for hosting refugees.

"From more than 2 800 interviews with displaced persons, policymakers and practitioners, a troubling and consistent picture emerged: refugees and internally displaced people attempt to build a new life after their violent displacement but constantly run into obstacles, barriers and dead ends," explains TRAFIG scientific coordinator Benjamin Etzold, a senior researcher at the Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies.

"Hundreds of displaced people shared with us their feelings of uncertainty and temporariness and the sense of an endless wait for an opportunity that's not guaranteed – namely a clear path to get out of a tangled maze of temporary solutions, year after year."

Turning attention to displaced people's connectivity and mobility

Project partners assessed how far the very challenging circumstances under which displaced people live – often for many years – are affected by government policies, asylum systems, protection frameworks, the provision of aid and local economies where they live. They also analysed social network relations, economic interactions and mobility beyond the respective living places and host countries.

Findings published in the TRAFIG Synthesis Report showed that most refugees are often much better connected than previously thought. They use their cross-border networks to make a living, keep in touch with loved ones and build a better future. However, the extent, intensity and reliability of transnational ties varied considerably between countries, sites and focal groups.

"In a nutshell, the better local, national and transnational support networks function, the better displaced people can cope with multiple challenges they encounter after displacement," states Etzold, "and the easier it is for them to rebuild their lives and thus move out of a protracted situation."

Supporting policymakers and practitioners to help displaced persons

The TRAFIG Policy Handbook provides takeaways, examples, policy recommendations and best practices. It offers essential advice

We understand much better now how long-term situations of displacement emerge and to what extent they are influenced by refugees and internally displaced persons' social networks.

in achieving people centred and sustainable solutions to long-term displacement.

TRAFIG's findings contribute to the main objectives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' Global Compact on Refugees. The outcomes will be useful for those working on refugee protection, local integration, resettlement, as well as return and circular mobility. The research results also provide new insights for humanitarian aid and development policy in countries of first reception. A toolkit for practitioners delivers practical ideas on how to strengthen connections in displacement.

"We understand much better now how long-term situations of displacement emerge and to what extent they are influenced by refugees and internally displaced persons' social networks," concludes Etzold.

PROJECT

TRAFIG – Transnational Figurations of Displacement: Connectivity and Mobility as Solutions to Protracted Refugee Situations

COORDINATED BY
Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies in Germany

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