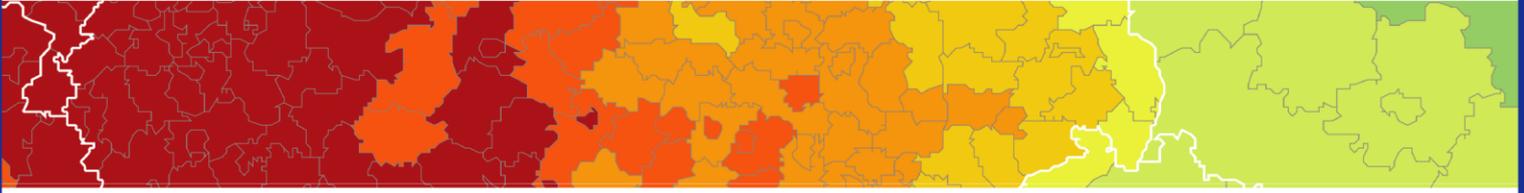


Inspire policy making by territorial evidence



# MIGRATUP - Territorial and Urban Potentials Connected to Migration and Refugee Flows

Targeted Analysis

**Executive Summary**

Version 15/09/2018

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**This delivery does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the members of the ESPON 2020 Monitoring Committee.**

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# MIGRATUP - Territorial and Urban Potentials Connected to Migration and Refugee Flows

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## Abbreviations

ESPON	European Territorial Observatory Network
EU	European Union
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

# 1 Introduction

The ESPON “Territorial and Urban Potentials Connected to Migration and Refugee Flows” project is the first one specifically devoted to the analysis of the implications for territorial cohesion deriving from the so-called refugee “crisis” that peaked in 2015. In fact, this research was developed in the aftermath of the important migration phenomena that in the last years have reshaped the geopolitical roles of the countries throughout the European continent.

The area investigated by our project, the Adriatic-Ionian and Danube macro-regions, provide a comprehensive geographical scope to analyse and assess the impacts of migration and refugee flows, since it includes altogether countries of arrival, transit and destination of these flows. The geographies encompassed by the project include also the countries traversed by the “Balkan Route”, what became known as the main gateway to Europe for hundred thousand migrants and asylum seekers – and the path along which some of the most dramatic events took place. It is important to underline that the research team has decided to include also Kosovo (under UN Security Council Resolution 1244) and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) to the country coverage, in order to produce an exhaustive overview.

The project outcomes demonstrate that the analysis of territorial opportunities and challenges connected to migration flows cannot be carried out without taking into consideration also the effects of the complementary dynamics of urbanisation and shrinking rural areas, which are affecting many territories across the countries of our interest. In fact, as this project as well as previous studies have explored, large urban centers are increasingly attracting newcomers, while depopulation and ageing residents are the most common trends one can retrieve in the rural and inner areas spread out throughout the macro-regions.

The combination of the socio-demographic phenomena analysed by the project leads to important comparative conclusions: the two macro-regions and the additional countries are characterized by intense and multidirectional migration dynamics, which include internal, macro-regional and external flows of people. These dynamics are vital for the territories’ economic performance, and reveal that even besides asylum flows, mobility is a defining feature of the area. A proper understanding of this multifaceted mobility is thus necessary to manage and to turn into an asset what today is depicted – mostly and erroneously – as a threat to security and prosperity. Territorial cohesion has to happen within this framework.

Therefore, considering the challenges that have already caused profound political tensions between EU member States, this project has collected evidence and insights that will hopefully prove crucial for macro-regional strategies and the future European Territorial Cooperation programmes. The resulting policy recommendations of this ESPON targeted analysis support a policymaking shift from emergency management to long-term planning for integration of newcomers. Migration has already proved to represent an enormous advantage for territorial growth: a proper policy framework can enhance these opportunities even further.

## 2 Policy recommendations

Building further on data collection, territorial typologies and case studies, a number of specific policy recommendations are made for improving migration management in the Adriatic-Ionian and Danube macro-regions, also taking into account territorial needs in the framework of the EUSAIR and EUSDR strategy and the ETC programmes.

### 2.1 Data gaps

The team believes that the data gaps observed on the different migration dynamics represent a serious limitation for the development of more effective policies. Data should be seen indeed as pre-requisite for such task. Therefore, before looking into the specific recommendations formulated as outputs of our analysis, it is useful to provide an overview of data shortcomings and means to improve it. As for internal migration, most of the countries provide data at NUTS 3 level or at levels that can be adjusted into NUTS 3 administrative units. However, since in most of the countries the notification of residence change is not a compulsory act, the scope of the flow of internal migrants cannot be fully assessed. To partially overcome this limitation and obtain a more complete picture, the team recommends:

- The digitalization (again, non-compulsory) of residence change procedures, in a way that would give citizens the possibility to register their movement online. This is predicted to encourage many to do so.

Current data available at the Eurostat database for analysing macro-regional flows i.e. changes of places of usual residence, are scarce and limited to few countries. Considering the remarkable entity of macro-regional movements, and their potential impact for economic growth, the team recommends that:

- More efforts are put in place at national statistical offices to start collecting and distributing data on immigrants (by country of previous residence) and emigrants (by country of next residence), consistently with Eurostat guidelines. Existing data should be harmonized and made available.
- Current categorizations available at Eurostat (Immigration by: citizenship; country of birth; country of previous residence. Emigration by: citizenship; country of birth; country of next residence) are ambiguous in terms of territorial origin of the immigrant/emigrant. Database improvements should make possible data crossing to retrieve, for example, also the territorial origin of those immigrants/emigrants born or holding citizenship of a specific country. By the same token, datasets about countries of previous/next residence should also specify country of birth and/or citizenship of the person moving.

Moreover, the team recommends that:

- Data on International migrant stock (revision 2017) elaborated by UNDESA are expanded to cover also regional levels (at least NUTS 2).
- The European Union Labour Force Survey (EU LFS) is expanded to include all candidate countries. Currently, EU LFS is conducted in the 28 Member States of the European Union, 3 countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and 2 candidate countries (the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, FYROM and Montenegro). Efforts should ensure that also statistics from Bosnia and Herzegovina,

Serbia, Albania, Kosovo (under UN Security Council Resolution 1244), which all collect such data, are harmonized and included in the database. A good example, in this sense, is the OECD Database on Migrants in OECD Regions, which covers socio-demographic characteristics of the foreign-born population; information on the educational level of the foreign-born population; and on the integration outcomes of migrants, with a focus on labour market integration. This information is available also at regional levels (Territorial Level 2)

Yet, the most impeding data gap concerns asylum seekers. The study recommends:

- The elaboration of an instrument, common to all authorities in the macro-regions and possibly to the entire EU, for the systematic collection of information about skills and education of asylum seekers.
- The identification of the asylum seeker in a database that allows to keep track of the same person over time.
- Improved collaboration and sharing of information among countries.

## **2.2 Migration and integration**

In addition to the suggestions how to overcome the existing data gaps, the team observes that recent migration flows to Europe have triggered a “securitization” of the migration debate, which has resulted in the tightening of refugee policies and the widespread stigmatization of immigrants and asylum seekers across many national contexts. However, the evidence we set forth in this research show that many of the territories analysed are suffering from depopulation labour force shortage, whether skilled or not, for which migration can be indeed a solution or an alleviating factor. Therefore – our resulting recommendations aim at stressing that future policymaking should move further in the direction of elaborating instruments that connect, conceptually and pragmatically, employment with opportunities for long-term integration and territorial growth. How to best link territorial challenges with opportunities, and to best promote such paradigmatic change of approach from emergency to long-term planning? In these respects, our targeted analysis recommends:

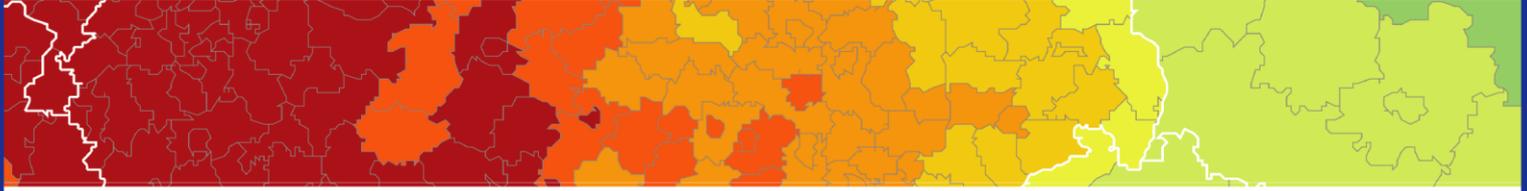
- The realization of systematic surveys and databases containing socio-economic information about newcomers, which can be accessed and updated at any time by public authorities.
- The establishment of mechanisms for the matching of territorial needs with immigrants/asylum seekers skills, in order to estimate their employability in local markets and manage migration accordingly.
- Further promotion of the territorial dispersal approach for asylum seekers integration, which provides instrumental social contexts for interactions with local residents.
- Implementation of deliberative democracy tools to increase mutual understanding and trust in the social contexts of interaction between locals and immigrants/asylum seekers (e.g. opening of reception centres). In other words, once the local needs of the labour market have been identified, a joint resolution between newcomers and the local population should not only identify actions that benefit territorial cohesion, but also reassure local populations on the positive impact of integration on the local development of territories affected by demographic issues. These tools, which include public gathering and discussions among key actors are meant to ensure legitimate political decisions for the common good.

### **2.3 Territorial cohesion and attractiveness**

- The differentiation of policies targeting urban and rural contexts, although both should aim at the same goal of territorial cohesion. Challenges are in fact different. Evidence from both migration dynamics and case studies highlights that, especially in rural areas, the different forms of migration are essential for the survival of local economies (e.g. agriculture), for the countering of socio-demographic trends (e.g. ageing), and for preserving as well as valorising these territories (e.g. hydrogeological risks). Policies should support and promote the re-vitalization of rural and inner areas.
- Some of the least attractive regions may be found among the regions that present the weakest socio-economic development as well; the two weaknesses combined might lead these areas to experience constraints to territorial development in the future, affecting cohesion, unless some territorial planning is carried out including both national and regional actions. This would also allow an effective implementation of the European Commission's Regional Development and Cohesion Policy for the years 2021-2027 which is especially aimed at empowering those regions that need to catch up with the rest of the EU in respect to territorial development.

### **2.4 Case studies evidence**

- The loss of young people in rural areas lead to fewer innovative businesses and to a decrease in services provided by the State.
- More attention should be given to skills assessment and qualification recognition, including the development of new tools for skills assessment. In fact, it emerges that accurate data about who migrants are, why they come and leave, their level of education and their skills are greatly missing. Enhanced knowledge of migrants' profile is understood as a starting point to match skills with available job opportunities, also for the purpose of avoiding a long-lasting loss of human capital.
- Special attention should be paid at protecting physical and mental health of both migrants and refugees. The vulnerability of and trauma experienced needs to be early considered, particularly in relation to providing free health services.
- Cities and small villages are key actors for integration. Both need to have policies that build resilience and promote integration according to the local context. Nowadays cities are called to play a crucial role in making migration an asset for local development; yet, as the Italian case studies have showed, rural villages may offer an easier process towards integration. Here, affordable house opportunities may be found together with an essential life style, also increasing mutual understanding and fostering a sense of belonging to a community. However, in the long run, the lack of stable jobs might push people to move again if policies for economic growth are not enacted.
- It is recommended the establishment of a EU fund to which municipalities willing to welcome asylum seekers and refugees can have direct access.
- Transport, digital communication infrastructures and job opportunities are fundamental aspects to attract people. Further investments on basic services are needed for long-term integration and for avoiding loss of territorial attractiveness (access to health services; housing; vocational counselling).
- Targeted training (e.g. in tourism, agro-forestry sectors and environmental protection) should be provided both for locals and migrants, as a way to both strengthen social cohesion and respond to specific territorial needs emerged from the interviews.



### **ESPON 2020 – More information**

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