A PLACE-BASED APPROACH TO MIGRANT INTEGRATION

Sustainable urban development strategies and the integration of migrants in functional urban areas

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fioretti C., Proietti P., Tintori G. (eds.)
2021
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
This report focuses on urban and territorial strategies promoted by the EU Cohesion Policy during the 2014–2020 programming period and explores whether and how Sustainable Urban Development (SUD), Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) and Community-led Local Development (CLLD) strategies may contribute to the integration of international migrants in the local context. The study incorporates two analytical approaches, with in-depth case studies based on local data and conducted by local academics complementing the analysis carried out at EU-level.

POLICY CONTEXT

The main comprehensive comparative indicators show that international migrants still strive to match EU citizens’ outcomes in employment, education and social inclusion across EU Member States. Research also shows that international migrants often tend to be over-represented in disadvantaged areas within and around European cities, characterised by a poor-quality built environment, lack of quality goods, services and housing, and high levels of socio-economic difficulties. The various dimensions of disadvantage of the areas where migrants live can hinder their integration and upward mobility.

Against this background, in September 2020, the Commission presented a New Pact on Migration and Asylum, followed in November by an Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021–2027). This reinforces the proposition that integration and inclusion remain a priority for the Commission and are essential part of an effective migration management.

In accordance with the Treaties, migrant integration policies are mostly within the remit of Member States. The EU supports Member States’ policies of integration and inclusion of legally resident third-country nationals primarily by means of a range of people-centred measures. These include financial instruments and funding schemes which explicitly target the migrant population. In the evolution of the framework for migrant integration, the EU support through funding has become progressively more salient.

The importance of local communities as the dimension where integration takes place has always been acknowledged; however, recently the role played by regional and city authorities in the multilevel governance of migrant integration policies has become more central. EU institutions were receptive to these developments, for example, through the ‘Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees’ of the Urban Agenda. In addition, specific efforts have been dedicated to taking stock of which EU funds are used to support immigrant integration and how, with a view to guaranteeing that funds are allocated in a strategic manner in accordance with EU priorities, enabling synergies while avoiding double funding and overlapping.

In line with these developments, this study focuses on the possible contribution of the Cohesion Policy, and of the territorial instruments promoted by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), to fostering the integration of migrants also through a place-based approach.

The main aim of the Cohesion Policy territorial instruments is to promote a balanced and sustainable development of urban and non-urban areas. They consist of investment programmes based on strategies that promote an integrated approach, meaning cross-sectoral, grounded in multi-stakeholder and multi-level governance (with a direct involvement of the local level) and considering the integration of territorial scales. These instruments were not explicitly designed as tools for migrant integration. However, they do address socio-spatial inequalities through a place-based approach.

The focus of the policy debate and in the literature was on measures which directly targeted migrant communities. The indirect benefits of a place-based approach, where urban development policies target the territories where migrants live and work, have not been scrutinised in full. Against this background, the analyses of the report provide valuable insights.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The goal of this study is to explore the possible role of EU-supported urban and territorial strategies targeting functional urban areas in contributing to the objective of migrant integration.

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1 The report illustrates the findings of the JRC Exploratory Research Activity (ERA) International migrants in Functional Urban Areas. How can strategies for sustainable urban development foster the integration of migrants?
More specifically the objectives of the research are to:

1. Contribute to the debate on the role of the EU in fostering migrant integration, focusing on place-based policies aimed at a balanced development of EU territories.

2. Build evidence based on the contribution of ERDF supported urban and territorial strategies to migrant integration during the 2014-2020 programming period.

3. Explore whether the use of functional urban areas as strategic planning places is suitable for developing place-based solutions to the challenge of migrant inclusion.

The report moves from the assumption that space plays an essential role in the processes of migrant exclusion or inclusion. Specifically, the report focuses on Functional Urban Areas (FUA) as the spatial unit of analysis. The reason is twofold. To begin with, its definition incorporates the interaction between a geographical space and its functional relations and network, thus being particularly suited for capturing not only the static dimension of its population, e.g. residence, but also the more dynamic dimensions related to the daily life of the population daily life, e.g. commuting to work, access to services and amenities, social life etc. In addition, the Sustainable Urban Development strategies of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) are encouraged to have a special focus on FUAs.

The research adopted an empirical strategy consisting of two main steps. The first step was to understand the distribution and characteristics of urban and territorial development strategies and the ratio of migrants across European FUAs. The second step was to select in-depth case studies that would offer better chances of answering the research questions. Thus, the EU-level information was combined with locally sourced data and findings to appreciate the added value of a bottom-up approach in terms of additional insights on the implementation of the strategies.

The data sources employed in the first part of the empirical work were EUROSTAT City Statistics Database and the JRC STRAT-Board dataset. EUROSTAT data provides information on the number of residents, including EU and non-EU migrants, and a series of sociodemographic data concerning the FUA. STRAT-Board has been developed by the JRC in collaboration with the Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) and details information on the urban and territorial strategies promoted by the EU cohesion policy for the 2014-2020 programming period. STRAT-Board offers a unique pan-European understanding of the actual implementation on the ground of Cohesion Policy territorial instruments.

In the second part, the case-studies provide the analysis with data not available at the European level. They provide a bottom-up picture of each FUA based on higher granularity of population and socio-economic data and in-depth qualitative analysis of the strategies.

**URBAN STRATEGIES AND THE EU PERSPECTIVE**

The first part of the analysis was devoted to building evidence using EU data at FUA level with EU27 Member States coverage, on the possible use of the urban and territorial strategies for migrant integration during the 2014-2020 programming period. These are the questions that steered the analysis:

- Is there a correlation between the localisation of strategies and the presence of migrants in FUAs?
- What are the main characteristics of the strategies implemented in FUAs, and is there any element which can be associated with the objective of migrant integration?

The dataset reveals that in the 2014-2020 period, there were 988 urban and territorial strategies, out of a total of nearly 1900 strategies, which have a targeting area that intersect with, or are contained within EU FUAs. On comparing the presence of strategies with the socio-economic characteristics of FUAs, it becomes clear that a higher incidence of strategies is observed in FUAs characterised by a high unemployment rate, low work intensity, low median income and a high incidence of single parents. This suggests that, on average, strategies are targeting FUAs that need a certain policy intervention.

However, the number of strategies is not necessarily higher in places where the proportion of migrants living there is above the national average.

The strategies were not explicitly designed to focus directly on migrants. In fact, originally, the main funding source, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) did not envisage any investment priority specifically dedicated to that purpose (a specific priority on migrant integration was introduced only in June 2018). The main objective was to build integrated strategies that address urban challenges touching upon multiple policy areas, with a specific emphasis on measures for lowering carbon
emissions, especially in terms of sustainable mobility, environmental sustainability and climate change and the regeneration of disadvantaged communities.

The analysis showed that in fact these are the main priorities addressed by the strategies. In particular the recurrence of the priority concerning the regeneration of deprived communities (the second most recurrent, used in 33% of strategies) seems to suggest a place-based approach to the question of disadvantage, where migrants are addressed only indirectly when they live in the deprived neighbourhoods targeted by the strategies.

At the same time, it appeared that several strategies (39% of the total), especially those implemented through ITIs and CLLDs, also mobilise the European Social Investment Fund. These strategies include a wider set of social investment priorities that could resonate closely with migrants’ needs (for example education, training, employment, access to services) while also including a specific priority for the socio-economic integration of marginalised communities.

Moreover, analysis of the keywords associated with the strategies, which, moving away from the themes established at EU level, give a more accurate understanding of the topics addressed at local level, showed that only a few strategies (25 out of 988 strategies) have an explicit focus on the integration of migrants and refugees.

Looking at the various types of territorial focuses, the analysis shows that besides strongly targeting cities (30%), a considerable percentage of strategies target areas within city/towns (18%), functional urban areas (16%) and other functional territories, e.g. the aggregation of multiple administrative units in rural areas (25%). Although it was not possible to clearly associate any of those territorial focuses with the objective of migrant integration, it is possible to argue that strategies at the ‘areas within city/town’ level could be used to target the deprived areas where low-income migrants tend to live. In fact, in 45% of the strategies that were associated with the keyword ‘disadvantaged neighbourhood’, the territorial focus was ‘areas within city/towns’. To a lesser extent this keyword was also associated with strategies with wider spatial focuses, namely cities (34%) and functional urban areas (13%).

The EU level analysis showed limitations mainly due to the lack of comparable data at a more granular level and to the presence of many missing values for some of the variables analysed. However, it was instrumental in identifying and selecting five case studies, for which local experts were able to conduct in-depth analysis.

**CASE STUDIES**

In the second stage of the study, the analysis at EU level is integrated with in-depth case studies based on local data. The cases concern the FUAs of Athens, Liége, Malmö, Paris and Venice. The case studies were written by local academic experts who were invited to analyse the local contexts from both a territorial and demographic perspective, together with the policies, their objectives, implementation and outcomes. The experts gathered detailed insights primarily on the following questions:

- What is the relationship between the areas targeted by the strategy and the areas with a higher presence of migrants?
- Does the adoption of a broader territorial focus, at FUA scale, allow the strategy to intercept migrant issues?
- Are there migrant-related actors among the stakeholders involved in the policy process or during the preparation and implementation of the strategy?
- Do the strategy and its projects explicitly or implicitly address migrant integration, ethnic diversity, or intercultural policy?
- Do the strategy and its projects address relevant issues in respect to migrant integration in that context (e.g. the strategy addresses affordable housing and this is a major issue especially for the migrant population living in the area)?
- Could the strategy have a negative impact on migrant integration?

**ATHENS**

Key figures of the Athens FUA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>3,828,434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU migrants</td>
<td>72,516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-EU migrants</td>
<td>333,315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUD strategies</td>
<td>4 Integrated Territorial Investments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Foreign immigration from low-income countries is a relatively new phenomenon for the Athens Functional Urban Area (FUA), as it started in the early 1990s. Historically, newcomers to the city showed a preference for the city centre, although more populous immigrant groups are more dispersed across the FUA while less populous groups are often more concentrated in specific locations. In general, immigrants from low HDI (Human Development Index) countries live in poorer housing conditions, have lower access to a private car and the internet, are younger and have lower educational qualifications than Greeks. Immigrants and asylum seekers who entered the country after the economic crisis are facing a much more constrained labour market, which in turn limits their capacity to access the mainstream housing market. The majority of recent arrivals views Greece as a transition country, and as a result they are not focused on obtaining the necessary skills which would facilitate integration.

The implementation of EU Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) for Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) strategies in Greece begun in 2015-2016, during the surge in the number of asylum-seekers reaching the country. There is also an Urban Innovative Action (UIA) in place in the Municipality of Athens which focuses solely on immigrants and refugees.

The four SUD strategies analysed cover parts of the FUA territory, including some areas with high multiple deprivation and high migrant concentrations. The strategies’ focus includes innovation and economic growth as well as social cohesion and quality of life, but they rarely mention immigrants and refugees per se. This is, at least in part, because the strategies’ scope and focus were aligned to regional level spatial plans and policy guidance (such as the Regional Strategy for Social Inclusion and Tackling Poverty and the Research and Innovation Strategy). However, they address several issues of significance for migrants and refugees, including (emergency) shelter, gender violence, labour market integration, basic skills, and welfare support.

The strategies propose several interventions of relevance to immigrants, whose beneficiaries are broader population categories and social groups. In theory, all immigrants who reside legally in the country could be among the beneficiaries. However, not having a good command of the Greek language can hinder their access to different services such as vocational training.

Mainstreaming migrant and refugee integration in the SUD strategies would therefore require that the documents and strategies guiding them, i.e. the regional operational programme and associated strategies as well as statutory spatial plans, also bring migrant and refugee integration to the fore. Improving the language skills of immigrants, where necessary, would also make the SUD interventions more accessible.

LIÈGE

Key figures of the Liège FUA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Fund</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ERDF</td>
<td>Mainstreaming migrant and refugee integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF</td>
<td>Mainstreaming migrant and refugee integration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The functional urban area of Liège is characterised by different dynamics that potentially facilitate or obstruct the integration of local immigrant population. Many newcomers are attracted by the job opportunities existing in the city of Liège and by the presence of many migrant networks providing potential support to newcomers. But the urban area is also characterised by dynamics that had a negative impact on migrant integration. The crisis of many local industrial activities resulted in the loss of numerous jobs as well as the emergence of industrial brownfield.
Many districts of the functional urban area are also characterised by the poor quality of its ageing housing infrastructure and many immigrants have difficulty finding decent housing opportunities. In this context, several urban renewal initiatives have been developed in recent years. Some of these projects were funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Migrant integration does not appear to be a focal point either the ERDF operational programme of Wallonia or the Integrated Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) strategy prepared on the basis of this operational programme. Along the same lines, it did not constitute a criterion of selection for the local projects applying for funding.

At local level, the relations between the projects and the life of local migrant populations seems more visible. However, the way local stakeholders and institutions perceive and consider the local population in the implementation of the projects varies a lot depending on the different projects. Local actors mention difficulties in considering the specificities of local migrant populations in their different projects. These difficulties are not always the result of resistance or lack of consideration of the local actors. It is also sometimes the result of structural limits resulting from national and European regulations such as the accessibility of valid residence status.

MALMÖ

Key figures of the Malmö FUA

This case study focuses on Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) and Community Led Local Development (CLLD) strategies implemented in the Malmö functional urban area (FUA) during the programming period 2014–2020. The SUD strategy targets the inner urban area of the Malmö City and the CLLD strategy target the areas of Leader Lundaland and Leader Söderslätt, each involving five municipalities. In effect, the case study perimeter slightly deviates from the functional urban area as defined by EUROSTAT.

The analysis draws on administrative data describing the Malmö functional urban area and interviews with civil servants and decision-makers with insights into the implementation of the SUD and CLLD strategies at local level. Results show that the implementation of the SUD and CLLD strategies function under rather different conditions. While the SUD strategy targets only one municipality and is primarily implemented by a single municipality which receives most of the funding, this is not the case at all for the CLLD strategies. Instead, the CLLD areas (and their respective Local Action Groups and directors) must coordinate between a handful of municipalities and other stakeholders, sometimes with conflicting aims.

The implementation of the SUD strategy explicitly addresses migrant integration. The Operational Programme fits well with existing local development strategies, described as the result of long-term and dedicated strategic work from Malmö City. Migrant integration is also visible as a goal in the way funds are used and implemented at local level. In some projects, migrants and migrant-led organisations are also involved in the design and implementation of the projects.

The focus on migrant integration in the implementation of the CLLD strategies diverge between Leader Lundaland and Leader Söderslätt. In Lundaland, there is no such focus on migrant integration in the local development plan. Yet there are two funded projects focusing on training and employment for newcomers. This depends more on the project owners than the local strategy as such. In Leader Söderslätt, there is an explicit focus on migrant integration in the strategic document. This is due to the extension of the CLLD area which involves the outer periphery of Malmö. In both Lundaland and Söderslätt, the involvement of migrants and migrant-led organisation in the design and implementation of projects funded through the CLLD strategy is described as a challenge. In the end, the implementation of the CLLD strategy depends on the abilities of local stakeholders to submit project proposals.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key figures of the Paris FUA

- **Total population**: 12,824,378
- **EU migrants**: 488,922
- **Non-EU migrants**: 1,244,527
- **SUD strategies**: 21 Priority Axis and Integrated Territorial Investments
- **Non-SUD strategies**: –
- **Types of funds used**: ERDF and ESF
- **Types of territorial focus of strategies**: Area within city/town; functional urban area

Social policies in France have a robust territorial basis. The government identify the neighbourhoods where the population in vulnerable conditions is concentrated. In the framework of the EU Cohesion Policy 2014-2020, regions developed Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) for Sustainable Urban Development (SUD) strategies targeting such territories.

ITIs in the metropolitan area of the Grand Paris (Métropole du Grand Paris: MGP) complement the national-funded long-term economic and spatial development strategies. The ITIs rarely mention migration and migrants explicitly, from referring, in some cases, to specific groups (e.g., Roma).

Besides this, in Paris, migrants, foreign-born residents, and most of the refugees cluster in well-defined geographical areas: the north-eastern arc and the southern longitudinal spine of the MGP. These same areas are also characterised by socio-economic disadvantage. Some ITIs target them.

A few strengths and weaknesses of the ITIs programmes and the main findings of the case study are:

- In these areas, where the priority and interest in addressing migration is apparent and consistent, ITIs pursued active strategies complementary to the national framework.
- The ITIs activated NGO and local actor projects, although the number of administrative procedures hampered such a potentially crucial element.

In conclusion, France deploys a strong national framework of social policies to integrate migrants targeting the neighbourhoods where those in the most vulnerable conditions are concentrated.

ITIs in the metropolitan region of Paris show a positive and dynamic trend in this direction. The question of the added value of these policies depends mostly on the establishment of local policy communities and a network of experts and activists. For instance, the national social policies for housing, urban renewal and education have often been revised and suffer from a long-lasting lack of resources. ITI policies are deemed to complement this framework which is however adrift. Even the best cases therefore have to confront troubling trends.

In this evolving context, an affirmation of local integrated strategies seems coherent with the continued trend towards the decentralisation of the French system, and with the need to encompass the challenge of the inclusion of migrants. How this will affect and complement national policies remains to be seen due to ongoing changes in the integration priorities because of external shocks such as the pandemic or the economic crisis. The French case shows that a better match between EU and national policies is fruitful but needs to be mainstreamed more swiftly, also by improving local strategic and administrative capacity.

The ITIs targeting the municipalities where there are higher shares of migrants contributed to
MAIN LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR POLICYMAKING

The findings of the report support the Commission process for consolidating and enhancing synergies between the different funds, as well as promoting an even more effective coordination between the EU and different levels of territorial governance. In particular, the analysis offers insights into the potential of role of EU place-based strategies to contribute to migrant integration.

A first point concerns the spatial target of strategies. SUD strategies often take neighbourhoods as the territorial focus, and CLLD as well can also be used to target deprived neighbourhoods within urban areas. Strategies targeting neighbourhoods develop area-based initiatives that regenerate the places where people in vulnerable conditions live, including migrants.

However, the study revealed that, targeting functional urban areas can also serve well the objective of migrant integration. Primarily, because including...
a wider spatial scale in the territorial diagnosis of the strategy, allows the identification of residential and work-life patterns beyond the core cities, thus capturing the daily dynamics of the local population, including migrants better. Moreover, it allows the detection of micro-pockets of disadvantage and ethnic segregation scattered throughout this extended area.

In fact, the case studies showed that adopting a strategy at FUA level still maintains the possibility of targeting some specific neighbourhoods as areas of activity. The benefits of this wider territorial perspective are thus multiple, including working on topics that transcend neighbourhood (and municipality) boundaries, as for example transport connections; addressing the complex and networked spatialisation of migrants’ daily lives; adopting an outward-looking approach in the regeneration of deprived areas, thus reconnecting them to broader functioning territories and avoiding negative spill-over effects on neighbouring areas.

The territorial focus adopted in the research particularly resonates with the multi-level approach for the regeneration of urban deprived areas and neighbourhoods prompted by the Urban Agenda for the EU. Especially so, in relation to New Leipzig Charter which highlights the need for harmonised measures at the spatial scales of neighbourhood, municipality and functional area.

As the case studies show, projects targeting migrants are more likely to be considered when the strategy is cross-sectoral and integrates actions from multiple policy areas. This can be facilitated by seeking synergies between different funds, in particular, combining ERDF with ESF, with the former supporting infrastructural and economic development measures and the latter social measures. In the upcoming programming period, the Cohesion Policy offers more flexibility in terms of funds and the aggregation of thematic objectives. In particular, this will be fostered in the ERDF regulations by the introduction of Policy Objective 5 (PO5), ‘A Europe closer to citizens’, through which it will be possible to combine activities financed under all other policy objectives. Among these, PO4 dedicates a specific objective to migrant integration. The new regulations may thus enable a cross-sectoral integrated approach that would fit the local contexts and the needs of local authorities better. Moreover, the close cooperation and integrated use of the funds will be sustained by the two instruments, ITI and CLLD, which will both be suitable for developing sustainable urban development strategies. Finally, the new Common Provisions Regulation aims to reduce fragmentation of rules, delivering a common set of basic rules for seven funds including the AMIF (Asylum Migration and Integration Fund).

All the above is especially important because it will allow a combination of a place-based approach (sustained by the ERDF) with people-centered measures (sustained by the ESF+ and the AMIF).

In fact, the case studies in this report exposed a possible shortcoming in the place-based approach which risks being less effective in intercepting individuals in particularly vulnerable situations such as transit migrants or refugees. Such categories, by definition, need early integration measures in the territorial context. However, they often lack certain basic skills such as knowledge of the local language or information on basic services and rights. In these cases, the place-based approach promoted by the urban strategies could be complemented by specific projects of integration, for example sustained by AMIF or other specific channels.

A last point regards the governance of the strategies. This appeared to be one of the most problematic aspect in the cases analysed, because no evidence emerged of any effective involvement of migrants in the various phases of the policy process. Although the strategies usually envisaged public consultations, there was no reporting of specific efforts to encourage the participation of migrants. Moreover, some of the cases highlighted the following barriers: scarce or no involvement of practitioners with consolidated expertise in migrant integration within the governance system; scarce or no measures to overcome problems with the local language and to include migrants with no fixed abode as beneficiaries of projects.

Those shortcomings and barriers suggest that, in the next programming period, more effort is required in terms of awareness-raising, methodological support and capacity-building measures for Managing and Local Authorities, to ensure the inclusion of migrants and groups in vulnerable conditions in the governance system of local strategies.
JRC Mission
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