

Migration flows and integration policies: data evidence and best practices in the EU

22-23 November 2018

Electra Metropolis Hotel, 15 Mitropoleos Str, Athens, Greece

Report on Day 1

Introduction

The humanitarian refugee crisis has led to heated debates in most EU countries and at the European level. Countries in the Mediterranean area have had to deal with an influx of refugees on a local day-to-day manner.

But like climate change, it can be argued that migration is a global issue that needs to be addressed both locally and internationally but the EU needs to provide the necessary means to its members for the integration of refugees along with the solidarity needed among the EU members. The recent inflow of Syrian asylum seekers in Europe forced upon EU leaders and citizens an awareness regarding the global refugee crisis that is mostly unfolding in the global south

Many believe that the current European crisis is exacerbated by the confusion of short- and long-term policy issues, of asylum and migration regulation, of debates around rights, politics and economics and cannot be solely addressed at the national level.

In understanding the impact of immigration, analyses that are both context-specific and connected to global dynamics are crucial to determine the effects of migration. Recent concern has been formulated about the lack or unreliable quality of migration data. Beyond data, robust and clear analytical premises of policymaking are the key to an understanding of the problems and possible solutions. One-size-fits-all policies rarely work over the long term.

Dealing with migration and asylum issues calls for an urgent reaction of all stakeholders. Scientists, civil society organisations, activists, concerned citizens and policymakers should join forces to bring about a better understanding of migration, both forced and voluntary, of its determinants and consequences for host societies and countries of origin. Such debates provide grounds for evidence-based policymaking and sound practices.

Therefore, territorial evidence on the flows of asylum seekers and refugees, their distribution between and within EU countries, regions and cities, the impact on socio-economic development as well as information on crisis management and integration is in high demand. The ESPON applied research activity "Impacts of refugee flows to territorial development in Europe" <https://www.espon.eu/refugee> addresses these issues and aims to provide relevant territorial evidence and policy recommendations. A more focused ESPON targeted analysis examines the territorial impact of migration and refugee flows in the Adriatic-Ionian and Danube macro-regions <https://www.espon.eu/migration>.

The joint ESPON / Interact conference over two days focused on migratory flows and integration and shed light on the distribution of asylum seekers and refugees at regional and urban levels and how has this been changing over time as a result of European and national policy decisions in recent decades.

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The conference also explored the main challenges and identify good policy responses and the best practices for successful integration of refugees into the local communities, societies and labour markets at regional and local levels.

The conference, with its 90 strong audience, was opened by the moderator Maria Nikoltsiou, a TV journalist, who outlined the objectives of the first day to the which were to understand the challenges of southern Europe in terms of migratory flows and integration and to share best practice of integration policies and actions. Day 1 would conclude with an overview of the main challenges, some solutions, what tools were available or needed and future research needs.

Mr Ilias Miltiadis Klapas, Secretary General of the Greek Ministry of Immigration Policy, welcomed participants and introduced the Greek National Strategy on Integration. In 2015 Greece was faced with the biggest migration crisis since the second world war. Numbers dropped following the EU-Turkey agreement. Greece did its best to handle the crisis with a mix of national, NGO and EU funding. Greece has now established 60,000 places in accommodation centres with access to healthcare and education with 12,000 children in the school system. While the reception crisis has passed, the new challenge for Greece and the EU is the integration of the refugees. This is not a new challenge for Greece as in the past 20-30 years Greece has had to deal with the integration of Balkan and ex-Soviet Union migrants. While Greece was equally unprepared for these migrants, the booming economy made it easier to integrate migrants.

Greece, therefore, has experience of integration, but this was never consolidated until the first National Strategy for Integration in 2013. In July 2018, a new strategy was adopted which will be followed by a public consultation in the coming months. This strategy addresses key question such as what kind of society we wish for, the need to balance short- and long-term measures, the need to see migration as an opportunity and not a threat. This also means balancing support for migrant and indigenous populations.

Effective integration must include multi-level and multi-tier policies and be long-term in scope. The causes of migration must also be understood as some asylum seekers arrive in Greece but may not remain in Greece while some will remain and need to be integrated into a host society with accommodation and employment at a local level. Migrants are also an opportunity to address future demographic challenges in terms of ageing.

In order to implement the Integration Strategy, an action plan recommends a transfer of integration from the national to the local level with more emphasis on horizontal cross-cutting policies especially needed for skills. The action plan will increase e-governance and combat fraud and change the legal framework with new provisions to speed up the process to a legal status.

Implementation of the action plan will be faced with administrative issues and changing perceptions of migration.

Mr Ioannis Firbas, General Director, National Coordination Authority for ESIF, Ministry of Economy and Development noted that Greece was strong supporter of ESPON and Interact. Information from ESPON is needed to understand the distribution of migrants. Good data is needed to develop strategies. One of the key issuers of migration is that 'one size does not fit all'. Integration in Greece or Germany is not the same. Furthermore, ESF funding is unlikely to increase so there is a need to identify priorities for funding.

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Dr Laurent Frideres, Head of Unit Evidence and Outreach, ESPON EGTC welcomed the participants on behalf of ESPON and thanked Interact for the organisation of the joint conference which was part of the Transnational Outreach programmes' series of workshops, seminars and conferences across Europe picking up topics and themes identified by stakeholders such as the challenges of refugee and migrant integration in Greece and southern Europe.

He then outlined the activities of ESPON and the research activities of two current ESPON projects dealing with migration. He noted that migration is linked to a variety of other territorial processes.



Figure 1: ESPON activities and current migration projects

The next session of the conference examined the challenges for southern Europe in terms of migration flows. Mr Mermiris, Representative of the Deputy Director of Reception and Identification Service, Ministry of Migration Policy, Greece reminded the audience of the refugee numbers in 2015 which reached 865,000. This resulted in the setting up of 6 reception and identification centres (RICs) in the Greek islands¹ and three refugee camps in Schist, Diavata and Leros. The RICs deal with identification procedures, including verification, medical screening and access to special needs. Since 2015 there has been more focus on vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors (UCMs) and victims of rape and torture.

The key challenges are how to deal with the sheer numbers with a limited amount of resources, dealing with vulnerable groups, improve relocation schemes in Europe and develop integration strategies which will include enhanced public administration, better planning and coordination and inter-cultural management. Dealing with migration within the context of a financial crisis has led to more extreme-right views and a shift towards more conservative values. Therefore the migration policy should also examine the causes of migration with policies of prevention and helping the return of migrants to their home countries when and where possible which would also help to reduce the burden on southern European countries and Greece.

Measures required include a decongestion of the islands in terms of refugees and more refugee accommodation to reduce the pressure on the RICs. More recreational activities are needed in the refugee camps and more collaboration with public authorities, civil society actors for efficient reception services cooperating with EU and international organisations.

Ms Inmaculada Carda Isach, DG for Social Inclusion, Valencia Region, Spain noted that since 2015 with the change of government in Valencia there has been more positive response to migration. In 2015 a network to welcome refugees and a humanitarian chain to move 1000 refugees from Lesbos to Valencia.

¹ Lesbos, Kos, Leros, Samos, Chios, Fylakio

In February 2016, a delegation from Valencia visited Leros to see how Valencia could cooperate with Greece.

The role of civil society organisations is important as they give a sense of solidarity and encourage open borders. In 2016-2017 a series of actions took place in Valencia to improve refugee reception. These actions include access to basic rights such as health care and education; the reception of refugees with either a legal or illegal status and access to economic benefits and social services. In June 2018, Valencia welcomed the Aquarius boat with over 600 refugees aboard. This meant the organisation of a reception service in six days with public sector and civil society support. The reception included an interpreter for each refugee accompanied by an expert in asylum law and specific attention paid to UCM and women victims of trafficking.

The next session of the conference examined three current research activities under the ESPON and Horizon 2020 programmes. Ms Laura Todaro, Principal Consultant, VVA presented the MIGRARE ESPON project² which studies the 'Impacts of Refugee Flows to Territorial Development in Europe'. The project covers the distribution of asylum seekers and refugees at the regional and urban level and changes over time. It examines how different European regions and cities located in arrival, transit and destination countries respond to refugees. The project also analyses the skills and qualifications that the refugees possess and how the influx of refugees impacts on the recipient countries' regional and local labour markets and demographic imbalances. The project also examines the main challenges, good policy responses and best practices for successful integration of refugees into local communities, societies and labour markets at the regional and local levels. The project will support the development of a robust territorial evidence base to inform policymaking in the field of migration.

Laura Todaro noted that migration to Europe peaked in 2015-2016. In 2015, Europe had 1.3 million asylum requests, this dropped to 400,000 in 2016. By 2017, asylum requests were at the same level of 1992 – around 650,000. However, within these broad numbers, figure 2 below illustrates the complex interrelationships within the refugee pathway.

² <https://www.espon.eu/refugee>

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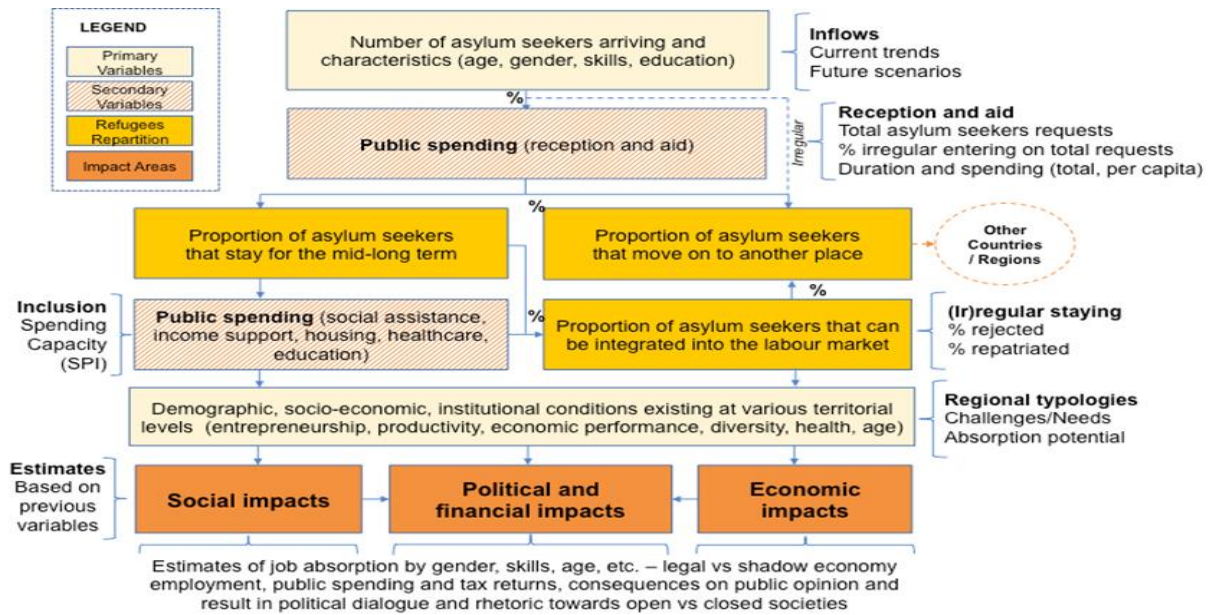
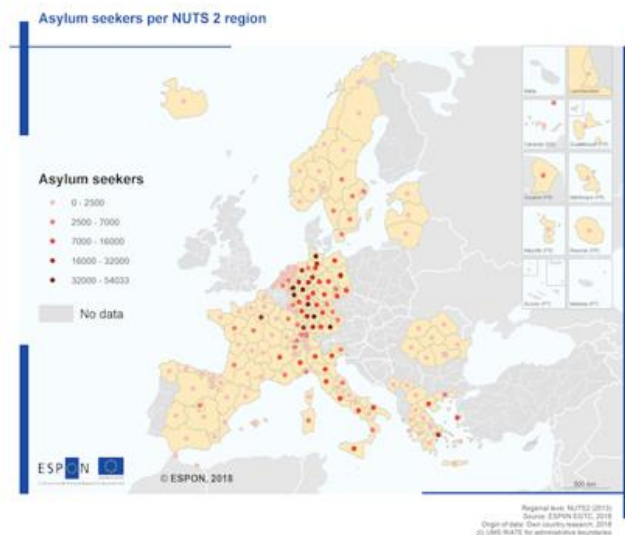


Figure 2: Impact Chain – Asylum seekers/refugees and territories

Just relying on aggregated numbers is not enough. The figure and explanation below indicate the different regional distribution of asylum seekers.

Distribution at territorial Level (Ch.3 - RQ1)

- The distribution of asylum seekers across European territories reflects their relation with countries of arrival, transit and destinations.
- Most regions in Germany and Italy seem to show relatively high number of asylum seekers
- Sweden's performance seems to be focussed in regions in the southern part of the country
- In Greece there is also a strong difference between regions
- In France, asylum seekers are concentrated in the capital region, regions with dynamic economic growth and the border regions with Italy and Spain
- In Spain, asylum seekers are concentrated in the capital region of Madrid.
- In general, asylum seekers tend to gravitate to economically dynamic regions (as shown in France, Spain, Germany, and to some extent Italy with the Lombardy, Lazio and Piedmont regions).



Own maps on Eurostat data sets from 2008 to 2017, including asylum applications, asylum decisions (positive and negative), repatriation, illegal stays

Figure 3: Distribution of migrants at regional level

One of the key issues is matching the skill supply of the migrants and the demand of regions. The project has developed a map of regional attractiveness linked to its potential absorption of migrants (see figure 4).

Regions attractiveness and potential absorption capacity

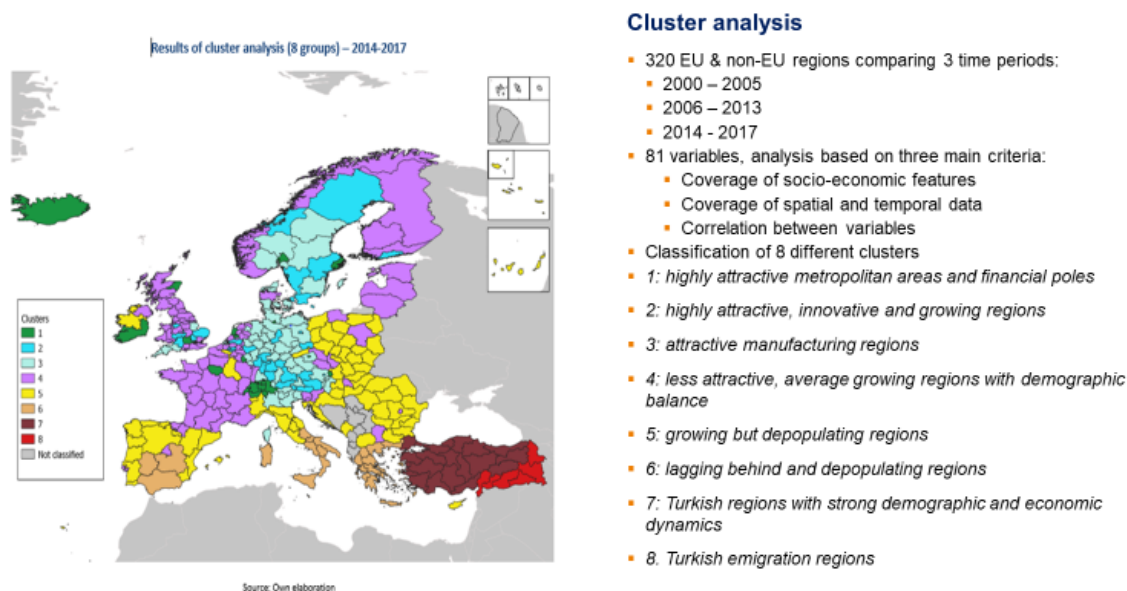


Figure 4: Regions attractiveness and potential absorption capacity

The project will also conduct twelve case studies across Europe to get more on the ground information regarding migrant integration.

In conclusion, a preliminary overview of the trends and characteristics of inflows and stocks of asylum seekers and refugees highlights some clear patterns:

- the volume and paths of inflows varies over time;
- the patterns of flows and stocks across European countries and territories also vary – with volume peaks (in absolute terms) shared by arrival and destination countries, as well as relevant pressure faced by transit countries in relative terms (percentage with respect to the local resident population);
- the characteristics of individuals within and across ethnic groups of asylum seekers and refugees also differ and may vary over time;
- some ethnic groups are characterised by well-balanced composition of age and gender, suggesting entire families seeking asylum in European territories, while other ethnicities comprise mostly younger males (e.g. Pakistan).
- skills and employability differ across individuals and among different routes and the ethnic groups with which they are composed;
- the characteristics of receiving communities and territories also change, depending on a higher absorption and inclusion capacity – in terms of economic and job market performances – of certain destination countries and territories with respect to other arrival countries and territories.

Prof. Stefano Bianchini and Dr Marco Zoppi, Research Assistant, University of Bologna presented the ESPON Targeted Analysis project 'Territorial and urban potentials connected to migration and refugee

flows'.³ This project focused on the macro-region Adriatic-Ionian and then impact of migration on the Danube region. The project identifies four main flows:

- urbanisation - the shift of population from rural to urban and especially capital cities e.g. Tirana has gained 11% more population in 4 years and now houses 29% of the Albanian population.
- mobility within the macro-region - here we find a lack of data but between 2008-2015 more than 1 million changes of address were registered
- refugee transit flows
- secondary movements.

In terms of refugee flows it is interesting to note the different refugee routes for both Greece and Italy (see figure 5).

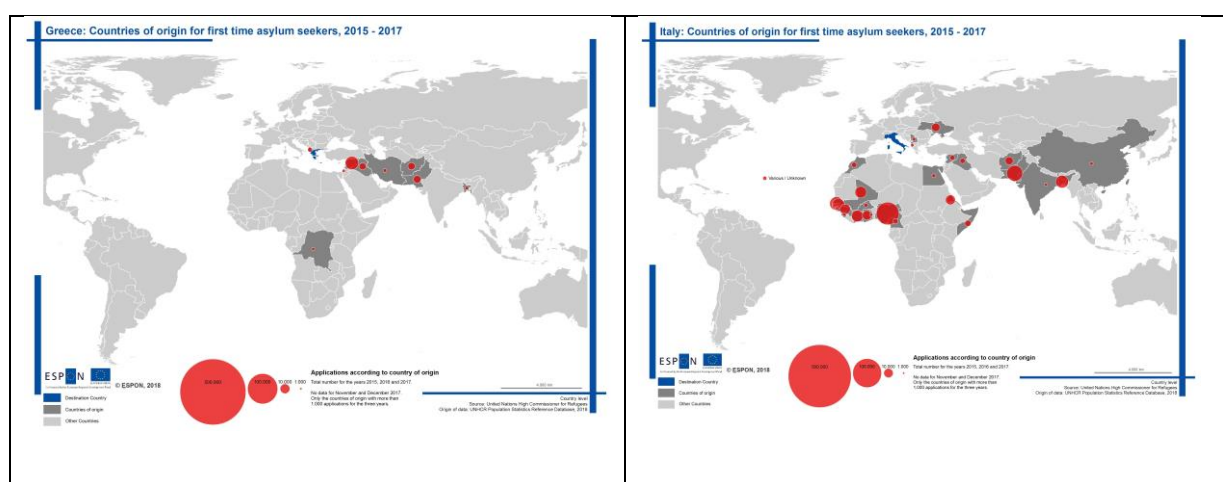


Figure 5: countries of first-time asylum seekers

The project recommends the development of systematic surveys and databases containing socio-economic information about newcomers, which can be accessed and updated at any time by public authorities. This can be supported by the digitalisation of residence changes and addressing data gaps. This can then support 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. This links in with the need to promote better territorial dispersal asylum seekers. It is also necessary to increase mutual understanding and trust in the social contexts of interaction between local populations and immigrants/asylum seekers (e.g. opening of reception centres). These tools, which could include public gathering and discussions among key actors are meant to ensure legitimate political decisions for the common good.

In conclusion, Professor Bianchini reminded the audience that the flow of migrants was not an emergency, but a global fact and we need a long-term perspective. But migration is not the only factor regarding mobility within macro-regions and we need to examine growing urbanisation. These population movements lead to demographic challenges which are also are challenges for territorial cohesion policy.

³ <https://www.espon.eu/migration>

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Dr Elissavet Lykogianni, Associate Director, VVA presented the recently approved Horizon 2020 NADINE project 'Developing digital tools to assess the skills of migrants and refugees'. This project is led by Script and Go, France and has Greek partners including Caritas, Greece. The project is premised on the unprecedented scale of migration into Europe which is mainly young adults aged 18-34 (53%). However, these refugees and migrants often have low levels of education among migrants/refugees (40% versus 23% for native born) while the ability to work is recognised as one of the key enablers for inclusion.

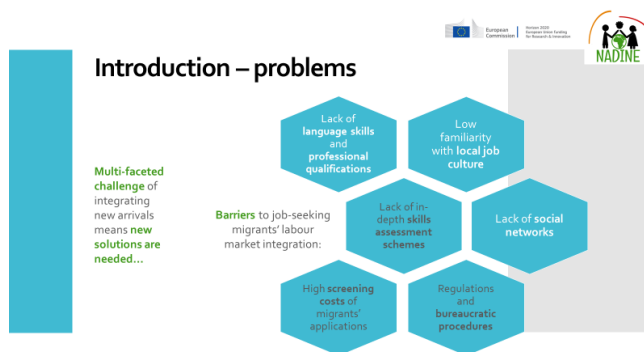


Figure 6: Migrant problems in seeking work

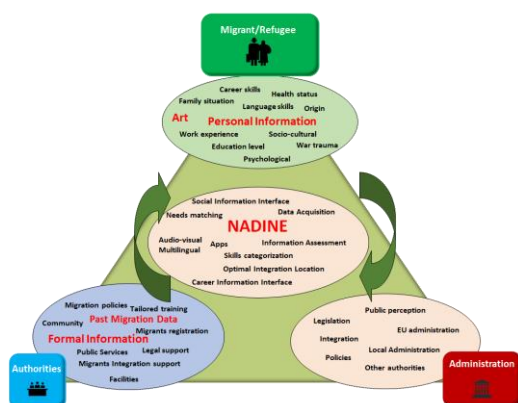


Figure 7: 3-pillar target group connected by the NADINE system

The aim of the NADINE project is to provide an ICT tool to assess skills which will be accessible for migrants and host authorities and administrations. The tool will include needs matching, tailored training information, career information, social information (health, education, etc.) and administrative information. The host authorities will feed information into NADINE about local migration policies and supporting services so that the migrant/refugee is able to access this information. They will also add local labour market needs so that an individual's skills can be matched to opportunities.

NADINE will help public administrations to better map labour market demand, infrastructure and services and match these with the labour supply of migrants and refugees. It will also address the specific, variable emerging needs of migrants and contribute to the reform of policy based on the data from the platform.

The afternoon session was started by Ms Roberta Lo Bianco, Coordinator of the Migration Unit, CESIE who introduced the 'Ragazzi Harraga' - social inclusion processes for unaccompanied minors in the city of Palermo project.⁴ Figure 8 indicates the pressures on Italy regarding numbers of refugees and the rise of unaccompanied minors (UAM) in 2016. In 2016, 25,846 UAMs arrived in Italy of whom 1300 arrived in Palermo in Sicily. The project deals with the problem of fragmentation and often lack of coherence of efforts to support UAMs in Italy.

⁴ <http://cesie.org/media/Leaflet-Laboratori-Harraga-web.pdf>

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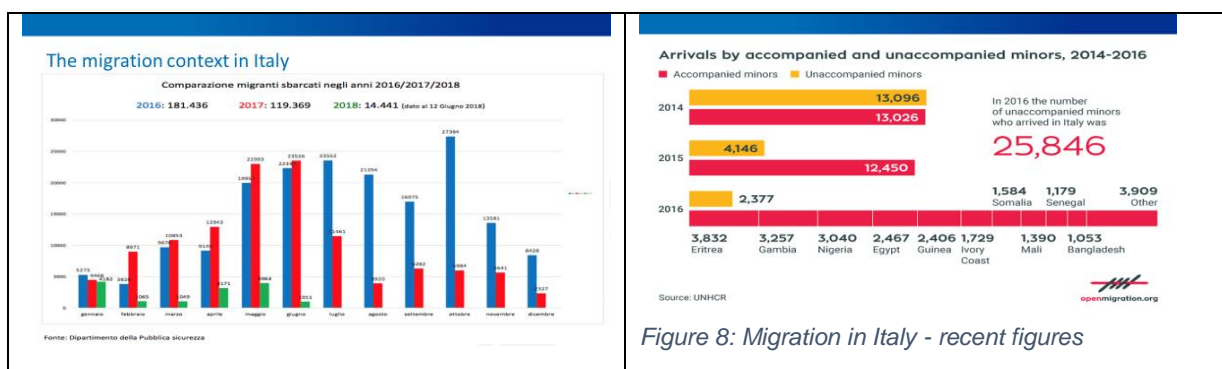


Figure 8: Migration in Italy - recent figures

The project has five actions or pillars. The first pillar proposed a digital folder which includes identity, reception history, inclusion process and basic skills. The second pillar deals with the need to provide links between education and the world of work and has organised five workshops to develop skills. The third pillar helps migrants into the world of work and tries to build on the skills learned in the migration process such as resilience. The fourth pillar involves the organisation of accommodation and the fifth pillar is the development of a youth hostel or guesthouse for UAMs.

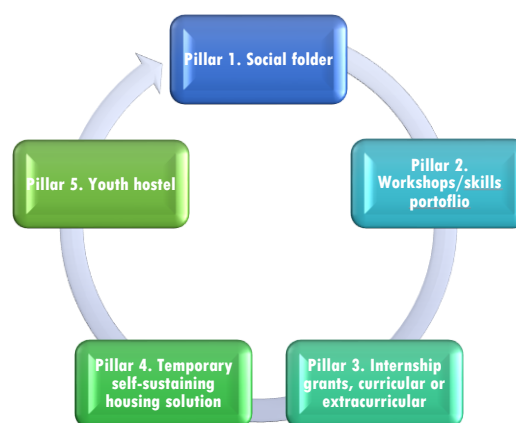


Figure 9: Ragazzi Harraga' five pillars of the project

Inclusion paths of UAMs should adopt a holistic model which oversees the complexity of the processes and delivers diverse methods of inclusion and autonomy. Multiple actions answering to multiple needs in a unique structure (such as proposed model) allow connections to be made among the different stakeholders involved.

In the establishment of a local partnership, it is crucial to involve local organisations (CSOs, reception centres, local authorities etc.) that have already expertise on the field and carry grassroots daily work with the target groups. On the ground organisations have different expertise and provide different points of view and approaches which widens the field of action.

The proposed model may have a stronger impact on smaller cities, where the concentrated presence of migrants in some central areas makes it easier to create reference places for the target groups. In the case of bigger cities with a wider distribution of migrants, a 'hub' model within a neighbourhood context might function more effectively.

One of the success factors is the close collaboration between private, public sectors and civil society sharing responsibility and social capital around the UAMs. This connection requires a definition of common objectives and a sharing of all the actors' understanding of the essential needs of the territory and expertise. However, one of the key rules is that ant project is not just for the UAMs but with them in order to identify their needs and the effectiveness of the actions proposed.

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Mr Konstantinos Kousaxidis, International Organisation for Migration, presented the Greek concept of Councils for Integration of Migrants which are established as an advisory mechanism for municipalities for the promotion of integration of migrants in the local societies. The Council consists of 11 members (6 members of the municipal council and 5 representatives of migrant/refugee communities).

The role of the Council is to identify and investigate issues faced by migrants and refugees permanently residing in the municipality regarding their integration into the local society and their contacts with the local authorities. They can submit suggestions to the municipal council for the development of local actions to promote the smooth integration of migrants and refugees and, in general, to solve problems they face, in particular, through the organization of counselling by municipal services and events to enhance social cohesion.

Greece is also organising Centres of Integration of Migrants which organise and implement activities to integrate migrants and refugees. These centres record data, record and evaluate social needs of the targeted population, receive and manage cases, refer cases where and when needed, develop/use volunteer support, promote social work, act in order to activate the Council of Integration of Migrants. They also provide legal counselling, refer cases to the Children's Ombudsman and other relevant authorities for victims of human trafficking and violence, support and counselling for the creation of associations of migrants/refugees.

The centres also receive and manage and refer cases with psychological problems, conduct psychological evaluations and provision of psychological support, detect trauma caused by forced migration, human trafficking especially of women and minors (and other types of violence), creation of life projects for UAMs, support and refer persons with addictions, record the psychosocial profile and needs of migrants/beneficiaries of international protection

Greece has also set up a Network of Municipalities for Integration which includes Athens, Thessaloniki, Trikala, Tripoli, Livadia, Karditsa, Herakleio, Larisa, Piraeus, Nea Philadelfia, and Ioannina. These municipalities receive support measures such as the development of integration plans and ad-hoc studies for policy design and project development. Municipalities are also offered training for community engagement and two-way communication with TCNs.

The IoM is also involved in the Admin4All Phase II project⁵ which aims to promote the connection and the exchange of best practices among the local actors from different partner countries. This is done through a series of regional workshops organized at EU level which bring together all the participants in order to share their experience and discuss of their needs and ideas.

Mr Konstantinos Kousaxidis noted that many support mechanisms were available to municipalities but there while some municipalities have a 'can do' attitude, others have a 'can't do' 'won't do' attitude. The integration of migrants is a complex topic and often a trial; a hard error approach is needed and this is where pilot programmes can be useful as they allow municipalities to learn from their mistakes. However, when we are dealing with people, we need to analyse carefully what mistakes can be acceptable.

Mr Lefteris Papayannakis, Deputy Mayor of Athens for Migration and Refugee Issues presented a more political perspective of refugee integration. According to Mr Papayannakis there is no refugee 'crisis', people have the right to move and therefore we should not panic. 1.3 million refugees have entered

⁵ <https://admin4all.eu/>

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Greece and now there are 80,000 refugees in Greece with 15,000 in Athens which has a population of around 600,000 within the Attiki region of 4 million. This is not an invasion and moreover migration is not just a question of refugees. Under the Greek Golden Visa scheme ⁶ 7,000 Turks have entered Greece. However, there is a need to develop regulations that encourage the distribution of refugees and migrants across all municipalities. It is also important to coordinate services to refugees through coordination centres. In Athens, it is estimated that 99 organisations offer services to refugees.⁷ In a final conclusion Mr Lefteris Papayannakis noted that refugee and migration issues are political and will be topics for discussion in the next elections and that is why it very important to have accurate data and facts regarding refugees and migration.

Ms Amalia Zepou, Vice-Mayor for Civil Society and Innovation of the City of Athens presented the 'Urban Innovative Actions project 'Curing the Limbo'.⁸ In Athens there is a problem of long-term inactivity that characterises a large part of its recently arrived refugee population, adding to a similar condition in its own local unemployed people. The "limbo" aspect of its refugees and unemployed mirrors an inactivity in the housing market with a growing number of properties remaining vacant.

The challenge is how to activate the refugee population, capitalising on the vibrant civil society of Athens which following the financial crisis has been developing community groups offering a variety of services from soup kitchens to children's workshops.

Streams of Work

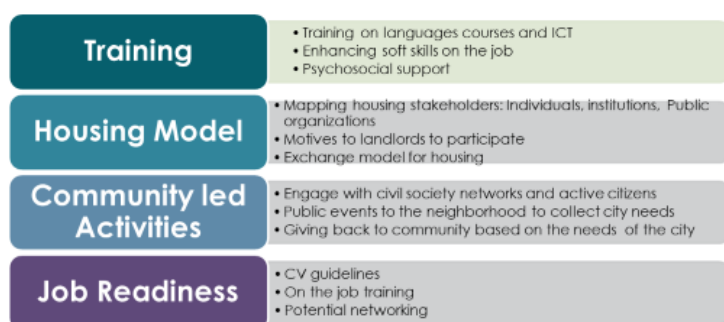


Figure 10: Work streams in Curing the limbo project

The project which includes five partners from Athens wishes to 'reactivate' vacant buildings and overturn the established inertia and offer a positive impact to the city on a wider scale. The programme will develop around a circular "gift" system, addressing the two-fold issue of both housing and inactivity. Refugees receive affordable living spaces from the city's available housing stock and in

return, they work for the public benefit, supporting the needs of the local community and participating in citizen-led activities that improve quality of life in Athenian neighbourhoods.

Beneficiaries receive on-the-job training supervised by the University of Athens, which includes language learning, psychosocial support, "street law" knowledge and other basic social and soft skills. These skills are tailored to the beneficiaries' needs and are offered in an integrated way, during which other parallel

⁶ Launched in July 2013 the Greek golden visa programme grants a five-year residency visa in return for an investment in real estate. There is no minimum stay requirement and children up to the age of 21 are included in the family application. The visa is granted for five years and renewed every five years if the property investment is retained. It is not necessary to live in the country in order to retain and renew the investor visa. However, citizenship can only be granted after seven years of residency.

⁷ See the UNHCR handbook for Athens http://static.help.unhcr.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2018/10/18065602/Survival_Guide_2018.pdf#_ga=2.181547303.1491167408.1543254517-845856662.1543254517

⁸ <https://uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/athens>

activities are also gradually introduced. The modality of exchange is developed around the incentives given both to tax-paying proprietors of currently empty spaces as well as to the beneficiaries through their integrated inclusion in the city.

Mr Athanasios Vitsentzatos, Director of Social Integration Department, Athens presented the local dimension of integration policies. Local government is crucial to national strategies as they are best placed to deal with refugees on the ground. Migrant Integration Centres (MIC) have at least 20,000 migrants legally residing in their area. The call for the centres was announced in 2016 and the first centres started in 2017. There are now 11 MICs in 10 municipalities, MICs play a role as intercultural mediators and offer services such as information, consultancy, psychological support, promote volunteer work, and give general advice and legal aid. They also provide a needs analysis of refugee groups in terms of accommodation, education, etc.

Mrs Giota Poulou, Mayor of the Municipality of Livadia presented the Housing Programme ESTIA in Livadia. Since the beginning of November 2016, Livadia has been in collaboration with its Public Benefit Organisation (K.E.DH.L.) and has been implementing the Project 'ESTIA – Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation' in rented apartments with the support of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and funding from the European Union from Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (DG ECHO).

In 2016, Municipality of Livadia in cooperation with the Ministry of Migration Policy and the UNHCR had to find 40 apartments in 15 days. This task was assigned to the Public Benefit Organisation of the Municipality of Livadia (K.E.DH.L.) which signed a Project Partnership Agreement for 2016 with the UNHCR. 55 apartments were assessed as appropriate and equipped to with 330 accommodation places in 2016. In 2017, the objective was raised to 420 accommodation places in 70 apartments and in 2018 an increase of the target of 60 more places and 10 additional apartments was agreed.

One of the success stories of Livadia has been the integration programme linked to the provision of accommodation in apartments in decent living conditions. Refugees receive health care and vaccination for refugee children and equal access to the local healthcare units. 155 refugee children are enrolled in Livadia schools in all grades. The municipality also organises common cultural events and sports activities.

The above actions involve a wide variety of organisations with the municipality, Greece and the EU. However, there is no contribution from NGOs as the municipality wanted to organise its own programme. Although there were some racist comments, the municipality emphasised that the refugees were not terrorist but victims of persecution. When the first refugee baby was born, the mother and baby were visited by the Mayor.

The above actions have not been without difficulties such as problems of documentation and more work is needed on long-term integration. Livadia has cultivated ethical values of solidarity and an acceptance of cultural diversity which has resulted in an inflow of €2.6 million and new jobs in the town.

The final session was devoted to a reflection on the previous interventions with a focus on policy recommendations.

Ms Maria Koutatzi, Head of Social Policy & Advocacy for Caritas, Greece⁹ introduced the work of the Caritas charity in Greece which covered delivering basic needs to refugees to support with integration. Caritas provides holistic support and counselling for job seekers, digital tools to support training programmes, and supports social economy initiatives. They have developed an 'employability hub' which offers counselling, vocational training and long courses. It is important to develop a humanitarian value chain approach that supports the integration of migrants through the development of skills needed in local economy growth sectors.

Mr Pavel Trantina, a member of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), explained that the EESC has set up a temporary study group on integration (IMI)¹⁰ which aims to promote the development of a common international migration policy. The IMI also prepares the EESC's contribution to the European Migration Forum (EMF)¹¹ which is forum building a bridge between civil society and the European Commission.

The EESC is now developing an opinion on the cost of non-immigration and non-integration because it is argued that without migrants some economic sectors would collapse. For example, in 2060 for every elderly person there will be only two people of working age in Europe and this would place risk on the European social model.

The opinion,¹² which is expected to be adopted mid-December 2018, deals with five areas:

- Sustaining the economy
- Bridging the skills gap
- The care sector
- Depopulation in rural areas
- Cultural sector – 2018 the Year of Cultural Heritage

Mr Panagiotis Exarchos, from the Urban Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees,¹³ introduced the objectives of the Partnership which are to manage the integration of incoming migrants and refugees (extra-EU) and to provide a framework for their inclusion. This covers housing, integration, the provision of public services, social inclusion, education, and labour market measures. The Partnership focuses on five themes: housing, community building & reception, education, work, and the cross-cutting theme of vulnerable groups.

The Partnership has developed action plan¹⁴ which has eight actions: recommendations on the protection of unaccompanied minors (UAMs); establishment of financial blending facilities for cities and SMEs; further reinforcing the role of microfinance; improving access for cities to EU integration funding; establishing an academy of integration strategies; more evidence-based integration policies in cities; improving desegregation and establishing a European Migrants Advisory Board.

The European Migrants Advisory Board, led by Amsterdam, has been stimulated by the fact that several integration policies have failed to hit the mark and there is an undeniable need to better manage the involvement of immigrants and refugees in policy-making processes. The Board is a self-led group of

⁹ <https://www.caritas.org/where-caritas-work/europe/greece/>

¹⁰ <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/sections-other-bodies/other/permanent-study-group-immigration-and-integration-imi>

¹¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/about-european-integration-forum>

¹² <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/cost-non-immigration-and-non-integration>

¹³ <https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/inclusion-of-migrants-and-refugees>

¹⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/action_plan_inclusion_of_migrants_and_refugees.pdf

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advisors with refugee and immigrant backgrounds, working together to increase the participation of refugees and immigrants in different policy-making processes affecting their access to rights. The Board has four objectives:

- To present the interest of refugees and immigrants through participation in policy debates and processes at local, national, and European levels;
- To ensure and promote refugees' and immigrants' access to rights;
- To contribute to building a positive narrative on immigration and asylum;
- To advise on refugee and immigrant-related policies.

The nine Board members from Amsterdam, Athens, Bamberg, Barcelona, Berlin, Brussels, Helsinki, Italy, Lisbon and Stockholm provide advice on immigration and asylum-related policies to the Partnership.

Mr Michele Colavito from the Italian Agency for Territorial Cohesion¹⁵ also supported the need for 'long-term policy for a long-term issue'. However, in order to transform projects to process we need a multi-level governance approach from the EU to the local levels and also improve networks and networking. This means an integrated territorial approach and involves a wide range of territories. It is important to involve civil society and make proper policies to be implemented. Mistakes need to be avoided but we should also communicate both good and bad practice.

Mr Ivano Magazzu, Project Manager from Interact¹⁶ who were the joint organisers of the conference described the Interact programme which helped develop capacity building for EU cooperation programmes. The European Union is a mix of cultures and economies that will reach its full potential through mutual understanding and close cooperation. The European Union supports cooperation in many ways such as Interreg programmes, an initiative specifically dedicated to helping European regions work together to find solutions to common economic, environmental, social and cultural challenges. There are more than 100 Interreg programmes managing thousands of cooperation projects throughout Europe who are dealing with these issues. The Interact programme's specific mission is to support these programmes in their daily work and Interact provides advice, organises learning events and develops a wide range of tools on managing and communicating European cooperation programmes. The Interreg programme has many migration-focused projects which help test new methods and evaluate impact. The future Interact programme in 2021-2027 will also support the improvement of the administrative capacity of smaller urban areas.

In the discussions that followed, Ms Maria Koutatzi remarked on the difficulties of formulating an integration policy in a crisis period and it was important to gain cross-sectoral cooperation. In a period of reducing public resources, more integrated policies are a necessity. Also, the concept of integration should accept that it is not just cloning migrants to the host community but accepting that migration would also change the host community – the whole community changes which also brings challenges and enhances the need for all levels of governance to work together. Integration would also be enhanced by more evidence of the benefits of migration. Finally, the danger that national governments may devolve all responsibilities for refugee and migration to local authorities and NGOs should be avoided.

The final concluding remarks were delivered by Ms Mathilde Konstantopoulou the National Representative for Greece for ESPON from the Ministry of Economy and Development. The conference identified the key challenges as the massive increase in migration/refugees in 2015 and now it is time to

¹⁵ <http://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it/>

¹⁶ <http://www.interact-eu.net/>

Inspire Policy Making with Territorial Evidence

absorb the backlog and pay more attention to vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors. More work is needed to improve relocation schemes with more focus on directing migrants to regions with more absorption capacity (combinations of public support and job market) as identified in ESPON research.

We now need to pay much more attention to integration strategies, but these strategies are not just cloning migrants to host culture but involve more holistic transformation of the society however this has to be carried out in a period of stronger nationalistic tendencies e.g. BREXIT, Italy and Catalonia,

In terms of solutions, there is no one size fits all but need to exchange ideas and innovations between cities and countries. We need a multilevel and cross sectoral approach combining housing, education, health and jobs/skills. There should be a stronger emphasis on the role of cities (as magnets for migration) but need more data at regional and city level which could be a role for ESPON.

More actions on identifying and matching skills with job opportunities (forestry/agriculture etc.) need to be undertaken combined with positive narratives indicating that migration not a threat but an opportunity. More effort is needed to engage migrants in the programmes destined for them so they are not just passive recipients but engaged actors.

Several speakers had emphasised the fact that migration was fact of life. Mobility could be seen as a human right and thus long-term policies for long term issues are needed as 'migration is not an emergency but a global fact'. This long-term perspective indicates that migration is a key issue for territorial cohesion and that a territorial approach can provide evidence for understanding of flows as well as the place-based logic of migration.

Solutions need tools such as multi-level governance – building bridges between all levels of government from the EU to the local level combining EU and national strategies such as the Greek National Integration Strategy and the bottom up action described in Palermo, Livadia and Athens. To join up the national and local we need a better understanding of the 'value chain' from reception to integration and more joined up agencies at the city/regional level and improved networking to share good practice and failure. This involves a supportive framework (resources/administration) and local actors with a 'yes we can' attitude (Palermo and Livadia) often driven by enlightened politicians.

Migration is a key aspect of territorial cohesion and thus an academic research area but the importance here is the 'people' dimension. Research helps us to join up results of 'projects' moving debate from project to process. Research also provides a theoretical process that can stimulate projects. Two key areas of research were also mentioned – the need to evaluate skills and competences of refugees and migrants and the need to monitor results. Which initiatives are effective? How do know where we get the best return on investment. Research needs and will also encourage better and comparable data at the regional and local levels.

Annex 1

Day 1 – Migration flows and challenges of southern Europe: data evidence and best practices in the EU

Objectives:

- Understanding the challenges of southern Europe in terms of migratory flows and integration
- Making available relevant research and data from ESPON projects to better understand the topic in the EU context and sharing examples of integration policies and practices among the stakeholders and Interreg programmes
- Input from specific initiatives and organisations
- Outlining possible solution and next steps related to migration challenges

Moderator: Maria Nikoltsiou – Journalist

09:00 Registration and welcome coffee		
10:00	<p>Welcome to the event and presentation of the Greece National Strategy on Integration</p> <p>Welcome from Ministry of Economy and Development</p> <p>Welcome from ESPON</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Ilias Miltiadis Klapas, Secretary General of the Ministry of Immigration Policy, Greece • Mr Ioannis Firbas, General Director, National Coordination Authority for ESIF, Ministry of Economy and Development • Dr Laurent Frideres, Head of Unit Evidence and Outreach, ESPON EGTC
10:30	<p>Migration and refugee flows – challenges for southern Europe</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr D. Mermiris, Representative, Deputy Director of Reception and Identification Service, Ministry of Migration Policy, Greece • Ms Inmaculada Carda Isach, DG for Social Inclusion, Valencia Region, Spain
11:15	<p>Coffee break</p>	

ESPON territorial evidence of the impact of migration and refugee flows and Horizon 2020 Future ICT Solutions

11:45	MIGRARE - Impacts of Refugee Flows to Territorial Development in Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms Laura Todaro, Principal Consultant, VVA
12:15	Territorial and urban potentials connected to migration and refugee flows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prof. Stefano Bianchini and Dr Marco Zoppi, Research Assistant, University of Bologna
12:45	Developing digital tools to assess the skills of migrants and refugees (NADIN, Horizon 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr Elissavet Lykogianni, Associate Director, VVA
13:00	Lunch	

Effective migration management: which practices can we extrapolate in post-2020 public support schemes? Panel discussion

14:00	'Ragazzi Harraga' - social inclusion processes for unaccompanied minors in the city of Palermo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms Roberta Lo Bianco, Coordinator of the Migration Unit, CESIE
	Strengthening Municipal Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr Konstantinos Kousaxidis, International Organisation for Migration
	Best Practices of Integration actions - the case of Social Integration Centre of Athens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr Lefteris Papayannakis, Deputy Mayor of Athens for Migration and Refugee Issues
	Urban Innovative Actions programme "Curing the Limbo", Athens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ms Amalia Zepou, Vice-Mayor for Civil Society and Innovation, Athens
	Local dimension of integration policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mr Athanasios Vitsentzatos, Director of Social Integration Department, Athens: Local dimension of integration policies
	The Housing Programme ESTIA - the experience of Livadia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mrs Giota Poulou, Mayor of the Municipality of Livadia

16.15	Coffee break
Reflection on policy recommendations	
16.35	<p>Overview of key points from each session and looking forward to Day 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Pavel Trantina, European Economic and Social Committee, • Mr Panagiotis Exarchos, Urban Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees • Ms Maria Koutatzi, Head of Social Policy & Advocacy, Caritas, Greece • Mr Michele Colavito, Italian Agency for Territorial Cohesion • Mr Ivano Magazzu, Project Manager, Interact
Conclusions	
17:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Mathilde Konstantopoulou, ESPON, Monitoring Committee, National Representative for Greece, Ministry of Economy and Development
17.45	Networking Cocktail

Day 2 - Meeting of the Network “Interreg response to migration-related challenges”

Objectives:

- Exchanging and networking on the current policy trends and tools available for Interreg programmes to tackle migration issues, also in the light of the proposals of the priorities for 2021-2027 Cohesion policy.
- Identifying possible type of actions and projects to be undertaken by Interreg programmes in the future programming period to better tackle migration issues throughout European territorial co-operation.

09:30	Registration and welcome coffee	
10:00	Introduction and main conclusions from Day 1	Interact and ESPON
Migration and refugee flows – challenges for southern Europe		
10:30	New Policies developments in the EU in tackling integration of people with migrant background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs Evangelia Georgitsi and Mrs Antonia Psyrra, European Commission DG HOME
11:00	Future Perspectives: EC Proposal for the Cohesion Policy 2021-2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs Maria Soumela, European Commission DG REGIO
11:30	Coffee break	
12:00	Data and evidence in support to Integration Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Michele Vespe, European Commission DG JRC
12:30	Who do you think is the migrant?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testimony from Mr Abou Tagourla (Mauritania/France)
13:00	Lunch	
Best practices from programmes		
14:00	Interreg Mediterranean - Panoramed Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Michele Colavito, Agency for territorial cohesion, Italy
	Interreg Greece-Cyprus - PAIONAS Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Lykoudis Andreas, Lieutenant Commander HCG, Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy

Inspire Policy Making with Territorial Evidence

	Interreg Italy-Austria - EUMINT Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs Anna-Kira Pirhofer, EURAC
	Interreg Danube - DRIM Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs Sanja Cukut Krilic
	URBACT - Arrival Cities Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs Laura Colini,
15:15	Coffee break	
Panel discussion:		
15:30	Possible types of activities and projects to better tackle migration challenges in Interreg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mrs Katerina Themeli, Interreg MA Greece • Mr Stefano Bianchini, University of Bologna, Adrion/ESPON projects • Mrs Ourania Tzoraki, University of Aegean, SCIREA project, Horizon 2020 • Interreg Projects
16:30	Open debate, wrap-up of the meeting and future steps/activities	
17:00	End of the meeting and closure of the Conference	

Annex 2 – two ESPON projects on migration

Impacts of refugee flows to territorial development in Europe

<https://www.espon.eu/refugee>

The refugee crisis is one of the hottest topics on the EU agenda. The recent events related to the Syrian civil war, political turmoil in Libya and the subsequent influx of refugees towards Europe as well as perceptions caused by internal migration that led to 'Brexit' have had a polarising effect on Europe. Therefore, territorial evidence on the flows of asylum seekers and refugees, their distribution between and within EU countries, regions and cities, impact on socio-economic development as well as information on crisis management and integration is in high demand. The ESPON applied research activity "Impacts of refugee flows to territorial development in Europe" addresses these issues and aims to provide relevant territorial evidence and policy recommendations.

The ESPON project examines the distribution of asylum seekers and refugees at the regional and urban level and how has this been changing over time because of European and national policy decisions in recent decade. It sheds light on how different European regions and cities located in arrival, transit and destination countries are responding to the refugee crisis in terms of providing humanitarian aid, services (accommodation, material support, healthcare provision, education, language courses, labour market programmes), community building, internal distribution of refugees and medium- and long-term integration.

The project looks at the skills and qualifications that the refugees possess and how the influx of refugees has impacted on the recipient countries' regional and local labour markets and demographic imbalances (especially concerning regions which are facing the challenges of losing population and ageing. Do the skills and qualifications meet the needs of local labour markets and how do they compete with local population and regular migrants?

The project investigates the diversity within Europe in terms of integration policies at regional and local levels and identifies the main challenges and policy responses and the best practices for successful integration of refugees into the local communities, societies and labour markets at regional and local levels. This raises questions on what kind of support do they need? How successful have the integration measures been in the past? How to improve the use of existing funding opportunities? Is there a need to improve the legislation? What kind of impacts would the implementation of the proposal of European relocation scheme generate to European countries regions and cities? How are countries redistributing refugees internally? What are the main concerns for the host countries and communities?

Territorial and Urban Potentials Connected to Migration and Refugee Flows

<https://www.espon.eu/migration>

The 'targeted support' project contract contributes to raising knowledge on the territorial impact of migration and refugee flows in the Adriatic-Ionian and Danube macro-regions in order to take these aspects into account in the framework of the EUSAIR and EUSDR strategy and the ETC programmes. Both the Adriatic-Ionian and Danube macro-regions face substantial inflows of migrants and refugees coming from outside the EU due to their geographical location. Some regions, like North Aegean and Puglia, have become the main landing points. Others, like Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, are regions

facing the highest influx of migrants as points of final destination. Therefore, both macro-regions are characterized by strong interdependencies and similar challenges in this matter.

The project gives a comprehensive overview of the recent migration and refugee flows in the Adriatic-Ionian and Danube macro-regions from a qualitative and quantitative point of view looking at the main driving forces affecting the geographical distribution of the migrants (e.g. attractiveness of specific regions and cities to migrants and refugees). In addition, the territorial impacts of migration will be investigated seeking to explain how migration affect the current socioeconomic challenges and possibly provide opportunities as well.

The recommendations will focus on how different territories can overcome challenges of unpredictable and large-scale inflows, manage integration and enhance the potentials in their endeavours to cope with the current migration and refugee inflows within their strategic policy and development objectives.