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MIGRANT INTEGRATION IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

COMPARATIVE WORKING PAPER

Local Integration Policies and Multi-Level Policymaking Interactions in Small- and Medium-Sized Towns and Rural Areas
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TARGET AUDIENCE

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Executive summary

This working paper looks at the integration policies targeting post-2014 migrants developed by 49 small and medium-sized towns and rural areas (SMsTRA) in eight EU countries, Turkey and Canada, and at the policymaking interactions that local governments in these localities develop with non-public actors and governmental actors at higher levels of government. The analysis is based on 696 interviews conducted with a wide range of policymakers and other stakeholders in each of the selected municipalities, and with regional, national and European policymakers.

The working paper is organized in **three parts** that discuss three different sets of (interlinked) research questions. The **first part** of the paper analyses the migrant integration **policies/initiatives developed by the EU that target specifically SMsTRA** and the relationship between the EU and SMsTRA. It crucially shows that links between European and national policymakers on the one hand, and local stakeholders in SMsTRA on the other appear to be rare to non-existent. Further, European and national funding schemes, while relevant for and impacting on SMsTRA's ability to deal with the integration of post-2014 refugees, rarely mention smaller localities as targets.

The **second part** moves to the local level analysing the **policies (if any) developed by local governments**, in cooperation with other stakeholders, in the 49 SMsTRA to deal with the integration of post-2014 migrants. The section crucially shows that the presence or absence of an accommodative integration policy and engaged municipal actors to deal with the integration of post-2014 migrants is somewhat linked with the economic dynamics and political orientation of localities: localities with a positive economic dynamic and a more progressive political orientation more often develop accommodative policies and have engaged actors in place.

The **third part** of the paper analyses **policymaking interactions involving SMsTRA**. It therefore asks to what extent and in what ways do local governments in SMSTRA interact with local public and non-public stakeholders and regional/national/supranational authorities, and whether these relationships are collaborative or conflictual. Our findings crucially show that the frequency and nature of policymaking interactions among local actors as well as between local actors and actors at other levels of government can be largely explained by differences in localities' size and political orientation: medium-sized towns and progressive towns, overall, develop much more intense and collaborative interactions compared to smaller and conservative localities.

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Introduction

Small and medium-sized towns and rural areas across Europe have experienced and dealt with an increased and often unprecedented arrival and settlement of migrants in 2014, posing them with the challenge of negotiating the arrival of these newcomers and their integration into local communities. In the past years, many of them have created their own policies, put in place officials and municipal units responsible for immigrant integration and built up relationships of collaboration with actors in the locality and other levels of government. Unfortunately, the experiences of governing the arrival and integration of newcomers and of dealing with 'refugee crisis' remains topical. With the unfolding of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the European Union is currently facing the largest arrival of refugees since WWII. And also this time, smaller localities and rural areas carry a significant share of the burden of welcoming individuals that had to flee their country of origin and preparing for their longer term and potentially long stay.

Investigating smaller localities and their immigrant integration policies is important, because they have become lynchpins for the challenge posed to European societies of successfully managing what has often been depicted as a 'crisis' of accommodating and integrating large numbers or refugees. This comparative working paper[1] aims to do so, by focusing on immigrant integration policymaking in small and medium sized municipalities and rural areas in eight EU countries and two countries outside of Europe. Furthermore, it investigates patterns of multi-level governance and relations between local public and non-public actors in SMsTRA and stakeholders acting at regional, national, and supranational levels. Understanding such patterns of interaction is crucial to make sense of recent policy developments in these localities.

More specifically, this working paper addresses three sets of questions. First, we ask which policies/initiatives has the EU developed that target specifically SMsTRA and what is the

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[1] This comparative working paper is a deliverable of the third work package of the Whole-COMM project. For an outline of the overall Whole-COMM project and its methodology please consult https://whole-comm.eu/working-papers/working-paper-1-2/.

relationship between the EU and SMsTRA? Second, we move to the local level asking the following set of questions: have SMsTRA created their own policies to integrate post-2014 migrants? Are these policies accommodative or restrictive? Are municipal actors engaged in implementing these policies or do they leave this to the sphere of civil society? Third, we move to analyse policymaking interactions involving SMsTRA. We therefore ask to what extent and in what ways do local governments in SMSTRA interact with local public and non-public stakeholders and regional/national/supranational authorities, and whether these relationships are collaborative or conflictual. In particular, the paper aims to identify the factors that seem to explain the emergence of frequent and collaborative interactions between local governments in SMsTRA and other actors.

Our analysis leads to three main findings.

- First, the paper shows that European and national policymaking and funding, while relevant for and impacting on SMsTRA's ability to deal with the integration of post-2014 refugees, rarely mentions smaller localities as targets. What is more, links between European and national policymakers and local stakeholders in SMsTRA appear to be rare to non-existent. This is particularly striking for the European level, that in the past years has often emphasized the importance of the local level for immigrant integration, yet has often focused on and involved stakeholders from larger cities or metropoles. Arguably, this may create a bias in policies, if policies fail to take into account the realities and needs of smaller localities as what concerns European policies and support.

- Second, we find that the presence or absence of an accommodative integration policy and engaged municipal actors to deal with the integration of post-2014 migrants is somewhat linked with the economic dynamic and political orientation of localities. Localities with a positive economic dynamic and a more progressive local political orientation more often develop accommodative policies and engaged actors in place.

- Third, when looking at SMsTRA's embeddedness in multilevel governance relations we find that these can be largely explained by differences in localities' size, economic development and experience with diversity, as well as the political orientation. While localities' size does not seem to explain the type of policies that local governments develop, it does appear to matter when considering the presence or absence of interactions among local actors as well as between local actors and actors at other levels of government. The political orientation of local governments also plays an important role in this respect, while the economic dynamic of our localities seems to be much less relevant.

Whilst the interviews and surveys carried for this report were all carried out before the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, we believe that our insights can help evaluate the situation in

and preparedness of SMsTRA for dealing with yet another influx of refugees (for a more elaborate discussion of insights on how small localities in Europe can make a difference in the reception of Ukrainians fleeing from war, please see https://whole-comm.eu/blogs/is-multilevel-governance-all-we-need/). As refugee crises keep recurring, the task of learning lessons from previous instances of perceived 'crisis' and ensuing efforts of integrating refugees becomes all the more important and underlines the potential of comparative European research on these issues to help solve future crises – at EU, national, local levels.

The working paper is organized as follows. After a brief methodological note, the paper proceeds in three parts, conceived to reply to the three sets of research questions outlined above. The first part addresses the first sets of research questions focusing on the role of smaller localities in European integration policymaking. The second part looks at local policies (within our ten different national contexts). Part 3 focuses on policymaking interactions addressing the third set of research questions.

Methodological note

The analyses of this working paper are based on document analysis (media sources and policy documents) and on semi-structured interviews conducted between November 2021 and February 2022 in 49 SMsTRA. In total, we carried out 696 interviews, including:

- 647 at the local level, involving the following actors: mayors/members of local government responsible for integration (69), high-level local officials (75), pro-migrant groups/CSOs/migrant organizations (61), anti-migrant groups (8), members of opposition in the local council (40), experts/journalists (27), street-level bureaucrats working in public social services (127), employers (43), employer organizations (38), real estate companies (32), non-profit service providers (95), trade unions (26), others (6).
- 30 officials at the regional level (regional officials in charge of immigrant affairs/integration)
- 12 officials at the national level (national officials in charge of immigrant affairs/integration)
- 7 expert interviews at the European level (officials, think tank staff, CSO staff in charge of immigrant affairs/integration)

Most of these interviewees also filled in a structured survey designed to gather quantitative data on policymaking interactions among the actors involved in the local governance of post-2014 migrants' integration (see part 3 for more details).

The research was carried out in eight EU countries (Poland, Austria, Germany, Sweden, The Netherlands, Belgium Spain, Italy) as well as in Turkey and Canada (for more information on

the selection of countries see: Caponio and Pettrachin, 2021). In each of the countries, a set of small and medium sized towns and rural areas were selected for case studies. The case selection process was very structured and theory oriented. All selected localities were directly involved in the reception of asylum-seekers and refugees between 2014 and 2017, and they are all characterized by the presence of currently residing post-2014 migrants. None of the selected localities is a satellite town of a big city and we aimed to exclude 'extreme cases'. Our case selection procedure was then conducted with the aim to maximize variation across a set of variables, such as population size (we select a mix of medium towns, small towns and rural areas), administrative role (a mix of provincial/regional capitals and localities with no administrative function), the localities' experience with cultural diversity, their economic and demographic situation and the political affiliation of their local government (for more information about the case selection procedure and the indicators used to operationalize our variables see: Caponio and Pettrachin, 2021). The variables 'experience with cultural diversity' and 'structural factors' were additionally used to identify four types of localities, as illustrated in the typology in Table 1, which also summarises our expectations about variation in local integration policies and policymaking interactions in different types of localities (for more information on our expectations and the typology please see Caponio and Pettrachin, 2021).

Table 1. Typology of different local contexts adopted in the Whole-COMM project, and expectations concerning policies and policymaking interactions for different types of localities.

		Structural conditions	
		+ (favourable)	(unfavourable)
Experience with cultural diversity	**+ (high)**	**Revitalising/Better-off Localities** Engaged and proactive local actors Accommodative/Inclusive policies No significant anti-immigrant mobilization Active in translocal/multilevel collaboration	**Marginal Localities** Ambivalent actors, less proactive, much depends on civil society actors Ambiguous policies High level of anti-immigrant mobilization Less active in TL/ML collaboration
	- (low)	**Localities In Transition** Engaged actors, fragmented civil society Receptive policies Higher degree of Anti-immigrant mobilizations Actively involved in TL/ML collaboration	**Economically Stagnating/ Left-behind Localities** Disengaged and reactive local actors Civil society may mobilize; Restrictive and exclusionary policies; Anti-immigrant mobilizations common; Unlikely to engage in TL/ML collaboration

We also expect the size of our localities and the political affiliation of local governments to mediate all of the expectations mentioned so far (see Caponio and Pettrachin, 2021).

The methodology used is comparative case study research, which is geared towards creating deep knowledge of cases and entities as well as synthesizing similarities, differences and patterns of phenomena across two or more cases in a way that allows some generalization (Goodrick 2014, 2019). In line with our research questions, our comparative analysis seeks to compare different SMSTRA approaches of the integration of post-2014 migrants and different patterns of interaction/dynamics of relationships between different local actors and across local/regional/national/supranational levels, across different countries and across different types of localities. Our analysis is largely based on country reports produced by national country teams within the Whole-COMM project (which are available at this link: https://whole-comm.eu/).

Part 1: the role of smaller municipalities in European union integration policy-making

There has been considerable attention for the local level in EU policymaking on immigrant integration for the past decade. Especially in light of generally more restrictive policies by national governments, European policymakers have targeted local authorities and stakeholders with funding opportunities and support in their integration agendas. Whilst European policies often referred to examples of integration policies from larger cities, we are interested here in knowing more about whether and to what extent European policymakers have smaller and medium sized cities and rural areas and their realities on their radar.

More specifically, the following section addresses the first set of research questions of this working paper:

1. Which policies/initiatives has the EU developed that target specifically SMsTRA?
2. What is the relationship between the EU and SMsTRA?

In order to assess to what extent (smaller) municipalities play a formal role for and in EU and supranational policy-making on the integration of post-2014 migrants, we carried out an analysis of EU level policy documents and conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews with officials and relevant civil society stakeholders on the European and international level.

We selected six documents relating to local migrant integration post-2014: four from the European Commission, one from the OECD and one from the European Committee of the Regions (for a list of documents see Appendix). Furthermore, we interviewed eight experts from the European and international level, including representatives from the European Commission (DG Home), the OECD, three European city networks, an international think tank and two international NGOs working in the field of migration and integration (for a full list of interviews see Appendix).

In the following we draw on insights from these EU-level documents and interviews focusing on EU policymaking specifically targeting SMsTRA and the relationship of European and international institutions with SMsTRA.

1.1. Policies/initiatives from the EU targeting the integration of post-2014 refugee migrants in SMSTRA

The EU for long has recognized the role of the local level for migrant integration. With the **European agenda for integration,** published in 2011, the European Commission called for more action at the local level, highlighting the need to address especially disadvantaged urban areas, to improve multi-level cooperation and for the EU to provide financial support to local initiatives.

With the unfolding of the 2014 'refugee crisis', this importance of EU level support of local authorities became salient, also because of the striking friction in approach between local authorities and national governments in the reception of immigrants. As one respondent said, local governments generally wanted to implement more welcoming and progressive policies and action programs, despite the reluctance of national governments, whose approach was very much of a 'far from my bed-show'. The discrepancy and relationship between national and local level, according to this respondent, hinders integration policies at the national level, but ultimately also at the local level because of the lack of support (R4).

In the following years, the European Commission published several policy documents on immigrant integration, especially in the aftermath of the 2014 'refugee crisis'. The EU's first policy document in response to the large increase in migrants coming to Europe was the **Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals** (**2016)** in order to provide immediate assistance to immigrants at the first stage of integration, emphasizing the need to address the specific challenges faced by refugees. It called for a coherent approach to integration across different policy areas and government levels and conceived it as a role of the EU to coordinate policy development and involve all relevant actors – including local authorities.

With the recent **Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2020)**, an attempt was made to look at a long-term perspective of integration for migrants in the years **2021-2027**, which is currently being implemented. The local level in this policy document is considered as playing a key role in welcoming and guiding newcomers when they first arrive in their new country.

Providing guidance on issues relating to integration specifically in view of the COVID pandemic, the **Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals 2021-2022** suggested research on the links between national policies and local integration outcomes and to expand cities' knowledge and use of available financial instruments to invest in the social infrastructure needed to advance immigrant and refugee inclusion by assisting local policymakers to pool resources from private and public financial institutions.

Also, the OECD has published a document dedicated to the inclusion of immigrants by local authorities. The **Local inclusion of migrants and refugees: A gateway to existing ideas, resources and capacities for cities across the world (2020)** is a collection of recommendations from different international bodies, including OECD, CMO, UN HABITAT, UNICEF, UNCTAD, UNESCO and WHO.

Whilst the local level is mentioned in these documents, one key insight is that there is no dedicated attention paid to smaller localities. They also do not differentiate between local realities and needs based on different size, economic development or political orientation. Because of this lacking of attention to smaller localities and to variation between smaller and larger localities, the local level becomes a uniform category, which in turns stands in the way for more fine-grained policies.

There is one document from the European level that deviates from this pattern and differentiates middle and small cities and rural areas from larger cities, namely the document by the European Committee of the Regions (Commission for Citizenship, Governance and Institutional and External Affairs) on **Integration of migrants in middle and small cities and rural areas in Europe (2020).** Drawing on case studies from five countries, this report provides a useful overview of some of the key opportunities and challenges outside of large cities. The report specifies that migrants offer significant benefits to medium and small cities, but that these cities have often been left to deal with issues that the national level has failed to address. The document points out that small and medium-sized cities have been adaptable to changing realities and policy-needs, but that there is also a great variety of integration policies and activities. For these localities financial support e.g. by the European Union is often difficult to obtain due to the lack of resources to submit applications and prepare reports, as financial and human resources more generally in these localities are thin. It also shows that smaller and medium sized localities have been successful in sharing resources and services with geographically close towns and villages and have used informal channels for knowledge sharing in regional level networks, whilst European level networks have often remained difficult for these localities to participate actively in. The authors suggest to conduct an EU wide needs assessment of medium, small and rural areas in the integration of migrants, to provide tailored capacity building support, and to broadcast outcomes of small networks across Europe and expand the program of sharing good practices. Further, the authors recommend (to the European Committee of the Regions) to advocate on behalf of these localities for more accessible EU funding. They also point out that the needs of medium, small and rural localities need to be considered separately from each other, due to their distinctive realities and that monitoring through more data collection, analysis and dissemination would be important. The findings and suggestions made in this document are highly relevant to fill the void in European policymaking on smaller and medium-sized localities and rural areas. In fact, the research of WholeCOMM provides an EU wide needs assessment of SMsTRA that this document is calling for.

When asking experts on European and international level about the role of SMsTRA in immigrant integration, they acknowledged that smaller localities have taken a relevant role in dealing with the refugee crisis and in coming up with creative solutions for immigrant integration. However, as two respondents highlighted (R4, R8), **it took small localities some time to get to grips** with their role in dealing with the so-called 'refugee crisis' and integrate these newcomers. As an employee at the Council of European Municipalities and Regions mentioned:

> *"Small municipalities do not really have the quickness, readiness to just change their way or change the procedures in a very short term. Uh, they do not have even sometimes the possibility because everything has to go through the approval, council, et cetera, and then you have the political at stake. So all that is complicating everything. But the third sector played really an important role." (R8)*

At the same time, several interviewees recognized the **willingness of smaller localities** – including those who had little experience with accommodating migrants (R4), **to learn more about and develop their integration** infrastructure after 2015 (R8). One respondent acknowledged that especially in more rural and smaller municipalities policies have changed in a positive direction (R1).

To summarize, what we see in EU level policy documents from post 2014 is that the role of the local level is being clearly acknowledged as regards the integration of newcomers, given that they play a key role in welcoming newcomers once they arrive. European institutions recognize the role of the EU as funder of integration activities at a local level as well as the importance of making such funding instruments known and accessible. When asked about immigrant integration in smaller localities, experts on the European level were perceptive of the specific challenges faced and opportunities taken in smaller localities in light of the 2014 refugee crisis and the need to accommodate and integration newcomers post-2014. **However, as our analysis shows, at EU and international level there is still too often a focus on bigger cities.** A notable exception poses the document on the Integration of migrants in middle and small cities and rural areas in Europe published by the European committee of the Regions in 2020.

1.2. Relations and interactions between EU and SMSTRA

Analyzing EU documents and interviews with experts working on immigrant integration on EU levels and in international organizations, we also were interested whether any forms of interaction among smaller and mediums sized localities and rural areas were mentioned and to what extent we can find established relationships between these SMsTRA and the actors at the EU level.

As one interviewee mentioned, multi-level governance receives more attention nowadays and here the EU plays an important role in creating a narrative to bring the actors within the network closer together and form a common identity (R6). Multi-level governance would be needed so that insights on the local level can feed into national level policy-making (R8). However, creating real communication between levels in practice is complicated, one responded argued:

> *"I have this impression that everybody, every level wants more multi-level governance, but then in the end, in the end there is some kind of communication discrepancy between the different tiers of government that does not always allow the flow of information freely from one side to the other." (R8)*

One forum of interaction has been created based on the **European agenda for integration (2011)**. It brings together actors from local and national governments and different

stakeholder to collaborate on integration. This shows that the EU is trying to bring different actors and levels together. (R4)

Another forum for interaction across levels and stakeholders is the **European integration network (EIN).** It was founded following the adoption of the 2016 Commission's Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals. The EIN was conceived as a group that is able to make a difference, by e.g. mutual learning. Yet, according to one of our respondents the network is not used effectively. Member states sometimes just send someone to represent the member state, but they are not really proactive and the effect of this network on the design and implementation of EU policies is limited (R2). The local level seems to be absent in this network.

A third forum for relations between local authorities and EU institutions was mentioned in the document **Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees: Action plan 2021-2022** by the Urban Agenda for the EU. Co-led by the City of Amsterdam and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME), the Inclusion Partnership is meant to provide an outcome-oriented platform for micro level cooperation and trust-building between cities, Member States, EU institutions, and other stakeholders.

One way in which cities interact with the European institutions (but also through which the European institutions are implementing some integration policy programs) is through European networks of cities lobbying at the European level, such as the **EUROCITIES and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) network**. However, as one of our respondents claims integration has somehow decreased attentions as a topic or is difficult to mobilize for:

> *"Eurocities is a very organised network. I mean, of course you see that not as many members engage in migration anymore as it was 10 years ago. And you see people now want to talk about green cities, and smart cities, and environment, and, you see that migration, does not have the same power anymore within the organisation, of course it is still an area. And then for some other bodies it's very difficult for them to get on their feet, for smaller municipalities. Because you have CEMR, but they work with national associations of municipalities. And their mandate on migration is very weak, because they have to go through the national associations of municipalities and then say what do we want to do on migration, but then you have all those right-wingers and they don't want to work on it too much, so it is not a nice issue to mobilise support on." (R1)*

Overall, while several fora of interaction across multiple levels of government with the European Union exist, some of these fora did not include local authorities at all, were led by

large cities or had limited influence. The direct involvement of smaller, medium-sized cities and rural areas to date seems negligible. Partly this may be explained by the lacking resources in smaller localities to participate in such EU level fora, but partly this may also be due to a lack of efforts of involving such smaller localities in these for a by the organizing parties.

Part 2: integration policies targeting post-2014 migrants

Part 2 of the working paper discusses findings related to our second set of research questions on the local policies developed in European SMsTRA focusing on the integration of post-2014 migrants. Such findings are mainly illustrated in section 5 below. Before presenting insights from our research, in the preceding section 4, we illustrate the broader national and regional policy contexts in which our sampled localities are embedded and the formal role of smaller and medium sized municipalities and rural areas within their countries and regions. Bringing the national and regional policies into view also provides us with a basis to assess local policies (and multi-level governance relationships) later on.

2.1. National and regional integration policies and the formal role of municipalities

Comparing the development of integration policies on post-2014 migrants across the national contexts of our research, we find that most countries have national policies in place to regulate the reception and integration of refugees, with some notable exceptions. We can distinguish four types of countries: countries with national policies but no regional ones, countries with national policies as well as regional policies, countries with no national level policies but regional level policies and countries with neither national nor regional policies in place for the integration of post-2014 migrants.

National level policies, no/few policies on regional level	National level and regional level policies	No national, but regional level policies	Hardly any national or regional policies
NL, TUR, SE	IT, SP, GER, AUT, CAN	BE	POL

Table 1: Comparison of development of national and regional level policies by countries

The first category (**national policies in place, but no policies in place at the regional level**) applied mostly to the unitary and highly centralized countries in our sample, including The Netherlands, Turkey and Sweden.

In the **Netherlands** in the past decades there has been a back and forth between more centralized and more decentralized systems. With the 2013 Civic Integration Act, a more centralized system was put in place, including a national dispersal mechanism for distributing asylum seekers to municipalities and clearly defined legal tasks for the municipalities to accommodate and integrate these newcomers. The regions/provinces in the Netherlands play only a marginal or no role. Recently the law has changed again, as in January 2022 the New Civic Integration Act came into force, giving the municipalities again a more central role and more leeway in defining their local responses to immigrant integration.

Due to rising centralization in **Turkey** the national level is highly influential for integration. Local approaches largely mirror national policies and local actors have weak capacity and lack financial means in developing their own policies. Pro-migrant NGOs are more active but often these activities are often based on a short-term project-base. National integration policy is determined by the 'Presidency of Migration Management' (PMM) and implemented through the Provincial Directorates of Migration Management' (PDMM).

In **Sweden**, settlement is decided upon between national level migration agency, county administrative boards and municipalities. However, a Swedish law from 2016 ruled that the national government can also force municipalities to increase the number of settled refugees. Practical support of refugees is the responsibility of the municipalities in Sweden, with the funding provided by the national level. Introduction programs to the labour market were first a municipal task but since 2010 are in the responsibility of the national level. Overall, local integration policies are very much influenced by national state policies, and there is limited discretion for local governments to diverge from the national framework. Municipalities cannot control the inflow of migrants and they are obliged to provide a specific set of integration policy measures. On the other hand, municipalities can make decisions that go beyond their core obligations, albeit without secure chances for national-level funding.

Conversely, both **national level policies as well as regional policies were in place in** regionalist and federalist systems, where regional states have some leeway to define their own integration policies. This category included Italy, Spain, Germany, Austria and Canada.

In **Italy**, we find a quite centralized system, with national level and prefectures in charge of reception, although municipalities can apply for setting up a reception center in their locality. Italy has developed its national Protection system for asylum seekers and refugees and migrants with humanitarian status (SPRAR, later renamed to SAI) in the early 2000s. As of 2014 prefectures were entitled to set up governmental reception facilities called CAS (with a heterogeneous quality of the services provided), next to the national (but locally run) SAI reception centers.

In **Spain**, national legislation regulates asylum and subsidiary protection as well the rights and social integration of foreigners. It provides the framework for immigrants to be integrated in Spain, but delegates the power for immigrant integration (often referred to as 'inclusion') to the regional governments. The integration work on the ground is largely carried out by the

third sector, a large number of NGOS that work at the national, regional and local level. At national level, the responsibility for integration lies with the General Directorate for Humanitarian Assistance and Social Inclusion, which is part of the State Secretary for Migrations (Secretaría de Estado de Migraciones). With the aim to foster the inclusion of immigrants in the country, two Strategic Citizenship and Integration Plans have been implemented. The national level also provides the funding of regional and local initiatives and programmes, through annual funding calls. The regions develop their own integration and migration plans.

In **Germany**, there are national laws and policies regulating integration. This entails the national integration law (2016) (an omnibus law consisting of different legal acts) that includes regulations on language and integration courses, integration into labor market, residence regulations after procedure, access to settlement permit as well as the "National action plan for integration" (2007), which delineates integration as a process of five phases. Responsibilities and funding for integration in Germany lie partly at the regional level, especially as regards reception and distribution, but also for language, labor market and some integration activities. The regions set up initiative programs, create trans-local networks for exchange and provide funding for local integration (e.g. the funding of local integration coordinators). For municipalities integration is a so-called voluntary task of self-government, so this means that apart from accommodation and education it is a deliberate decision of municipalities how much effort and financial resources they invest.

In **Austria**, refugee reception and support is a shared task between federal level and regional states. As regards integration there are two main national laws for integration from 2017, but regional states also have their own integration charters. Labor market policies and employment support are a national domain - implemented by public employment services (AMS) through regional branches. Similarly, the provision of German courses and value and orientation courses is overlooked by the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) and their regional offices.

In **Canada**, immigration is largely controlled by the federal government that sets annual numerical targets, but there is also a provincial nominee program and a municipal nominee program where provinces and municipalities can develop their own immigration streams and nominate candidates to the federal government. Immigrants also arrive by programs for sponsoring family members and programs for refugee resettlement, where e.g. community organizations sponsor immigrants, paying for housing, basic necessities, accompanying services, securing employment, language practice and childcare. The Canadian government had a rather exceptional program for resettling 25k Syrians in 2015. In most provinces immigration and resettlement are mainly funded by the national government, but the province also plays a role. For example, the Ontario ministry funds provincial programs for newcomer integration, and created a Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism. Quebec has its own Ministry of Immigration, 'Francisation' and Integration and has its own laws on integration.

Only regional policies but no national policies on post-2014 migrants exist in the third category of countries, including the case of **Belgium**. Here it is the **regions and not the national level** that are determining for immigrant integration, resulting in quite diverging approaches between localities in the two regions. Traditionally Wallonia had taken a more universalist and laissez-faire approach and Flanders a more multiculturalist and interventionist approach. Recently there was some convergence towards assimilation, with Flanders in 2021 again restricting their approach further.

In the last category, with the case of **Poland**, there were **hardly any or very limited policies in place on the national level nor on the regional level**. The Polish national government had liberalized labor migration in the context of the 2015 'refugee crisis' (with a system of a simplified procedure of gaining a work permits that was created for nationals from Armenia, Belarus, Moldova, Russia, Georgia and Ukraine), while it opposed the reception and accommodation of asylum seekers. A separate integration policy was never formulated in Poland, but some strategic documents on migration contain a perspective on migrant integration. First and foremost Poland's Migration Policy published in 2019 conceived of migration as necessary but as a threat and integration as assimilation/adherence to Polish norms and values. European funds for migration and integration were the main source of financing for integration activities in Poland as there is no national money dedicated to this topic.

2.2. Comparison of local integration policies

2.2.1. By size of locality

Larger cities and their approaches to integration of immigrants have been extensively discussed in the literature and we have many comparisons of metropoles. Less research has been carried out on immigrant integration policymaking in smaller places and rural areas. What is more, we lack studies that would compare rural areas, smaller towns and medium-sized cities in their approaches to immigrant integration in different countries. This means that our study can fill an important gap in the literature.

As a first step we have examined whether there was a clear difference in the policies and actors dealing with the integration of post-2014 migrants across rural areas, small-sized towns and medium-sized localities.

Table 1 Comparison of integration policies and actors across medium-sized localities, small-sized localities and rural localities

	Policies in place, receptive and inclusive policies, municipal actors in place, engaged municipal actors	Mixed	Lack of policies or restrictive/exclusionary policies, municipal actors missing or disengaged
Medium-sized localities	CAN (Quebec); IT (Sicily); BE (Flanders); SE (Jönköping); AUT (Tyrol); NL (Utrecht)	CAN (Ontario); CAN (British Columbia); SP (Catalonia); GER (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern); GER (Lower Saxony); SP (Andalusia); SE (Gavle)	(IT (Piedmont); BE (Wallonia); TUR (Central Anatolia); TUR (Mediterranean region)
Small localities	CAN (Quebec); IT (Piedmont); AUT (Lower Austria); BE (Flanders)	CAN (British Columbia); CAN (Ontario); NL (South Holland); NL (Overijssel); SE (Scania); SE (Gävleborg);, GER (North-Rhine Westfalia); GER (Saxony Anhalt); SP (Catalonia, Castile&Leon)	IT (Sicily); BE (Wallonia); POL (Greater Poland); POL (Lower Silesia)
Rural localities	IT (Piedmont); SE (Dalarna)	IT (Sicily); AUT (Tyrol); NL (Drenthe); GER (Lower Saxony); SP (Valencia); SP (Andalusia); SE (Blekinge)	AUT (Lower Austria); POL (Lower Silesia); POL (Greater Poland); GER (Saxony); TUR (Eastern Marmara region)

Note. Localities' names are not disclosed in this report to protect interviewees' anonymity.

Overall, when comparing immigrant integration policies for post-2014 migrants by looking at municipalities' size, no clear pattern seems to emerge. Whilst some localities have come quite far in developing policies, putting actors and structures and place, other localities have not been able or willing to do so, but this seems to be independent from the specific size of a locality. Based on these findings, we can conclude that we do not find a clear indication that size matters and that locality size does not seem to have any predictive quality for the availability of (accommodating) immigrant integration policies in a certain location.

2.2.2. By type of locality

Drawing on our typology of SMsTRA (see working paper: https://whole-comm.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/WoC_WP_1.pdf), we were interested to what extent integration policies and actors differed in revitalizing/better-off, left behind, marginal and in transition localities. [2]

Comparison of revitalizing/better-off localities

We started out with the following expectations for our comparison of revitalizing localities:

Revitalising/better-off localities	Actors	Receptive/engaged municipal actors
	Policies	Accommodative and inclusive policies

Comparing our findings on revitalizing localities, we found our expectations being met by many of our localities, which had rather accommodative and inclusive policies and engaged municipal actors in place. However, some localities also had actors that were not receptive and had no accommodative policies in place. Several revitalizing localities showed a somewhat mixed picture, e.g. having receptive local actors, but more exclusive policies.

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[2] Our Canadian partners opted against applying the typology on their cases and hence these are not be included in this part of the analysis, but they are included in the analysis based on political orientation and size.

AS EXPECTED: Policies in place, receptive and inclusive policies, municipal actors in place, engaged municipal actors	Mixed	Lack of policies or restrictive/exclusionary policies, municipal actors missing or disengaged
NL (Utrecht), AUT (Tyrol), SE (Dalarna), SE (Jonköping), BE (Flanders), IT (Piedmont)	SP (Catalonia), SP (Catalonia), SP (Castile&Leon), GER (North-Rhine Westfalia), SE (Scania)	IT (Piedmont), BE (Wallonia), POL (Lower Silesia), TUR (Eastern Marmara Region)

The first category of actors entails those with **receptive and engaged local actors as well as accommodative and inclusive local policies.** In the **Dutch** revitalizing locality (Utrecht) both the city council and the administration were characterized as proactive and were praised for their long-term commitment to fostering immigrant integration. The municipality for the last 40 years had collaborated with one non-profit service provider that bundles integration related tasks under one policy approach to integration. The local welfare organizations, three private housing corporations and a language café were also involved in assisting refugees in the locality. Local policies promoted the city as a welcoming and inclusive place (policy plans "Inclusive city agenda" and "Antidiscrimination agenda"), conceiving integration as a two-way process that requires participation, mixing and that individual feel at home. The revitalizing town in **Austria**, (Tyrol) also had an integration official in place and integration was one of the priorities of the current mayor. In addition, several civil society initiatives were active in this town, providing German courses, a cultural offer and a playing space for children. The municipal actors put significant efforts into integration, by raising awareness about integration also within the local administration, collaborating with the Tyrolean Social Services, AMS and business chamber to provide services and training. When a gap in the service-provision occurred, the municipality had often stepped in over the past years, for instance giving out laptops for homeschooling during COVID, indicating a proactive approach. Local policymakers framed integration largely as agreeing on a basic consensus in society and enabling encounters. Even though the **Swedish** revitalizing cities had no dedicated unit dealing with integration, other local officials, city council representatives and social workers played an active role, next to representatives of private businesses and national and regional agencies. One of the localities (Dalarna) had created an integration policy that set out the values and goals that should permeate all parts of the municipal organization. In another **Swedish** revitalizing locality (Jonköping), the municipality has formulated five "integration goals" stipulating that the municipality's staff should be representative of its population, all residents should have shorter paths to employment, the municipality should collaborate with civil society, the municipality should counteract segregation, and all municipal departments

should strive toward social sustainability. In one revitalizing locality in **Belgium** (Flanders), the local government played a strong role as coordinator. The left-wing coalition in the locality rejected the request of the federal government to open a local accommodation center. It had an outspoken local integration policy and took explicit distance from the Flemish integration policy, focusing more on encounter and 'making the city' together. The three pillars of its integration policy included anti-discrimination, reception of newcomers, and stimulating intercultural encounter. One of the revitalizing localities in **Italy** (Piedmont) had taken the decision in 2015 to take over the coordination of a local SAI. The local integration policy covered the accommodation of asylum seekers, integration services, and the provision of a municipal office for people of foreign origin (later renamed in "Meet Point" (featuring a Services Area, Reception and Integration Area and Intercultural Area). Yet, NGOSs in this locality were quite critical of the municipality's prevailing emphasis on emergency measures and in their view still limited attention for integration. Officials in this Italian locality conceived integration, albeit using different terms, as a whole-of-community approach.

In some of the revitalizing localities we find a **more mixed** situation. In **Spain**, the revitalizing localities had no policy or strategy in place. However, in one Spanish revitalizing locality (Catalonia), there was a team within social services responsible for community work (including the integration/inclusion of immigrants). In another revitalizing locality in Spain (Catalonia) a dedicated position was created at the end of 2018 entitled 'tecnica de ciudadania'. In both localities a range of (national, regional and local) NGOs was taking care of a lot of the integration work on the ground. In another revitalizing locality (Castile en Leon) (as in all Spanish localities), there used to be a specific person (within social services) acting as the "contact point" for immigrant integration, but s/he had been on medical leave since 2020 and not yet been replaced at the time of fieldwork. Most of the local "integration work" is done by (national, regional and local) NGOs and local associations including many migrant(-led) organizations. The **German** revitalizing locality (North-Rhine Westfalia) initially did not have a separate official for integration and delegated the practical integration work to two key non-profit providers. However, in 2015 it created 15 and a half new positions within the municipal administration to cope with the situation. Over time, responsibilities were shifted more to the regional state (who ran an accommodation facility in the locality), but in the past two years again more attention is paid to the topic of integration in the locality as well. Based on pressure from local civil society, an integration concept is being developed. In one revitalizing Swedish locality (Scania) we found no specific integration policy but several comprehensive, cross-sectorial activation programs in place.

Several of the insights we gained there **were also not in line with the expected scenario** for revitalizing localities, constituting the third category of actors. For the Italian and Belgian case, alternative independent variables (political orientation) seemed to explain this divergence from our expectations, whereas for the Turkish and Polish case the divergence could be explained by the national context and the general finding that municipalities had little in terms of own policies or structures in place. A revitalizing locality **in Italy** (Piedmont) has changed its approach of integration with the change of governments. Whilst the centre-left coalition has

been proactive on integration (2011-16), the conservative coalition led by the League after 2016 promoted anti-reception and anti-integration policies. Integration measures were generally poor and there was no municipal office in place. There was a fragmented landscape of bottom-up initiatives and NGOs managing the reception facilities. Neighborhood associations, trade unions and employer associations also played some role in supporting the integration of post-2014 migrants. Whilst the third sector highlighted the bi-directionality of integration, a representative of the local government considered integration rather as an adaptation process. In the second **Belgian** revitalizing locality (Wallonia), no local policies and no member of the local government responsible for integration are in place, leaving all integration work to local civil society initiatives. The regional integration centre therefore had a coordinating role and the local integration policy approach could be best characterized as 'hands-off'. There are different potential explanations for this: the political orientation of the local government (a centre-right government) or the size of the locality (a rural area). In the **Polish** context, integration was not present in the official documents in any of the localities (including the revitalizing one in Lower Silesia), although integration was considered by local actors as needed. Whilst some local actors held the notion of integration as two-way process in Poland, some also understood it more as a process of assimilation. Also in **Turkey**, no real integration policies existed in the revitalizing (or any other types of) localities (Eastern Marmara). The municipality did not see itself as having a role in providing specialized services (but did cater to all residents including migrants with their service desk and urban infrastructure provisions) and also in the city council integration did not appear on the agenda of discussions. The Provincial Directorates of Migration Management acted as direct representative of the national government in this provincial capital, organizing one-off activities and so-called 'harmonization' meetings.

Comparison of economically stagnating localities

For the comparison of economically stagnating localities, we started out from the following set of expectations:

Economically stagnating localities	Actors	Disengaged and reactive local actors, resist national redistribution plans and oppose spontaneous settlement
		Civil society organisations and/or business eventually mobilised to favour integration, but fragmented and poorly coordinated
	Policies	Restrictive policymaking

Our findings from economically stagnating localities show that many of these localities have a more mixed situation as regards integration policies and availability of engaged municipal actors.

Policies in place, receptive and inclusive policies, municipal actors in place, engaged municipal actors	Mixed	AS EXPECTED: Lack of policies or restrictive/exclusionary policies, municipal actors missing or disengaged
BE (Flanders), IT (Sicily),	GER (Lower Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt), NL (Drenthe), IT (Sicily) SP (Andalusia, Andalusia), SE (Gävleborg),	AUT (Lower Austria), TUR (Mediterranean Region)

Starting again with the category of localities that fit our expectations, we have several cases where indeed the economically stagnating localities had more disengaged local actors, with NGOs taking over the role of coordinators, and more restrictive policies. In the economically stagnating city in **Austria** (Lower Austria), no local official was in place and the municipality delegated support of humanitarian migrants to a civil society association that had evolved from a group of local volunteers, with whom the mayor regularly exchanged. Policymakers emphasized that the number of asylum seekers must be kept within acceptable limits. In the **Turkish** economically stagnating locality (Mediterranean Region) there were also no local integration policies in place (just as in all the localities studied in Turkey) and the municipality does not see itself as having a role in providing specialized services to migrants. As many of the Syrian refugees work in this town as seasonal workers in agriculture and are living in tents, they also profited the least (in comparison to Syrians in the other localities) from the national /provincial programs and efforts. Integration according to some informants was built around protecting local communities whilst ignoring the voices of migrants.

Localities in the in-between category showed more of a mixed bag of restrictive policies but engaged actors or the other way around. For instance, one **German** economically stagnating locality (Lower Saxony) stood out as a best practice example for migrant reception despite its limited experiences with this task. However, the municipality provided only the most necessary support, including language classes and accommodation, and made no funding available for other services such as social workers or translators. It was tied in its integration efforts mostly to the regional level, where the main decisions were taken. Another economically stagnating locality in **Germany** (Saxony-Anhalt) relied on two local coordinators, fully funded by the regional level (Länder), working in separate departments formally tied to the mayor's office. However, while the local administration was initially supportive of post-2014 migrants, they encountered difficulties in engaging with the local administration and policymakers on the topic. Migrant organizations and civil society actors referred to a hostile climate for migrants in the locality. They pointed to a discrepancy between very active single persons in the administration and a majority population that was indifferent, critical, or even hostile. The interviewed local administrators conceived integration as a two-way process, but this was not shared by all actors. In the **Dutch** economically stagnating locality (Drenthe), there

was no separate integration policy, although refugees were mentioned in the coalition agreement (2018-22) and the governance program (2018-22). National policymaking on integration was considered as determining in the locality. Participation and inclusion of asylum seekers for instance as regards their housing was addressed in the generic social policies of the locality, such as the Policy plan Social Domain (2017). Integration was commonly conceived as participation and adaptation in this locality - manifesting in a recurring emphasis vis-a-vis refugees of the local culture being to leave one's curtains open. In this locality the municipality outsourced support of refugees to a national organization, the Dutch refugee council (but only for the first 18 months of settlement), as well as to a local welfare organization who offers services to all residents. In one economically stagnating locality in the **Italian** sample (Sicily), the locality proactively responded to the situation of abuses in and around the largest governmental reception center and was then put in charge for the reception program. They in turn outsourced the service provision to NGOs, who generally disagrees with the approach and role of the municipality. So, in this locality both local government and civil society organizations seemed to play a role in addressing post-2014 migrants' integration. Local officials often referred to employment as an important driver and indicator of successful integration. Conversely, NGOs often referred to the absence of social mixing and intercultural encounters in the locality, which they problematized. In the economically stagnating localities in **Spain** (both in Andalusia), there was (just in all other Spanish localities) no specific policy or strategy for the integration of foreigners – let alone that of post-2014 migrants more specifically. This however can be better explained based on the centralization of policies and lack of local self-reliance for integration policy making than as a specific characteristic of economically stagnating localities. However, one of the economically stagnating localities, had an official (within social services) responsible for "external cooperation and migrations" and "integration issues" and another locality had a social worker "specialised on immigrants" who is also the contact point for NGOs and other local actors. However, most of the local "integration work" is done by (national, regional and local) NGOs and local associations including many migrant(-led) organisations. In the economically stagnating locality in the **Swedish** context (Gävleborg) no specific local integration policy existed, although integration-related tasks were included in municipal hiring policies and antidiscrimination policies, as well as in policies regarding housing, employment, and education, reflecting a more mainstreamed approach. Integration in this locality was conceived ambiguously, with actors emphasizing the creation of cross-group relations and of equal opportunities, but also of the need that migrants would abandon their cultural traditions.

Lastly, two localities stood out as contradicting our expectations that economically stagnating localities would be more disengaged and reject the settlement of asylum seekers. This was the **Belgian** economically stagnating locality (Flanders), where we **found a rather outspoken and proactive local policy approach. This can be explained by the fact that** the mayor was coming from the same party as the Flemish minister responsible for integration (liberal party) and sought to form an alliance with the Flemish government. Local integration policymaking revolved around finding work and acquiring the Dutch language, but also antidiscrimination

and becoming a welcoming city. The locality had a local government that acted as coordinator of integration activities and the locality hired an Intercultural expert, who organized meetings with key figures from the migrant community, trained intermediary professionals on intercultural competences and ensured that the locality is now also part of the European cities against racism network (ECAR). Also in the case of the **Italian** economically stagnating city (Sicily), the local administration and grassroots initiatives made great efforts to promote the integration of post-2014 migrants, with the local administration playing a strong coordinating role. They tried to tackle the situation of severe labour and housing exploitation of seasonal workers (many of whom were post 2014 migrants), for instance by constructing a camp for these migrants. The locality's welcoming culture and tradition of easing integration was often highlighted and integration conceived as an emancipatory and two-way process.

Comparison of marginal localities

For the comparison of marginal localities, we started out from the following set of expectations:

Marginal localities	Actors	Municipal actors ambivalent, less proactive
		Much depends on civil society and/or by economic actors
	Policies	More fragmented and less coordinated

According to our expectations in most of the marginal localities under research we found a more ambivalent situation. Actors were less proactive, much depended on civil society, and anti-immigrant mobilizations took place. Some of the localities also showed more of a clear-cut picture, either in the more positive or negative sense of the term.

Policies in place, receptive and inclusive policies, municipal actors in place, engaged municipal actors	AS EXPECTED Mixed: ambiguous situation: less proactive actors, much depends on civil society, more fragmented policies, less coordinated	Lack of policies or restrictive/exclusionary policies, municipal actors missing or disengaged

AUT (Lower Austria), NL (South Holland)	SP (Valencia), GER (Lower Saxony), IT (Sicily), SE (Gävlebog, Blekinge),	BE (Wallonia), POL (Greater Poland)

In several of the marginal localities, we indeed found a more ambiguous situation, confirming our expectations. In the **Spanish** marginal locality (Valencia) (as in the other Spanish localities analyzed) no separate local integration policy and no dedicated integration official were in place. However, the locality had an intercultural mediator (within municipal social services) and local coordinator of the regional integration program. In the marginal locality studied in **Germany** (Lower Saxony) local authorities and neighborhoods struggled with the reception and accommodation of the large number of 5000 asylum seekers that arrived over 2 years and the social climate became less welcoming over time. This led to the request of an immigration stop to the regional state (Land), which was issued in 2016. However, also here the actors made some efforts, with the non-migrant population being initially rather supportive to post-2014 migrants and existing institutions adapting their offer. In the **Italian** marginal locality (Sicily) there were some local policies in place regarding the reception of asylum seekers, spatial segregation, lack of access to services in rural areas and labor exploitation. The locality also hosted two reception centers and a SAI project. At the same time the municipalities did not offer their own initiatives but focused on doing the bare minimum, seeking to enforce public order, and limiting labor exploitation. Integration in these localities was conceived by local policymakers as active participation, adjustment to majority society and laws and rules, whilst NGOs problematized the lack of interaction between the host population and newcomers. In one marginal locality in **Sweden** (Gävleborg) no specified integration policy was in place since 2018, when the municipality subsumed integration under a broader social sustainability programme. Under the heading of social sustainability, the municipality works to promote personal safety, equality, political participation, and to combat discrimination. These goals are supposed to permeate planning and day-to-day activities across all municipal services. The social sustainability programme does not single out specific target groups, but the social sustainability unit employs one integration strategist focusing primarily on how the municipality works with recently arrived refugees. This frame of social sustainability was however only mentioned by representatives of the municipality. In another **Swedish** marginal locality (Blekinge), a formal integration policy was in place with the intention to steer integration activities across the municipal organization, depicting integration as a guiding principle in all tasks related to employment, access to resources, housing, cultural activities, and so on. Main actors (as in all Swedish localities) are the local officials, local government representatives (from the majority and from the opposition), social servants and other street-level bureaucrats, and representatives of private business. Next to these actors also non-profit service providers, pro-migrant NGOs, and 'anti-migrant' organizations have a role in integration policy. Integration was framed here as self-sufficiency of migrants as well as the creation of social relations.

Counter to our expectations, some marginal localities had a very strong local policy development and advanced local actors. This was the case in the **Austrian** marginal locality (Lower Austria), where integration policy measures and an official responsible for integration were in place. Possibly this can be explained by the administrative function of this locality as capital of the regional state as well as by its proximity to the Austrian capital of Vienna. However, the offices' scope was broader than integration, focusing also on disability, sexual identity, religion and belief, indicating more of a diversity approach. There was a generally welcoming atmosphere for refugees and the locality took an inclusive approach. It organized a yearly intercultural festival, funded civil society initiatives that aimed to foster encounters. Furthermore, cultural institutions and associations of the locality took some initiatives to open their activities to refugees (choir, urban gardening, bicycle repair workshop), a parish was active in 2015 to help refugees and several non-profit service providers catered to refugees (legal advice, therapy center, center for women). In the **Dutch** marginal locality (South Holland), the municipality in 2017 has developed an "Action plan for the integration of refugees". The plan was never implemented due to a major municipal restructuring towards a neighborhood-based approach and the municipality since then has not designed a policy specifically addressing integration. However, integration is addressed in more overarching policy programs, related to economy, care, loneliness, etc. and the Coalition Agreement 2018-22 emphasizes a neighborhood approach and an integral approach to the social domain, hinting towards a more mainstreamed approach.

Also counter to our expectations, some marginal localities had nearly no policy development at all. The **Polish** marginal locality (Greater Poland), just as any of the other Polish localities, had no official integration policy and there were limited structures in place. In the **Belgian** marginal locality (Wallonia) there was no integration policy, no funding available for local initiatives and still few measures to promote integration. The general conception of integration was social cohesion, meaning in this locality that all services should be applied in the same way to everybody. There were more civil society-led initiatives, who had a more outspoken policy towards immigrant integration, with various projects, that were paying attention also to irregular migrants.

Comparison of localities in transition

For the comparison of localities in transition, we started out from the following set of expectations:

	Actors	local governments more engaged/receptive

Localities in transition	Policies	Pro-active integration policies

Somewhat in line with our expectations, several localities in transition did meet our expectation of a more ambiguous or mixed situation.

Policies in place, receptive and inclusive policies, municipal actors in place, engaged municipal actors	AS EXPECTED Mixed	Lack of policies or restrictive/exclusionary policies, municipal actors missing or disengaged
IT (Piedmont)	NL (Overijssel), AUT (Tyrol), GER (Mecklenburg-Vorpommeern)	GER (Saxony), POL (Lower Silesia), TUR (Central Anatolia)

In the **more mixed** category, the **Dutch** locality in transition (Overijssel) had adopted a 'Program integration' to support and stimulate permit holders to become self-sufficient and find employment. Integration was eventually included into a more generic "Social Agenda" in 2019, reflecting a more mainstream approach. The locality was described as a 'poor city', requiring integration as economic participation and self-sufficiency. Municipal actors recurrently referenced the Civic Integration Act, pointing to the clear role of national level policies and lamenting the insufficient funding by the national level. The **Austrian** locality in transition (Tyrol) had no separate local official in charge of integration agendas, but there was a local councilor that acted as point of contact and coordinated measures. It only partially had integration policy measures, which centered on addressing the needs arising at the refugee shelter. For mainstream services and specific integration support refugees must go to the district capital or one of the larger towns. Volunteers in this locality have been very relevant for providing language courses, finding employment, buddy systems etc. In one in-transition locality in the **German** case study (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) the municipality was considered by some respondents as initially too slow to react to the post-2014 migration and civil society has played an important role in filling the gap. Whilst we found an understanding of integration as a two-way process within the local administration, this perspective did not apply to all actors in the locality. There was an active local refugee support initiative, which later became an important partner of the local government. Eventually, the municipal administration created a new local office for refugee affairs in the administration and a working group on refugee affairs in the local council. Education providers aligned their programs and the Jobcenter developed a special unit. A challenge in the German locality was that the municipal housing company granted rental contracts only to persons with a residence

permit of a minimum of three years, making it difficult for post-2014 migrants to access this type of housing initially.

Some cases were also **not confirming our expectation** that municipal actors are engaged and proactive policies are in place in localities in transition. In the second in-transition locality in **Germany** (Saxony), there was no local official in charge of integration and no local policies. In the **Polish** locality in transition (as in all Polish localities), integration is not present in the official documents. NGOs play a significant role here in providing integration activities, relying on European funds. In the **Turkish** locality in transition (Central Anatolia) (as in all Turkish localities) no real integration policies were in place. A pro-migrant NGO functioned as an information provider for migrants looking for jobs. The municipality runs an information desk called 'turquois table' where it organized humanitarian/social assistance for all in need, including but not specifically targeting migrants.

Falling into our first category, the in-transition **Italian** locality (Piedmont) had local public and private actors that are engaged in integration projects funded by local banking foundations. The policymakers have a leading role and the locality's policies are reflecting a proactive approach.

Overall we found that, in contrast to the size of locality, the type of locality did matter to the local policy configuration. However, although many of our expectations matched our findings, we also found interesting deviations from our expectations, and we found various 'mixed bag' situations across the countries. This means that although a relation between type of locality and policy configuration seems to be there, we should not overstate this relationship and remain aware of the importance of contextualities. In particular, the differences in multi-level governance configurations between the countries (as observed in chapter 4) always needs to be taken into consideration when comparing across other levels between the selected countries.

One of our comparative findings was that indeed revitalizing communities often had a more accommodative and inclusive approach with strong engagement with municipal actors. Also we found that marginalized and transition municipalities showed mixed approaches, often somewhat accommodative and inclusive. For economically stagnating/left behind places we found much more of a mixed bag than we expected, with most cities having at least some approach in place, and some even being very active. Here too we observed that different national configurations of policies across different policy levels were an important factor to take account of in our comparison.

2.2.3. By political orientation of local government

Political orientation of local governments has often been referenced as an important predictor of the integration approach and frames of a locality (De Graauw and Vermeulen 2016, Martinez-Ariño et al 2019).

The general expectation in the literature is that localities with a politically more progressive orientation in their government would have accommodative and inclusive policies and engaged actors in place for dealing with migrant integration.

Progressive localities

In progressive localities our expectation was to clearly find more policies and actors in place as well as more receptive and inclusive frames and policies to deal with post-2014 migrant integration.

AS EXPECTED Policies in place, receptive and inclusive policies, municipal actors in place, engaged municipal actors	Mixed	Lack of policies or restrictive/exclusionary policies, municipal actors missing or disengaged
IT (Piedmont, Sicily, Piedmont), SE (Jonköping), BE (Flanders), NL (Utrecht), AUT (Lower Austria), CAN (Quebec)	GER (Lower Saxony, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), SE (Gävleborg, Gävleborg, Blekinge) SP (Valencia, Andalusia), GER (North-Rhine Westfalia), SP (Castile&Leon), CAN (Ontario, British Columbia),	BE (Wallonia)

Our analysis showed that indeed in the large majority of progressive localities our expectations were confirmed. There are also a few localities, where the situation is more mixed and one locality, where there is even a lack of policies or exclusionary/restrictive frames. When looking at these cases contradicting our expected picture more closely, other factors seem to be more influential/important for local policy-making. In the Canadian locality (Ontario), for example, the city simply has no mandate to offer any resettlement and integration services, but this lies more on the regional level. Similarly, centralized policies with the regional level being largely in control could explain the lack of policies in the Belgian progressive locality (Wallonia).

Conservative localities

For conservative local governments, we expected either a lack of policies or more restrictive and exclusionary policies and municipal actors being lacking or not very engaged.

Policies in place, receptive and inclusive policies, municipal actors in place, engaged municipal actors	Mixed	AS EXPECTED: Lack of policies or restrictive/exclusionary policies, municipal actors missing or disengaged
	IT (Sicily), SE (Scania), NL (South Holland), CAN (British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec), NL (Overijssel), AUT (Tyrol), SP (Catalonia, Andalusia, Catalonia)	AUT (Lower Austria), BE (Wallonia), TUR (Central Anatolia), IT (Sicily, Piedmont),

Our analysis confirms these expectations, supporting the view that conservative localities indeed tend to do less regarding integration or tend to restrict or counter the integration of immigrants. No conservative locality was identified that would fully contradict our expectations and have an inclusive policy and engaged municipal actors in place.

Mixed progressive/conservative

Policies in place, receptive and inclusive policies, municipal actors in place, engaged municipal actors	Mixed	Lack of policies or restrictive/exclusionary policies, municipal actors missing or disengaged
BE (Flanders), AUT (Tyrol), SE (Dalarna)	GER (Saxony-Anhalt, Lower Saxony), NL (Drenthe)	GER (Saxony), TUR (Eastern Marmara Region, Mediterranean Region)

With localities that do not have one clear political orientation in their local government, we found that these localities are rather evenly distributed across the spectrum as regards policies and actors in place.

Overall, we can conclude that political orientation seems to matter to some extent for whether or not integration is being proactively tackled and whether it is tackled in a more exclusionary or accommodative manner in medium-sized, smaller or rural localities. At the same time, political orientation cannot fully explain the presence of accommodative

integration policies and engaged actors, as we found some important outliers, where other factors (such as national policy context or economic situation) may have been at play.

Part 3: policymaking interactions related to the integration of post-2014 migrants

This section of the report shifts the focus from local policies to policy-making interactions between local governments and other actors involved in the local integration governance, asking:

- how frequently do different types of governance actors interact on issues related to the integration of post-2014 migrants?
- which type of interactions do they develop (e.g. collaborative or conflictual)?
- which factors seem to foster (or are linked to) the emergence of interactions between local governments and other governance actors?
- Has the covid-19 pandemic has affected the frequency of the interactions between different types of governance actors, in different types of localities? And how?

These are highly important questions if it is true that, as a joint report the European Commission and OECD[3] states, localities should be considered partners in a framework of multilevel governance for migrant integration, in order to inform national and EU policy through their experience on the ground, to capitalize on the more positive experiences and build effective policies.

Dealing with these questions, this section produces three key findings. First, it shows that the size of localities, the political affiliation of local governments and the experience with cultural diversity of localities influence the frequency and nature of policymaking interactions developed by our SMsTRA. In particular, we show that medium towns, progressive towns, and towns with higher experience with cultural diversity develop more frequent and more collaborative policymaking interactions with other actors involved in the governance of post-2014 migrants' integration. Second, we show that integration-related policymaking interactions have (dramatically) decreased after the start of the pandemic, particularly in rural areas.

As for the previous section, we proceed in our more detailed analysis by comparing different types of localities. We first compare localities with different size. Second, we compare localities with local governments with different political affiliations. Third, we compare localities with different structural factors and experience with cultural diversity. Finally, we develop some synthetic indexes to understand which types of localities tend to be more proactive in integration governance.

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[3]   Source: https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/working-together-local-integration-migrants-and-refugees_en

The analysis is largely based on elaboration of the quantitative data collected through an online survey filled in by 67 local officials and local elected policymakers across 7 EU countries (Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain and Sweden). When filling in this survey, interviewees were asked to assess the frequency of their interactions concerning issues related to the integration of post-2014 migrants with a predetermined list of actors (on a temporal scale of 0 to 5), in two different time periods (2016-2019; 2020-2021), and to assess how collaborative/conflictual these interactions were (on a scale of 1 to 5). We elaboratd on these data calculating average scores and aggregating these scores distinguishing between horizontal interactions (i.e. interactions of local governments with a wide range of civil society actors and the private sector), vertical interactions (i.e. interactions of local governments with regional and national governments and the EU), internal interactions (within the local government). These quantitative insights were complemented by a qualitative analysis of the interview material.

3.1. Comparison by size of locality

Figure 4.1 below illustrates the frequency of integration-related interactions (henceforth: interactions) between our 67 policymakers and officials and other actors involved in the integration governance system in the time period 2020-2021 and how this frequency varies across medium towns, small towns and rural areas.

Panel a of the figure focuses on horizontal interactions between the policymakers/officials and a range of civil society actors and the business sector. Overall, interactions range between a score of 1 ("occasional interactions") and 2 ("2 or 3 times per year"), with the main exception of anti-migrant groups or extreme right movements, that seem to be absent in most of the studied localities. Remarkably, policymakers/officials in medium-sized towns seem to develop much more intense interactions – particularly with non-public service providers – compared to policymakers/officials in small towns and rural areas.

Panel b shifts the focus to vertical interactions between local policymakers/officials and governmental actors at higher level of government (and other local governments). In this case, the size of localities seems to play an even more crucial role: policymakers and officials in medium towns develop more frequent interactions with regional governments, national MPs, national governments, and with other local governments. Remarkably, interactions with the EU level are almost entirely absent in the vast majority of SMsTRA.

Panel c of the figure illustrates the frequency of interactions between the officials and policymakers interviewed and other actors within the local government (councilors, public social services, and other policymakers or officials). The figure once again suggests that there are more frequent interactions related to migrant integration within local governments of medium towns, compared to small towns and rural areas, although variation between small and medium towns is less evident than in panels a and b. Overall, our data suggest that elected

policymakers in medium and small towns are involved in discussions or exchanges that concern immigrant integration in their localities at least once a week (average frequency = 4).

Panel d, finally, aggregates different scores and therefore summarizes the insights produced by previous panels. It once again shows that the frequency of horizontal, vertical and within local governments interactions seems to be related to the size of the localities. Furthermore, it suggests that policymaking interactions occur first and foremost within the local government, but also that horizontal interactions are more frequent than vertical interactions.

Figure 3.1. Frequency of interactions of elected policymakers and local officials with other actors in 2020-2021 in different types of localities (scale: 0=no interactions to 5=daily interactions).
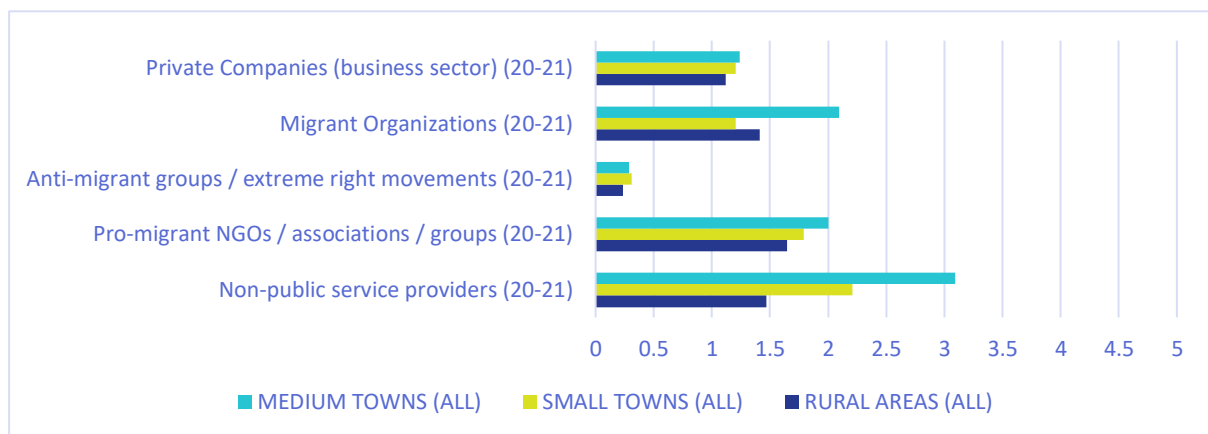

Panel a. Horizontal interactions.

Key findings: overall, size seems to be linked to interactions with civil society actors, but not with the private sector, while anti-migrant groups are absent or have no interactions with the local government in most localities.
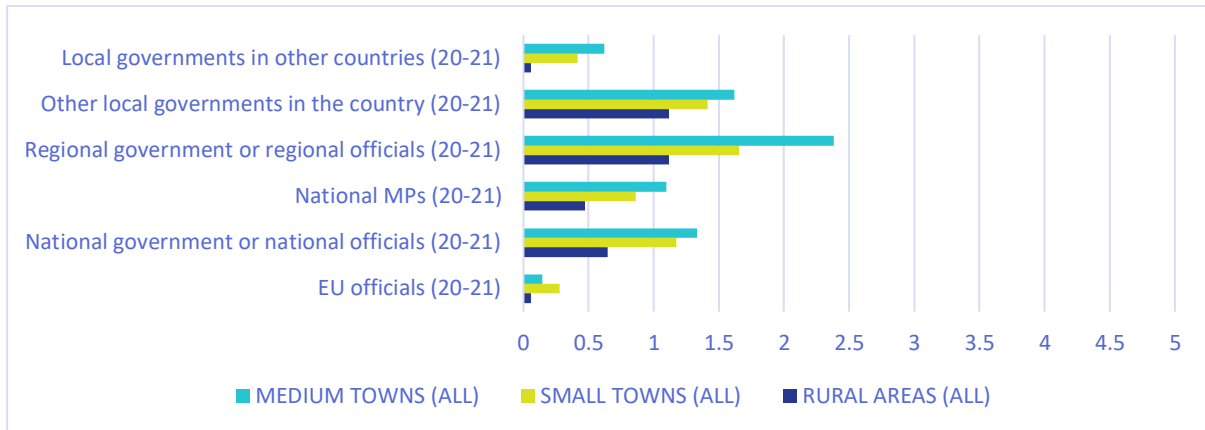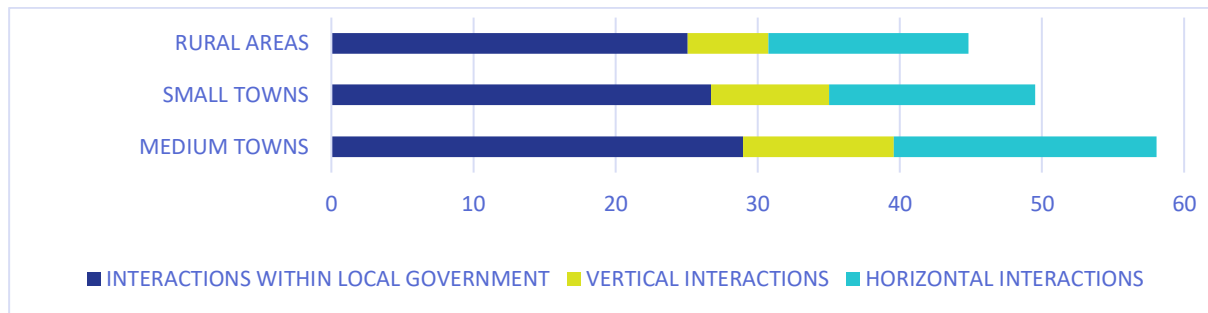
Panel b. Vertical interactions.

Key findings: overall, size seems to be linked to interactions with regional and national governments and other local governments. Most of these interactions are only occasional (scores close to 1). There are almost no interactions between EU officials and the local government in most localities.
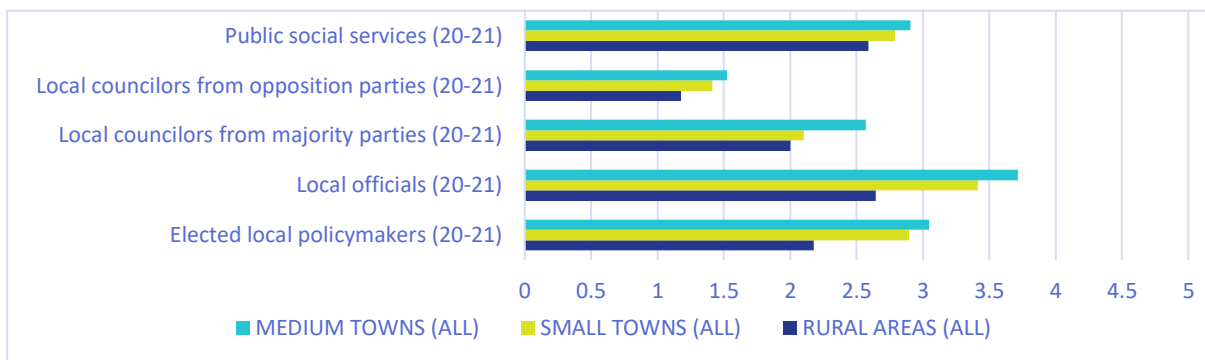
Panel c. Interactions within Local Government.

Key findings: overall, size seems to be linked to interactions with regional and national governments and other local governments. Most of these interactions are only occasional (scores close to 1). There are almost no interactions between EU officials and the local government in most localities.

Panel d. Sum of interactions with different types of actors.

Key findings: overall, size seems to be linked to the frequency of horizontal, vertical and within local governments interactions. Interactions occur first and foremost within the local government. Horizontal interactions are more frequent than vertical interactions.

Further elaborations of our data allow us to assess changes over time in the interactions between different types of actors involved in local integration governance. We focus in particular on two time periods analyzed (2017-2019 and 2020-2021). Figure 4.2 illustrates our findings, disaggregated between localities with different sizes. The figure crucially suggests that integration-related interactions have become much less frequent in the most recent time period, with an average decrease of around 1 point in our temporal scale. The observed variation highly differs across localities of different types and concerning interactions with different types of actors. The decrease in governance interactions is much higher in rural areas compared to small and medium towns. Furthermore, it is particularly high in the case of interactions within local governments (compared to vertical and horizontal interactions), suggesting that in the more recent time period local officials and policymakers discuss much less issues related to migrant integration between them. There is one remarkable exception, which contradicts the overall trend: interactions with national governments and institutions have (slightly) increased in the most recent period. This finding is consistent across the different EU countries, with the only exception of the Netherlands.

Of course, assessing the reason why integration-related interactions have experienced this remarkable change after the end of 2019 is not necessarily straightforward. Our interview material suggests several possible explanations. First, this might be due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Particularly in 2020, the pandemic created major obstacles for the development of governance interactions[4], as reported by several interviewees. In addition to that, some interviewees noticed that the pandemic shifted the attention of officials and policymakers (and economic resources too) to other more salient issues, for instance related to the

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[4] Importantly, our survey referred very broadly to "interactions" or "exchanges" between actors, without necessarily referring to 'in person meeting'

management of the pandemic and its effects. Furthermore, our interview material suggests that the above-described change in governance interactions might be related to the decreasing salience and politicization of the migration issue, the lower number of arrivals of newcomers in these localities, and/or the gradual inclusion of post-2014 migrants within the local community (and the less pressing need for local authorities to deal with this issue). The observed increase in interactions with national governments seems to be related instead to the consequences of the pandemic. In Italy, for instance, the regularization law adopted by the national government in 2020 to face labor shortages in key economic sectors after the first lockdown, might explain the higher number of interactions between local and national governments.

Figure 3.2. Change in frequency of interactions of elected policymakers and local officials with other actors between the time-period 2020-2021 and the time period 2016-2019, in different types of localities (positive values are linked to increase in frequency).
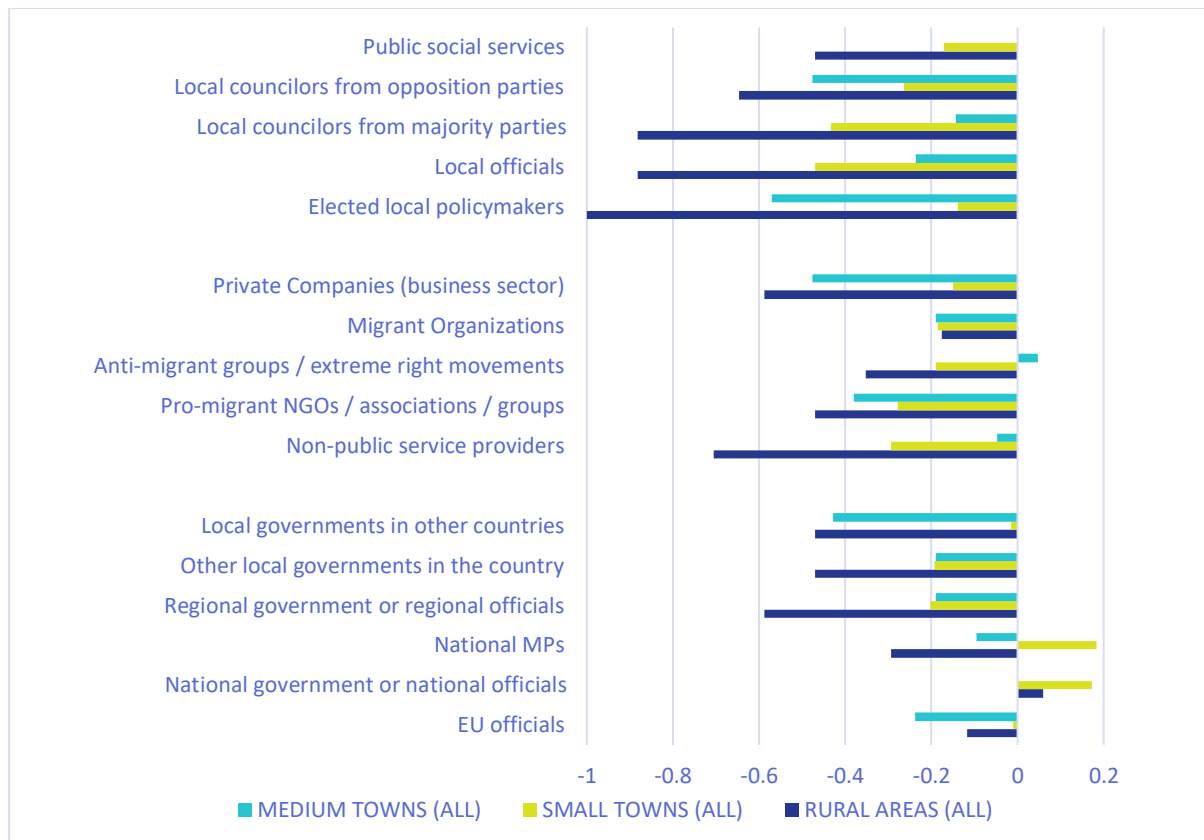
Key findings: overall, frequency of interactions related to migrant integration between local governments and all the other actors has significantly decreased after 2020 (with the only exception of interactions with national governments). Interactions within local government have decreased more than horizontal and vertical interactions. Interactions have decreased more in rural areas than in bigger towns.

Finally, figure 4.3 provides interesting insights on the type of interactions among local officials and policymakers and other actors. Overall, interactions between local governments and all the other actors are described as collaborative or very collaborative. Conflictual interactions emerge, not surprisingly, with anti-migrant groups, and conflicts also emerge between local governments and local councilors from opposition parties, which suggests that in many small localities immigrant integration remains a polarized (if not politicized) political issue. As the figure shows, internal interactions are more collaborative than horizontal and (even more) vertical interactions. Less collaborative interactions develop, in particular, between local governments and national governments and institutions. Furthermore, internal horizontal and vertical interactions are less collaborative in rural areas compared to small and medium towns.

Figure 3.3. Nature of interactions between elected policymakers/local officials and other actors, in different types of localities (scale: "-2=very conflictual" to "2=very collaborative").


Key findings: interactions within the local government are more collaborative than horizontal interactions and (even more) vertical interactions. Overall, all types of interactions are less collaborative in rural areas than in small towns and medium towns.

In sum, we found that size mattered to interactions between integration-related actors. Overall, medium sized towns had more interactions than small towns, who had more interactions than rural areas. Also, in all localities interactions were primarily of an horizontal kind between public actors and civil society actors, followed by interactions between municipalities. All municipalities, but in particular rural areas, had least 'vertical' interactions (with other levels of government).

3.2. Comparison by political affiliation of local governments

Figure 4.4 illustrates the frequency of interactions between elected local policymakers with different political affiliations and other actors involved in the integration governance system, in localities of different size[5]. Our analyses suggest that progressive policymakers tend to develop much more intense interactions with civil society actors, across all types of localities (although differences are less evident in rural areas). In particular, progressive policymakers in small and medium towns, unlike their conservative colleagues, develop very regular interactions with non-public service providers and pro-migrant groups, which might signal a more proactive involvement in integration policy-making and policy implementation. In the case of vertical interactions the differences between progressive and conservative policymakers are less pronounced. Progressive policymakers, however, particularly in small and medium towns, seem to develop more frequent vertical interactions, which might be again related to a more proactive involvement in integration policymaking. As to interactions within local governments, our data suggest some relevant variation. Particularly in the case of small towns, progressive policy-makers are more often involved in interactions with other actors within the local government, such as local councilors and public social services.

Figure 3.4. Frequency of interactions of elected policymakers with different political affiliations with other actors in 2020-2021 in different types of localities (original scale: 0=no interactions to 5=daily interactions; the figure shows aggregated scores for horizontal internal and vertical interactions).
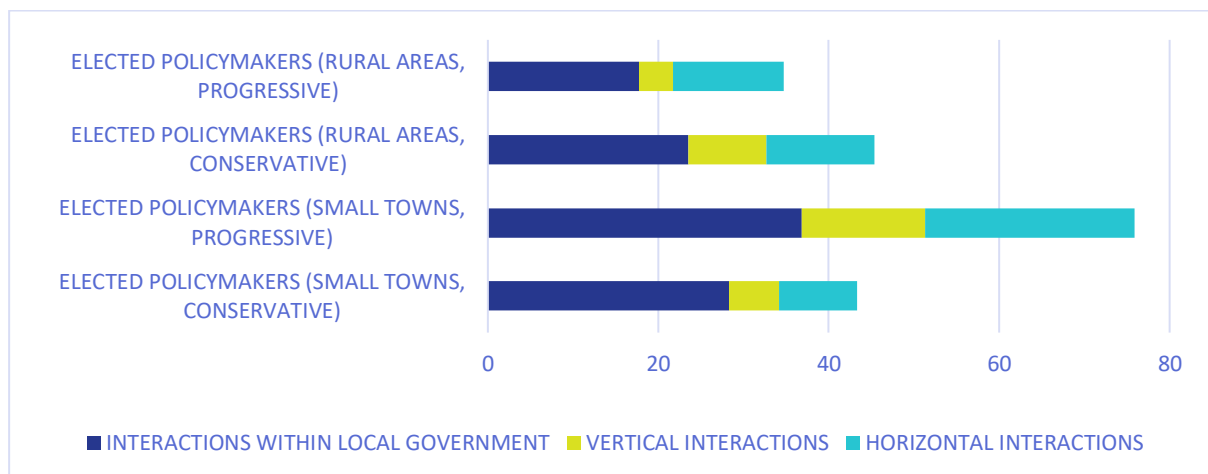
[5] Due to the very low number of conservative policymakers within medium towns that filled in our survey, this category was not included in figure 4.4.

A different question is whether the political affiliation of local governments influences the horizontal and vertical interactions developed by top-level local officials, who are not elected, and most of whom maintain their positions when new elections lead to new parties controlling the local government. Our analyses reveal very little variation, overall, across different types of localities, particularly in the case of vertical interactions. However, our findings suggest that local officials within progressive medium towns develop more interactions with, particularly, migrant organizations and non-public service providers compared to local officials in conservative towns, which might be related to the more proactive mobilization of progressive localities towards civil society.

Our data also reveal some interesting variation in patterns of interaction of local elected policymakers and local officials. In particular, we elaborated our data in order to understand whether it is policymakers or local officials that 'take the lead' in developing policymaking interactions in different types of localities. As far as vertical interactions are concerned, across all types of localities and regardless of the political affiliations of local governments, these interactions are conducted by local elected policymakers. As far as horizontal interactions are concerned, the data conversely suggests that the internal 'division of labor' between elected policymakers and officials varies remarkably across localities of different size and depending on the affiliation of local governments. In conservative small towns and rural areas, interactions with civil society and the private sector are mainly developed by local officials. In progressive rural areas and small and medium towns, elected policymakers are much more proactive: either they develop more interactions than local officials (in small towns), or the division of labor between officials and policymakers is very balanced (in the case of rural areas and medium towns). Interactions within the local government are mainly developed by officials in rural areas, independently of their political affiliation, while in bigger localities (and particularly progressive small towns) elected policymakers are more intensively involved.

It is also insightful to look at variations over time in the patterns outlined so far. Overall, by comparing interactions in 2017-2019 and interactions in 2020-2021, what emerges is a slightly more visible decrease in the frequency of interactions of conservative policymakers in small towns and rural areas, compared to their progressive colleagues. In the case of local officials, no remarkable pattern seems to emerge, across conservative and progressive localities.

Finally, as to the nature of policymakers' interactions, our data suggest that more collaborative interactions are developed by progressive policy-makers with civil society actors, particularly in small and medium towns. No remarkable pattern emerges in the case of vertical interactions. As to interactions within the local government, the main insight concerns the much more conflictual interactions within local councils in progressive rural areas compared to conservative ones.

In sum, we found that political orientation, as expected, does matter to the interactions that local government actors have. We found progressive local policymakers tend to have more interactions, to be more pro-active in these interactions, and to engage more with civil society

actors and migrant organisations. So here we can see a relation between their overall political orientation and their actual policymaking interactions, in line with their political philosophy.

3.3. Comparison by type of locality

Sections 4.1 and 4.2 have shown that the size of localities and the political affiliation of local governments seem to remarkably influence the intensity and type of interaction developed by local governments with other actors involved in integration governance. This section in turn, aims to identify trends in actors' interactions across different types of localities, i.e. localities characterized by better-off or worse-off economic and demographic conditions and by high or low experience with cultural diversity. Overall, this set of variables seems to explain much less the intensity of interactions of officials and policymakers with other actors in the time period 2020-2021.

As figure 4.5 shows, in the case of small towns, more frequent interactions are developed by policymakers and officials in localities with higher experience with cultural diversity. Our data also suggest that localities with unfavorable structural conditions (marginal and economically stagnating) tend to develop more vertical interactions and particularly, more frequent interactions with the national level. This might be related to a delegation of responsibilities on integration to national institutions or to more proactive requests for support from the national level in managing integration issues (e.g. as a consequence of the difficult economic situation in these localities). Similar, but less clear, patterns emerge in the case of the different types of rural areas and medium towns.

Figure 3.5. Sum of frequency of vertical/horizontal/within local government interactions of elected policymakers and local officials in 2020-2021 in small towns.
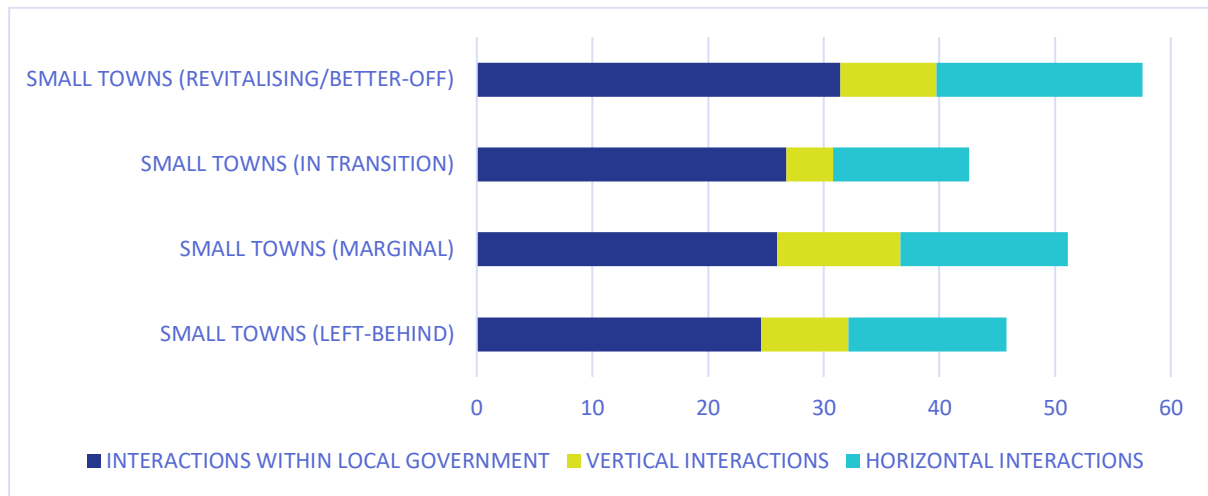
Panel b. Small towns.

Key findings: vertical interactions are more frequent in revitalizing small towns. No clear patterns emerge for horizontal interactions and interactions within local governments.

We have conducted some additional analyses to identify patterns of change in governance interactions between the two time-periods analyzed, across different types of localities. While in the case of rural areas and small towns no remarkable pattern seems to emerge across the four types of localities, in the case of medium towns our data suggest that interactions between officials/policymakers and other actors have decreased particularly in those with worse economic and demographic conditions, while they have remained much more stable in revitalising/better-off localities. This finding might be related to more negative consequences of the covid-19 pandemic (and the related economic crisis) in localities with a more disadvantaged economic and demographic situation before 2020.

So, finally we observed that, as expected, revitalizing municipalities had more interactions than the other types of localities. However, we did not find any clear patterns for the other types of localities. Also, we found that marginal and economically stagnating municipalities had relatively many vertical interactions, indicating that these cities perhaps have a strong relationship with the national level.

3.4. Summary indexes

To conclude, we have created three summary indexes through further elaborations of the collected data:

- Index1 = the sum of all the interactions of interviewees with the actors listed in our survey for the time period 2017-2019;
- Index 2 = the sum of all the interactions of interviewees with the actors listed in our survey for the time period 2020-2021;
- Index 3 = Index 1 + Index 2 (it corresponds to the sum of all the interactions of interviewees with the actors listed in our survey for both time periods).
- Index 4 = Index 2 – Index 1 (it corresponds to the change in the frequency of all interactions of each interviewee between the two time periods).

By comparing the resulting scores for different types of localities, (Figure 4.6 illustrates scores for Index 3) we can identify which localities are those who are more proactive in integration policy-making.

Figure 3.6. Summary index (index3) of total interactions between officials and/or policymakers with all the other actors listed in our survey in the two time-periods 2017-2019 and 2020-2021 (disaggregated per different type of interaction[6]).
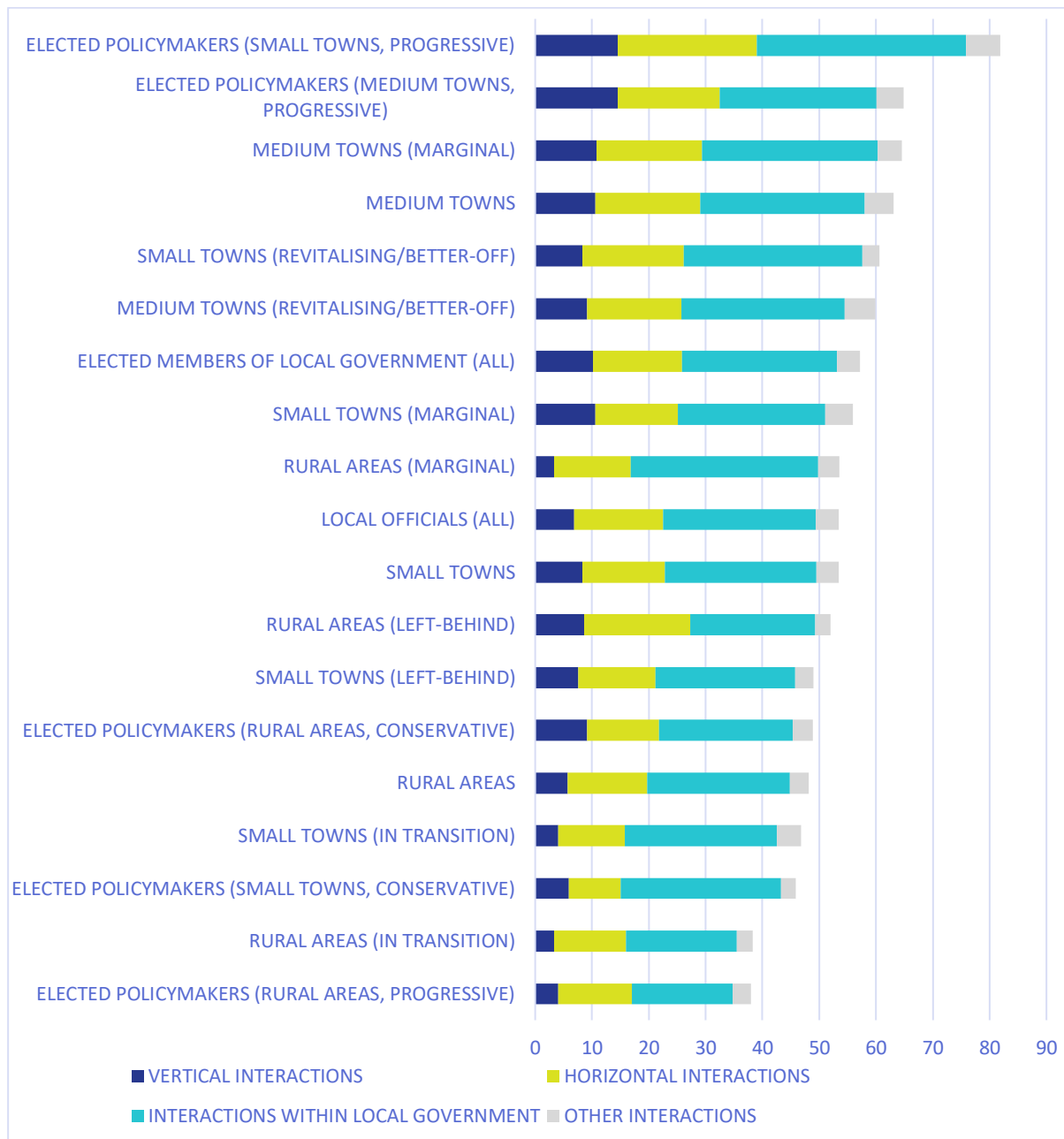
Key finding: the frequency of policymaking interactions developed by European localities seems to be influenced by their size, the political affiliation of their local governments and their experience with cultural diversity.

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[6] Other interactions include interactions with other local governments (within and outside the country).

Three key insights emerge from figure 4.13. First, not surprisingly, integration governance interactions seem to be more developed in bigger localities and much less developed in rural areas. Second, political affiliation of local governments seems crucial to explain the mobilization of small and medium towns, with progressive localities mobilizing much more than conservative localities. Third, the experience with cultural diversity of the studied localities (and to a lesser extent their favourable or unfavourable structural conditions) seems to be also linked with the total score obtained in figure 4.13: overall, integration governance interactions are more developed in revitalizing/better-off localities and marginal localities, and less developed in economically stagnating localities and localities in transition.

Finally, Figure 4.7 illustrates the scores obtained for index4 by different types of localities. In other words, the figure tells us how the total number of interactions related to migrant integration has changed between the pre-pandemic and post-pandemic time-periods in different types of localities. The figure crucially suggests that rural areas have experienced the most remarkable decrease in the total number of integration-related interactions between the two time-periods. In the case of medium towns, a strong difference emerges between revitalizing localities (that did not experience a remarkable change in the total number of interactions) and marginal localities, as the latter experienced a very remarkable decrease. The picture is more mixed in the case of small towns.

Figure 3.7. Summary Index (Index 4) representing change in the total interactions between officials and/or policymakers with all the other actors listed in our survey between the two time periods 2017-2019 and 2020-2021 (positive scores correspond to increase in total interactions).

Key finding: Policymaking interactions have decreased much more during the pandemic period in rural areas compared to bigger towns. In the case of medium towns, interactions have decreased much more in marginal compared to revitalizing localities.

Conclusion

Based on insights from 8 EU countries as well as Turkey and Canada, we compared policies as regards post-2014 migrant integration in small and medium-sized localities and rural areas and their and multi-level governance relations. Our objective was to develop a better understanding of differences in local policy approaches and to get a view of dynamics of governance networks of local public and non-public stakeholders in SMsTRA. Following some of the recent literature on the local turn in migration studies, we focused on differences in size, in type of locality and on political orientation as factors that could possibly account for differences in such local policy approaches and local patterns of interactions.

However, in order to compare small and medium-sized localities and rural areas across different settings, one first needs to understand the different (institutional, political, administrative) contexts in which they are situated. We found that the localities operate within very different multi-level policymaking configurations, complicating our comparison. In some countries there is much more emphasis on national policies and local policies play a lesser role, whereas in others there is a strong regional level as well, or national policies leave much space for localities. This means that different approaches and interaction patterns will not only be influenced by differences in size, type of locality and political orientation, but also differences in context. What we did find in Part 1 of this Report was that whereas differences in national context may matter significantly for SMsTRA, relations with the EU seem to be very limited. We can conclude that the EU level, while emphasizing the role of the local level, has often based its policies on the realities of larger cities and metropoles. Also in existing fora of policy deliberation on the EU level, voices from smaller localities and rural areas seem to be largely absent or have limited weight. Overall, Part 1 of this Report raises critical questions for future research on the multi-level governance relations or the absence thereof as regards the funding of migrant integration activities and the (dis)advantage of smaller localities as opposed to regions, metropolitan areas and larger municipalities in receiving support and funding from the EU for migrant integration.

Examining the extent to which SMsTRA have created policies and put municipal actors in place to deal with the integration of post-2014 migrants, which is the topic of Part 2 of this Report, we found that from our 49 sampled localities 12 localities had accommodating policies and dedicated municipal actors in place, 13 had no (accommodating) policies and (dedicated) actors in place or had restrictive policies or disengaged actors, and 24 localities were positioned somewhere in between these two extremes.

To account for such differences as mentioned above, a first key factor is size. However, in this respect, we did not find a clear pattern in terms of type of policy approaches but we did find interesting patterns in terms of interactions. More specifically, we find more intense interactions amongst local actors and between local and national level in medium-sized towns (but not with the EU level, for which MLG relations are nearly absent for all SMsTRA). In rural areas, policymaking interactions between policymakers and all types of actors are less

frequent and less collaborative. We showed that the difference in size between rural areas, small localities and medium-sized localities does not seem to have any explanatory value for the policy approaches and actors mobilised in these places.

Regarding the factor type of locality, we found that (as expected) revitalizing municipalities had significantly more interactions (especially horizontal and internal) and in general had a more accommodative and inclusive approach to migrant incorporation. The patterns for the other types were a bit more mixed, with some of our findings on economically stagnating municipalities showing a more active approach than we had expected. Interestingly, we saw that marginalized and economically stagnating localities had a relatively strong engagement in vertical interactions, especially with national government.

Finally, we found that political orientation matters significantly both to the type of policy approach and the density of governance networks, as was expected. We found that cities with progressive policy actors often developed a more accommodative and inclusive approach. We also found that political orientation matters for relationships between stakeholders at the local level and with other levels of government, whilst economic and demographic conditions play less of a role. Furthermore, political affiliation is crucial to explain mobilization of small and medium-sized towns, with progressive local policymakers developing more frequent and more collaborative interactions with civil society actors than conservative policymakers. The experience of localities with cultural diversity also seems to positively influence the total number of policymaking interactions in which policymakers are involved.

Hence, we conclude that many of the towns and rural areas in which we carried out our research have put accommodating policies and dedicated actors in place. Not all SMsTRA have done so, however. Particularly in economically struggling localities, localities of more conservative leaning, and localities in highly centralized systems we frequently find a lack of policies and actors to deal with post-2014 integration of immigrants or a restrictive or disengaged management of integration.

In other words, local characteristics (size, economic development, political orientations), national institutional frameworks (unitary state or federalist systems, centralization or decentralization of integration policies) and European policies and funding (with currently a rather generic approach of 'the local level') are highly relevant for understanding the preparedness of smaller localities in accommodating the arrival of newcomers. Exceptions exist and leadership of local policymakers apparently could tilt a policy situation into one way or another.

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Appendix

Table 2List of EU documents analyzed

	Document name	Publisher	Publication date
1	Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027	European commission	2020
2	A base-placed approach to migrant integration: sustainable urban development strategies and the integration of migrants in functional urban areas	European commission	2021
3	Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees: Action plan 2021-2022	Urban agenda for the EU	2021
4	Action plan on the integration of third country nationals	European commission	2016
5	Local inclusion of migrants and refugees: A gateway to existing ideas, resources and capacities for cities across the world	OECD	2020
6	Integration of migrants in middle and small cities and rural areas in Europe	European committee of the Regions- Commission for Citizenship, Governance and Institutional and External Affairs	2020

Table 3 List of EU and supranational experts interviewed

Respondent No.	Role + type of organization anonymized
R1	Director of international NGO in the field of migration

R2	Employee of international think-tank working on migration and integration policymaking
R3	Employee European Commission (DG HOME)
R4	Two representatives of European city network
R5	Employee at European network working on education
R6	Two employees at OECD
R7	Employee at international NGO working on topic of migration and integration
R8	Employee at Council of European Municipalities and Regions

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