



European Urban  
Knowledge Network



**Inspire policy making by territorial evidence**

## ESPON Policy Brief

# Territorial and urban aspects of migration and refugee inflow

*Europe has witnessed an inflow of a large number of people over the last years. As a consequence of the geopolitical instability in the Middle East and Africa, migration and refugee flows towards Europe have increased with significant territorial impacts on European countries, regions and cities. This situation has resulted in the largest movement of people to European countries since the Second World War. It brings challenges for regions and cities but also territorial development opportunities.*

*Indeed, the recent events related to the Syrian civil war and the subsequent influx of refugees towards Europe have increased the need to define effective measures in Europe, its regions and cities need new approaches in managing this unprecedented migration crisis. Many efforts are already in place in welcoming and managing the many migrants and refugees. Moreover, while a European response is currently being debated it is important to learn and be aware of the territorial and urban aspects of the current refugee inflow to Europe.*

### Challenges and opportunities for Europe, its regions and cities

The number of migrants is growing and migration flows are increasingly complex due to the current refugee crisis. The ongoing conflict in Syria, the instability in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Lebanon and other countries in the Middle East and different parts of Africa is very likely to force more and more people to seek asylum in Europe which could bring along even larger migration flows in the future. In addition, the demographic and economic factors especially in Sub-Saharan African countries as well as high poverty and unemployment rates in the Western Balkans may further aggravate this challenge.

Also, the situation is deteriorating for the large number of refugees in many of the countries in the neighbouring areas of the conflict zones like Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt where the lack of overall aid, education options and rising unemployment are pushing the refugees to continue their search for asylum in Europe. Furthermore, climate change suggests the need to prepare for significant refugee flows in the coming decades.

The rapid growth in inflows towards Europe, the large variety of routes, the diversity of countries of origin and underlying motives for displacement make the current refugee crisis particularly complex to address. Asylum applications are growing in numbers and many of the countries that have been accepting refugees are beginning to implement more restrictive policies, which shift the pressure towards the southern borders of Europe.

Beyond the immediate humanitarian urgency to provide asylum seekers with shelter, food and medical aid, the key challenge is to ensure the integration of the large number of people that intend

to stay in the EU and identify opportunities for cities and regions in Europe. Well managed integration should be seen as an investment that will pay off in the long run. Migrants with good chances to access the labour market may bring new skills and experiences and contribute to innovation and to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Migrants and refugees coming to Europe often belong to economically active age groups and can provide diversified skills that could support the economy and reduce labour shortages, particularly in many of Europe's ageing societies. Therefore, migrants could contribute to the future development of European regions and cities and enhance their resilience.

Harnessing this potential depends upon the development of comprehensive tailor-made integration measures that meet the individual needs concerning the vast number of countries of origin and different educational, language and cultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, considering that cities are important and attractive places for migrants and refugees, inclusion measures and policies should be an integrated element in the urban policy agenda and as well addressed in regional and local development strategies.

Welcoming the diversity of new residents brings substantial urban challenges, such as potential residential segregation when certain ethnicities, nationalities or a socioeconomic status concentrate in particular neighbourhoods of a city or metropolitan area.

Cities located in arrival, transit and destination countries in Europe are finding themselves in an especially critical position with regards to the social, humanitarian and financial consequences of the refugee challenge. Regardless of specific competences at different governance levels, it is typically up to municipalities to ensure that asylum seekers settle in well for the duration of their stay, however short or long it may be. This situation requires systematic and coordinated efforts at local level involving a range of stakeholders. This could enable asylum seekers to make a contribution to their host societies and could prevent long term costs for local and national authorities (EUROCITIES).

Local authorities are supposed to manage this temporary reception of asylum seekers in front-line and transit cities. They need to offer asylum seekers temporary accommodation until a decision has been taken about their status. Once the asylum seeker has received a status, either as a refugee or as a person receiving humanitarian protection, local authorities play a role in ensuring housing and starting with the integration processes of the beneficiary into the host society.

In general, regional and local authorities do not only have to implement national policies, but often have to develop ad hoc measures. Here a key issue in improving the local responses are better coordination, more knowledge and exchange of practices, including initiatives taken by local NGOs and citizen platforms (EUKN).

Achieving an inclusive and integrated approach tackling both the urgent and the medium-long term asylum seekers challenge requires governance in partnership. All levels of governments need to complement their respective strategy and action. This crisis, along with the current international instability calls for a change in addressing the way governments plan and implement actions and public services (CEMR).

#### Meaning of the terms asylum seeker, refugee, migrant and transit migration

**Migrant** corresponds to a person moving to another country with the intention to stay for a certain period of time. It includes people with a valid residence permit or visa, asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants. The term migrant is used as a generic term to describe flows or movements of people.

**Asylum** is a form of international protection given by a state on its territory and it is granted to a person who is unable to seek protection in the country of citizenship and/or residence, in particular for fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion.

**Asylum seekers** are persons who have formally submitted a request for asylum. In practice, some asylum seekers obtain some form of humanitarian migrant status and is granted some sort of protection such as refugee status. If denied asylum, the asylum seeker has the obligation to leave the country. People remaining after being denied asylum become undocumented migrants.

There are also many people that don't apply for asylum, either because they do not want stay in the country through which they transit, or because they know their prospects for obtaining humanitarian migrant status are reduced. These people are also considered as **undocumented migrants**.

**Transit migration** applies to a wide set of people temporarily staying in a place other than their origin or destination. Transit migration includes mixed flows of different types of temporary migrants, including refugees.

Sources: OECD, 2015 and Franck Düvell et al, 2014.

### Key messages for policy consideration

The influx of migrants, especially considering refugees and asylum seekers, is likely to remain a major challenge for the EU, which requires specific attention and policy initiatives.

The current refugee flows towards Europe and migration issues in general have clear territorial and urban dimensions.

The most important territorial and urban aspects to be considered by policymakers appear to be the following:

- Overall inflow of migrants from outside of Europe, including refugees, is expected to increase in the near future. According to Eurostat, 720,000 migrants and refugees have entered the EU since January 2015, compared to 560,000 for the entire 2014. United Nation estimates Europe's refugee flows to reach 1 million in 2015. This equals to approximately 0.2% of the entire population of the EU (508.2 million, 1 January 2015), however the impact on different regions and cities is highly diverse.
- The influx of migrants towards Europe creates major pressure in many countries and regions in Europe, but particularly in Italy, Greece and Hungary, as well as in Turkey. These countries are on the front line as main entry points to Europe. However, refugees are mainly transiting through these countries to more attractive places as some of these countries in particular in Southern Europe have been hit the hardest by the economic crisis.
- The main routes chosen by migrants and refugees to Europe go via Italy, Greece and Hungary. However, attention should also be given to other places under pressure with regard to a growing number of refugees but less significant in terms of volume in the European context, such as for example the Northern Norwegian border municipality of Sør-Varanger (Kirkenes) and transit cities or municipalities in Czech Republic, Serbia and Croatia since a large number of people is entering and leaving the country on daily and sometimes hourly basis.
- Refugee flows are mainly directed towards countries with the most favourable economic conditions such as strong job markets and to places with the most attractive and inclusive integration policies in place. Currently, Germany has accepted the largest number of migrants in absolute terms while Sweden has taken in the most refugees relative to the country's population.
- Municipalities, cities and towns in arrival, transit and destination countries in Europe play a special role regarding the social, humanitarian and financial assistance needed in relation to the current refugee flows. It is most often the cities where asylum seekers wait for a decision on their refugee status and where aid and necessary services are provided to them, their families and children. It is also in cities where undocumented migrants often remain if their asylum applications are rejected (EUROCITIES). Coordinating efforts among European cities in defining approaches and mobilizing resources could support cities in this process.
- Small islands, municipalities and cities in border regions face challenges of providing services to receive and take care of a large inflow of migrants in relation to the local population. In larger cities, concerns are more related to housing, access to schools and ethnic segregation. Governments should pay attention to the balance with the local population when establishing (temporary) centres for asylum seekers around small and rural municipalities.
- Migrants and refugees arriving to Europe are very diverse and entail a large heterogeneity in terms of education, skills, culture and language. In practical terms, this diversity is important for the means of integration of people into society and labour markets.

- Migrants and refugees may stabilise local labour markets and help reducing demographic and economic imbalances in regions and cities and support the European economy, especially outside the strong performing regions and larger cities. Under the condition of available resources for the necessary integration, allocation of new citizens into regions and cities that show signs of decline or depopulation might contribute to balanced and polycentric development within the European territory.
- Distribution of accepted refugees within countries should take into account the needs of local labour markets, (as well as refugees).
- Effective integration policies and efforts need to be put in place at regional and urban level to ensure that potential regional and local benefits are unleashed, including support in finding jobs, housing, social services, education, health care, etc. Bottom up approaches involving different actors, levels of governance and with the help and cooperation with all stakeholders, local inhabitants, civil society organisations and employers seem to be key factors for an effective and successful integration policy.
- Multi-level governance arrangements should ensure that regulations have no adverse impact on the integration of refugees, including on funding opportunities, knowledge exchange and cooperation with municipalities and other stakeholders.
- Without proper support for integration, lack of planning and inclusion measures, timely asylum procedures, reception centres offering language courses, possibilities to work, education for children, contacts with local residents, psychological assistance, etc, in other words altogether unfavourable conditions for the integration of refugees, risks exist that negative developments in society will evolve and make integration even harder.
- Early investment in integration is essential and has proven itself to pay off in the long run. Past experience with the reception of significant number of refugees and migrants has shown that, in the longer term, not investing in integration facilities and support leads to higher economic and social costs in terms of unemployment, social benefits, poor school performance, social tensions, segregations, etc.
- Competition on the local housing market between recognized refugees and native population all looking for affordable (social) housing seems to be a particular issue for consideration. The rising numbers of refugees and the shortage of housing could bolster segregation and hinder their integration into local society.
- Despite the recovery in many countries, public services and budgets are still under a lot of pressure due to the economic and financial crisis, hindering the capability to finance integration efforts.
- Potential financial support to cities, as advocated in recent debates involving organisations such as EUROCITIES and CEMR should be considered. Direct access for local governments to Asylum Migration & Integration Fund (AMIF) or to EU emergency assistance would help to ease the pressures of the current crisis. Also, there is a need for a stronger focus on integration in the European Agenda for Migration.
- EU Cohesion Policy may play a role in respect of providing finance, e.g. by allocating funds for implementing integration policy initiatives in regions facing labour shortage or with ongoing depopulation or with specific development challenges which could support economic, social as well as territorial cohesion.
- European regions and cities have a crucial role to play in developing effective and long-term solutions to unleash the opportunities that a successful social and economic integration of refugees may bring.

## Facts and trends in a territorial context: Highlights on refugee flows and migrants

### Refugees entering Europe

- By the end of 2014, refugees and asylum seekers accounted for 16.2 million people in the world. Around 10% of the world's refugees have been granted asylum in Europe (UNCHR, 2015).
- 1.66 million people submitted applications for asylum in the world in 2014 alone, the highest figure ever. And the number is on the rise: 438,000 refugees applied for asylum in Europe by July 2015, compared to 571,000 for the entire 2014 (UNCHR, 2015).
- Over 60% of the world's refugees live in urban areas and this figure has gradually increased (UNCHR, 2015).
- In 2014, the top three countries hosting the largest number of refugees were Turkey, Pakistan and Lebanon, with 1.59, 1.51 and 1.15 million refugees respectively. The top three countries in Europe were Germany, France and the United Kingdom with 0.6, 0.2 and 0.2 million refugees respectively (UNCHR, 2015).
- By the end of 2014, Syria had become the world's major origin country of refugees, overtaking Afghanistan, which was leading for more than three decades. The civil war in Syria has led to the displacement of 8 million people inside the country and more than 4 million leaving (of a total population of 23 million). In 2014, 1 in 5 displaced persons worldwide was Syrian. Most of the Syrian refugees stay in the neighbouring countries of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq (UNCHR, 2015).

### Migrants in a world perspective

- At a global level, international migrants amounted to 3.2% of the world's population in 2013 (232 million people). Europe is still the most attractive region in the world with the largest stock of international migrants (72 million in 2013) (UN, 2014).
- About 50% of international migrants reside within 10 countries. The U.S. is the first destination country (45.8 million in 2013), followed by the Russian Federation (11 million), Germany (9.8 million), Saudi Arabia (9.1 million), the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom (7.8 million each), France (7.5 million), Canada (7.3 million), Australia and Spain (6.5 million each). Within the EU, nearly 20 million residents (or 4%) are non-EU citizens (UN, 2014).
- Nearly 20% of all migrants live in the world's 20 largest cities and in many of these cities migrants represent over a third of the total population. Migration is driving much of the growth of urbanization, making cities much more culturally diverse places (UN, 2014).

### Migrants and the European labour market

- It is estimated by UN that by 2050 the total demand for labour migrants will amount to 215 million at a global level. By 2020, there will be a potential shortage of 38-40 million workers with tertiary education (13% of demand) (UN, 2014).
- The labour market shortage by 2020 will be particularly strong in Europe where an estimate of 66 million labour migrants will be needed compared to 9 million in North America. Germany alone is expected to experience a labour shortage of up to 2.4 million workers by 2020. France, Italy and the United Kingdom are projected to have surpluses in 2020 but face shortages thereafter (UN, 2014).

## Recent movements of migrants and refugees

### Main irregular border crossing routes towards Europe

The number of irregular border crossings at the external borders of EU have increased significantly in the recent years, especially at the borders of the Mediterranean countries. Migratory routes towards Europe and within Europe itself are changing faster than ever before, influenced by political and economical situations both in the countries of origin and destination.

Most people seeking asylum in Europe enter through irregular border crossings. From the beginning of 2010 to April 2015, a total of 770,000 irregular crossings representing 135 different nationalities have been detected (Frontex, 2015).

There are eight main routes for irregular border-crossings into the EU, either by land and sea (Frontex, 2015): Central Mediterranean route, Eastern Mediterranean route, Western Balkan route, circular route from Albania to Greece, Western Mediterranean route, Eastern borders route, Western African route and Black Sea route. In terms of volume and impact on the EU territory, the Central Mediterranean route, Eastern Mediterranean route, Western Balkans route, the circular route from Albania to Greece and the Western Mediterranean route are the most significant (map 1).

As migration flows increased and national policy measures evolved, the routes used to access Europe have also changed over time. The Central Mediterranean route from Libya to Malta and Italy has remained an important entry point to the EU throughout the crisis. The political crisis in Tunisia and Libya in 2011 increased the number of migrants entering Europe through this route. In the first half of this year, 116,000 asylum seekers have taken this route, mainly from Eritrea, Niger, Somalia, Gambia and Sudan. Syrians, who were among the main nationalities using this route to get to Europe are now largely using the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan Routes due to dangers and new visa obligations that have been put in place in Egypt and Algeria.

The Eastern Mediterranean route via Turkey to Greece has become the biggest migratory hotspot in 2015, mainly used by asylum seekers from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. In the first half of 2015, 66,000 people took this route to Europe.

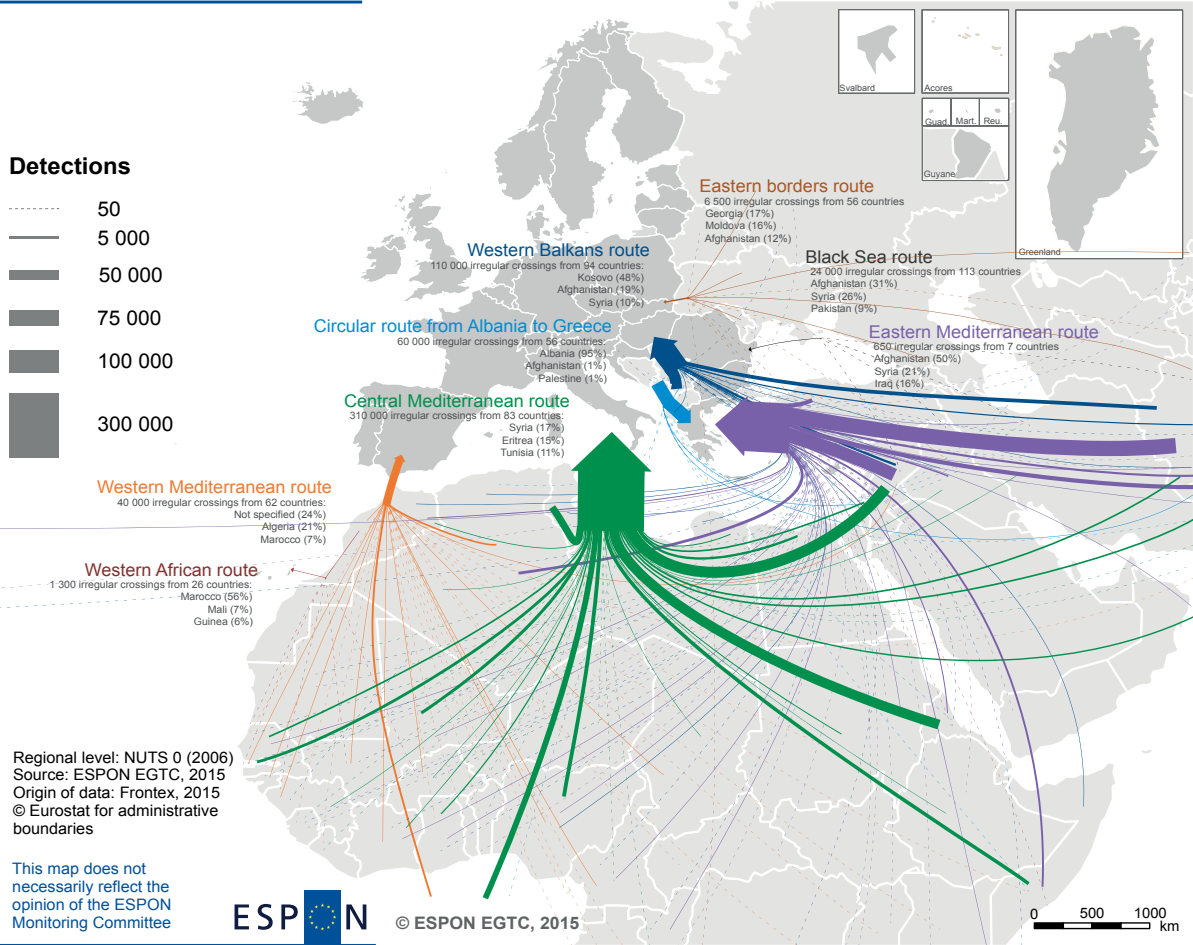
The Western Balkan route has reached its highest level of irregular migration in the current crisis. The number of migrants from Kosovo has declined, but irregular migration flow composed of Afghans, Syrians, Pakistanis and other non-regional nationalities has had a significant increase by June 2015.

The circular route from Albania to Greece was, for many years, one of the most significant along the EU's external borders, representing 34% of the EU total irregular border crossings in 2010, but the route has become less significant in terms of volumes in the more recent years.

The Western Mediterranean route is mainly used by Algerian and Moroccan nationals attempting to reach Spain, France and Italy and corresponds to the sea channel from North Africa to the Iberian Peninsula, as well as the land route through Ceuta and Melilla. In 2014 conflicts and violence in Mali, Sudan, South Sudan, Cameroon, Nigeria, Chad and the Central African Republic resulted in the migration of large parts of the population and added to the economic causes of migration in these countries. However, with tighter border controls and co-operation with Moroccan authorities, this route has become less accessible. Also, rising unemployment in Spain due to the economic crisis resulted in fewer jobs available to migrant workers, which is considered as one of the factors affecting the overall decrease in migratory pressures in Spain.

The volumes do not necessarily have to be significant in European scale to have a serious impact on local level. It is important to take into consideration the flows from smaller routes as well. For example, a growing number of refugees find their way through Russia to the Northern Norwegian border municipality of Sør-Varanger (Kirkenes). Although this route is not significant in terms of

Map 1 - Main irregular border crossing routes by nationalities, 2010 - 2015 (Q1)



volume in the European context, it creates numerous challenges for municipalities in Norway, as more than 4,000 refugees, most of them from Afghanistan and Syria, have crossed the border during the last few months (CEMR, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities).

When looking at the potential impact that the inflow of people has on territories, it is relevant to refer to the role of the so called “transit cities”. For instance, it is estimated that over 400,000 people have entered Serbia, since the beginning of 2015 up to November and 115,000 foreign citizens mainly from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq have sought asylum so far, others have continued their journey towards Western Europe.

In this respect, the transit cities in the northern and southern Serbia have been under significant pressure. For example, the municipality of Kanjiza which is located close to Hungarian border, with a population of 25,000 inhabitants was receiving around 14,000 migrants and refugees per week. Similar situation was in Presevo, a municipality of 27,000 inhabitants between former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Kosovo (UNSCR 1244), that received around 10,000 migrants and refugees weekly, from which an estimated 2,000 are staying (CEMR, Conference of Towns and Municipalities of Serbia).

However, this situation has already changed in many cases, especially in the municipality of Kanjiza which is no longer a hot spot due to the tightening of borders and the closure of the centre for asylum seekers. Since the beginning of November 2015, the route has thus been changed as the migrants are transferred to the border with Croatia. As a result, the municipality of Sid on the Croatian border

has currently become under pressure. A temporary reception centre that can host between 1,000-1,200 people on a daily basis was opened there to manage the increasing flows of refugees.

Other examples of this situation can be found in the Czech Republic in Zastávka, a town with 2,500 inhabitants, hosting 300 refugees at the moment, representing 12% of its total population. The number of arrivals fluctuates greatly as it is also a transit city for many refugees seeking to travel to Germany (CEMR, Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Czech Republic).

Finally, another example of a hot spot in terms of arrival of asylum seekers is Lesbos (in Greece), an island in the Aegean Sea close to the Turkish coast with 85,000 inhabitants. Lesbos currently receives 2,000 asylum seekers daily. Asylum seekers arrive at various spots along the Northern and Eastern coast of the island, heading on foot to the city of Mytilene, where two reception centres are based (CEMR Central Union of Municipalities of Greece - KEDE, Lesbos municipality).

### Latest information on asylum applications in Europe

The number of asylum applications and the number of people granted asylum or similar status has increased since 2010, according to data from Eurostat. Between 2010 and the third quarter of 2015, a total of 2,4 million first time asylum requests have been registered in EU member states and around 630,000 people have been granted asylum by first instance decisions and another 120,000 by appeals, averaging the Europe-wide acceptance rate to 31%.

As of the end of September 2015, 720,000 first time asylum applications have been filed this year and 150,000 have been granted refugee or similar status. The number of applications is expected to rise to one million by the end of the year and the number of people granted refugee or similar status could sum up to 450,000.

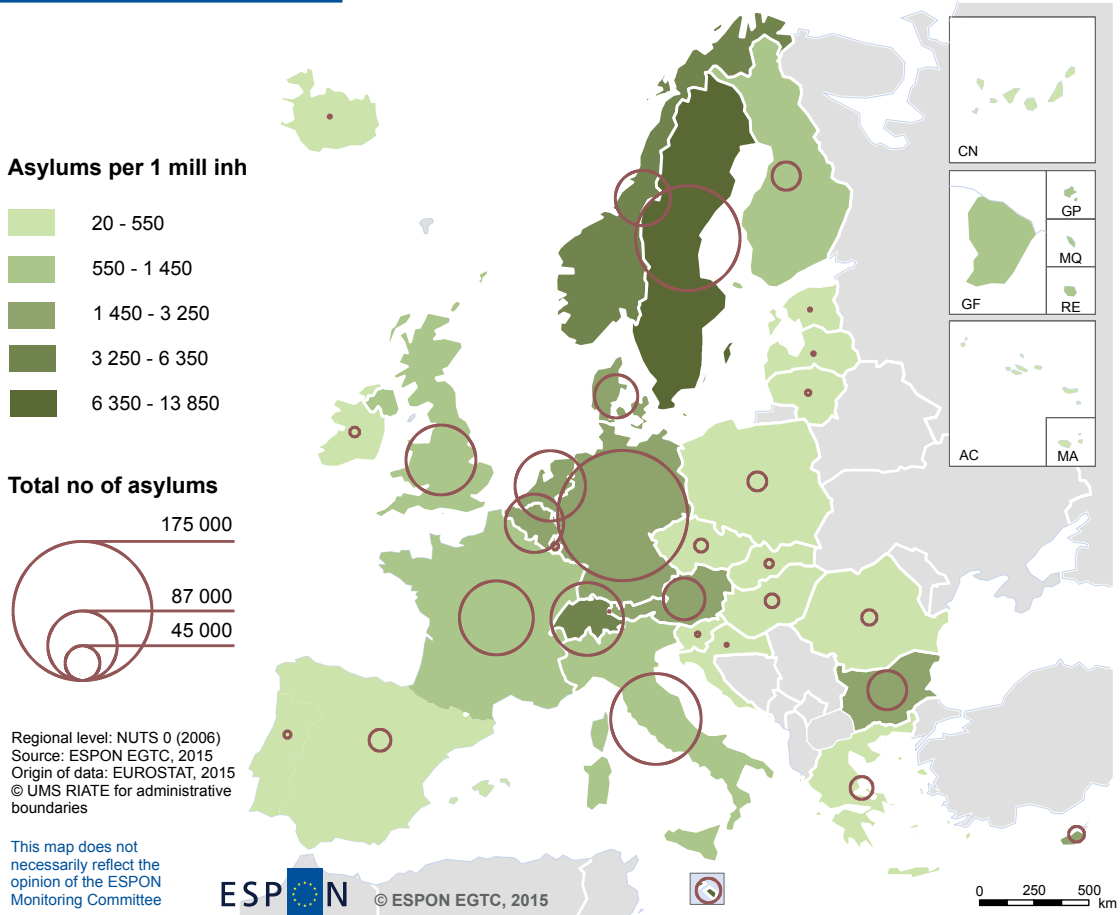
This is more than in any previous refugee crisis that has hit Europe since the Second World War. The unprecedented number of asylum applications in 2015 is already 29% higher than in 2014 (560,000 first time applications) and 88% higher than in 2013 (370,000 first time applications). The high inflow of arrivals to Europe underlines the need for the implementation of measures aimed at creating facilities and conditions to receive, assist and register all people arriving in the short term (map 2).

The countries that have received the most asylum requests within the last 5 years are Germany with 700,000 requests, France with 310,000 requests, Sweden with 300,000 requests and Italy and Hungary with 200,000 requests respectively. The overall acceptance rates have been the highest in Germany, Sweden, Italy and France. In Germany, 36% (170,000) of applicants have received asylum on their first attempt and 17% of appeals (25,000) have been successful. In Sweden, more than 53% of applicants (110,000) have been granted protection in their first attempt and 16% of appeals (10,000) have been successful. In Italy, 55% (80,000) of applicants received asylum on their first attempt and 25% of appeals (25,000) have been successful. In France, more than 17% of applicants (50,000) were granted asylum in their first attempt and 19% of appeals (40,000) received positive decisions. Overall it is important to keep in mind that most of the asylum seekers are not granted protection. Looking at the trend from 2010 to 2015, it is visible that the acceptance rate has decreased significantly since 2012 (48.6%) to 2015 (31%), even though the absolute acceptance volumes have been gradually increasing (map 2).

The number of applications has been the lowest in the majority of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe, but also in small countries in Western Europe such as Liechtenstein and Luxembourg, but also in Portugal, Ireland, Cyprus, Iceland and Malta. Looking at the proportion of asylum seekers in relation to the population of the respective countries, Sweden has taken the biggest share of asylum seekers compared to other European countries. For every one million people in Sweden, there are 11,000 asylum seekers. Switzerland and Germany have granted asylum for 6,000 refugees per one million inhabitants (map 2).

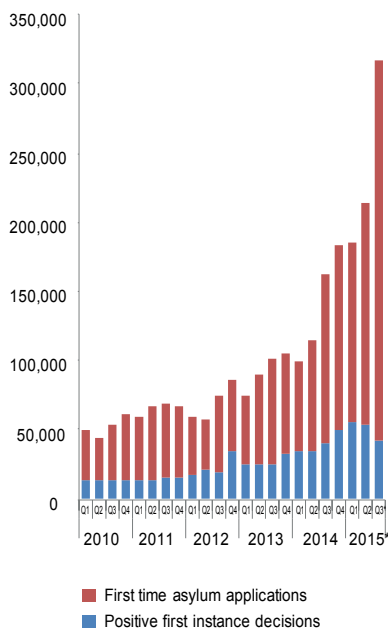


Map 2 - Positive decisions on asylum applications, 2010 - 2015 (Q3)



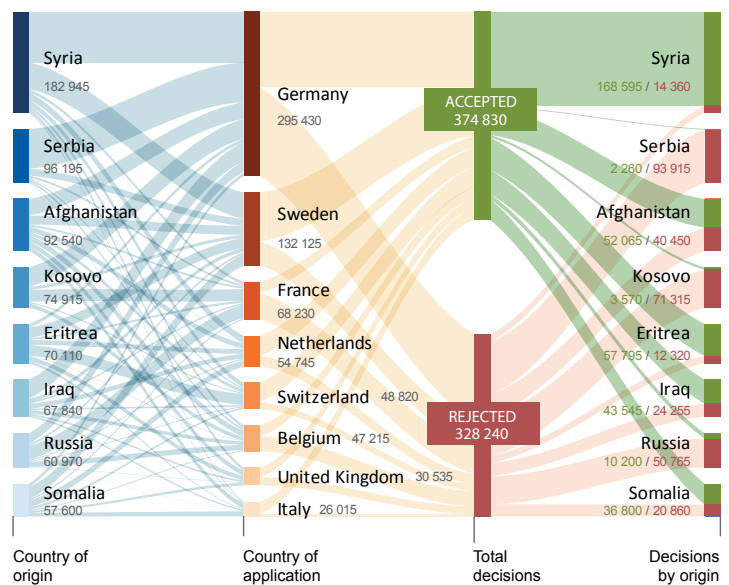
EUROPEAN UNION  
Part-financed by the European Regional Development Fund  
INVESTING IN YOUR FUTURE

Decisions on asylum applications, 2010 - 2015 (Q3)



\*Not all the data concerning Q3 was made available during the compilation of this policy brief

Decisions on asylum applications, top 8 origin and receiving countries, 2010 - 2015 (Q3)



Source: ESPON EGTC, 2015  
Origin of data: EUROSTAT, 2015

## Asylum seekers and integration policies – some examples

Politicians, authorities, organisations, citizens, etc. are taking steps to welcome and integrate migrants and refugees. The following examples show how this is done in practice at national level and in a number of European cities.

### National example - Sweden

When looking at the legal framework, including regulations and policies, Sweden seems to have the most favourable conditions for integrating migrants, according to the Migration Integration Policy Index (MIPEX). MIPEX is a tool measuring policies to integrate migrants in 38 countries, and it includes 167 policy indicators in eight key areas: labour market and mobility, family reunion, education, health, political participation, long term residence, access to nationality, anti-discrimination. The index does not measure the implementation of the existing legal framework on the ground but it allows for comparison among European countries on the existing legal conditions.

The overall objective of the Swedish integration policy for newly arrived refugees and immigrants in general is to provide everyone with the opportunity to support themselves financially and to be part of the Swedish society. The Swedish approach of trying to adapt the welfare policy to the needs of arriving immigrants has historically been well received by the public and policy makers. As a result, migrants in Sweden have access to very high standards in education, enforcement of strong anti-discrimination laws and fair access to citizenship.

Although Sweden is not a traditional immigration country, a relatively high number of foreign-born persons have settled in Sweden since the Second World War. In 2003, there were around 1,100,000 immigrants in Sweden, 12 % of the total population. Today this is around 15% with 75,000-100,000 new arrivals every year. However, the weight of European immigrants is small in comparison to non-European immigrants.

The Swedish Migration Agency has the overall responsibility of the Swedish migration policy, which means that asylum and refugee reception is primarily a national task but local authorities at the municipal level together with the employment office have the responsibility for integration policy. Roles and responsibilities are regulated in the legislation and agreements between the government and municipalities.

The agreement to accept refugees between the municipalities and the state has been voluntary until now, but a new legislation will be introduced in March 2016, which means that all municipalities are obliged to accommodate refugees. Currently, municipalities also receive compensation from the state government for education, housing and care of unaccompanied minors (EUROCITIES survey).

Usually, asylum seekers contacted the Migration Agency once they arrive in Sweden. However, considering the overwhelming numbers of asylum seekers, the Migration Agency has staff (placed since the beginning of September 2015) at central railway stations and ferry terminals to meet migrants as soon as they arrive in the country.

Asylum seekers that need help with accommodation will receive a place in one of the Migration Agency's accommodation centres, which provide an initial, temporary place to stay. There are accommodation centres in the three largest cities, Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö, as well as Gävle and in smaller municipalities where it has been easier to find available premises (CEMR, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions). Refugees who are accepted are offered a residence and an initial support programme in a municipality, taken in charge by the Employment Office.

## Urban examples – Leipzig, Bilbao, Utrecht and Dublin

### Leipzig

Leipzig is a city in the Bundesland Sachsen region in Germany and has a population of 550,000 inhabitants and has for years been positioning itself as an open, intercultural and inclusive city. By the end of 2015, Leipzig is expected receive more than 5,000 asylum applications, an unprecedented number in the city's recent history. In comparison, the number of asylum applications in 2014 was around 1,200.

Leipzig's approach to the integration of asylum seekers includes the provision of housing, as well as making sure that refugees have access to education, employment and to the society as a whole. Providing language courses is also important for the city as language skills are the key to any further integration. Finally, another very important aspect is the intergration of the children of asylum seekers and refugees into childcare services and schools.

The city of Leipzig has taken proactive measures and has initiated or supported many initiatives on migration and integration. For example, for the past 25 years the 'Intercultural weeks' have been showcasing the work of numerous organisations, communities and initiatives that work to promote the city's cultural and religious diversity. Leipzig is also providing training on intercultural competences for employees within the city administration and offers language and cultural translation services to all departments and municipal agencies.

Since the late 1990s, the city of Leipzig has been promoting decentralised accommodation for asylum seekers, which has allowed more than half the city's asylum seekers to live in private accomodation, rather than spending a long time in larger residential buildings assigned to refugees. These housing measures enable better and faster integration of asylum seekers. As part of this concept, the city provides social services for the asylum seekers. Social workers help with matters such as dealing with the authorities and other questions or concerns, as well as finding an apartment and other everyday issues. The social workers also organise language training and leisure activities for the asylum seekers, act as contact persons for neighbours and maintain relationships with other community actors. The high level of voluntary engagement of Leipzig's citizens also plays an important role in the city's integration efforts.

### Bilbao

Bilbao is the 10th largest city in Spain with a population of 350,000 inhabitants. Moreover, it is the most important industrial and port-city of the Spanish autonomous región of the Basque Country. Around 7.4% of the Bilbao population is of foreign origin and this figure has notably increased in the last 10 years.

Bilbao has adopted an intercultural city strategy and an intercultural city action plan. The city's Local Strategy (2015-2019) includes an objective regarding integration, managing diversity and openness of the city. The main objective of this intercultural approach is to promote integration and social cohesion. To manage diversity, the Local Strategy is linked to the Local Action Plan, which develops different action areas in collaboration with stakeholders: analysis, training, networking, employment, housing, education, social insertion and welcoming, culture and diversity, and gender and participation. This Local Action Plan includes interculturalism as a basic concept, as it is also incorporated in the regulation of the Local Board of Immigration.

As a result of the current situation in Europe, the Basque Government has organized a network of institutional collaboration, in coordination with the Spanish government and specialised NGOs. Bilbao is part of this network, in which an insertion itinerary is prepared to meet asylum seekers who are to be resettled from other European countries (CEMR, the Association of Basque Municipalities).

## Utrecht

Utrecht is the fourth largest city in the Netherlands with a population of 330,000. Utrecht has always had a strong focus on the fate of irregular migrants left under the care of local authorities and the need to provide services to all, bringing together city authorities, civil society organisations and volunteers.

The civil society has played an extremely important role in the intergration of the migrants. There are a lot of initiatives organised by civic organizations and citizens, including gathering of clothes, sport activities (football with the Utrecht Refugee Cup, Wrestling, fitness etc) and other actions such as refugees telling their stories in school classes and dinners for refugees with Dutch families.

The asylum centres are organised by the state, the regional level plays no active role on this respect. The Dutch reception policy is to have big centres for 600 to 3,000 people in order to manage the reception centres in an economically efficient way. However, it is very difficult to get enough support from the Dutch people in the cities for such large centres. It is therefore preferable to make the reception centres smaller, then the civil society feels more motivated to support. Also, it is better for the refugees themselves and easier to organise, including safety.

After the permit to stay is granted, all municipalities in the country are responsible for a fixed number of social housing, access to education, health, sport, and integration. However, the national financial support has been substantially reduced over the last two years and it is almost non-existent at the moment.

During 2015, Utrecht provided housing for 700 refugees the plans for 2016 are to provide additional housing for 800 refugees. Regarding to the access to education, it is always organized within three days after the refugee children arrive in the city. Health service is also organized through the national organization with local doctors and hospitals (EUROCITIES).

## Dublin

In 2008, Dublin City Council adopted a City-Wide Integration Framework, which essentially set out a policy and strategic framework for encouraging all of the partners and stakeholders at city level to take responsibility for integration. The Framework was premised in part on the principles that integration should be the adaption of mainstream policies and services rather than the creation of separate services for migrant groups and diversity is seen an economic and social advantage to the City of Dublin.

In 2010, the City Council commissioned The Integration Centre (TIC) to develop the first city level framework for monitoring integration. The report provided a detailed analysis on a wide range of socio-economic indicators relevant to integration, e.g. employment, education attainment, etc. Over the last six years, Dublin City Council has developed and implemented a wide range of initiatives in line with the Framework.

However, since the development of the original City-wide Integration Framework, there have been significant and challenging shifts in the wider external and local social and economic contexts which have had, and will continue to have, an impact on priorities for integration. This includes, for example, the phasing out of direct national funding to support local integration initiatives funding from the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration, of which Dublin City Council was a beneficiary. There is now a strategic shift to encompassing and mainstreaming integration activity within the social inclusion and community development plans of Local Authorities, particularly through the Local and Community Development Programme. Dublin City Council's Corporate Plan 2015-2019 includes the goal to 'develop engaged and active communities in the promotion of social inclusion and healthy living'.

In May 2015 Dublin City Council established a city-wide Public Participation Network (PPN). The purpose of this network is to provide opportunities for groups and organisations working on a voluntary, co-operative or not for profit basis in Dublin City to help influence and formally contribute to decision-making bodies of the council. The specific aim of the Network is to encourage the participation of migrant community groups (CEMR).

### Local authorities often taking the lead

In many cases, local authorities, and in particular some cities, have been more proactive in receiving asylum seekers than their national governments.

In the United Kingdom in September 2015, Scotland's 32 councils committed to take at least 2,000 refugees and are currently preparing to receive them through the UK Home Office's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities is coordinating this work, with actions focussed on ensuring that the programme is properly resourced and well-coordinated at national level and on planning for the long-term integration needs of refugees drawing upon existing expertise and best practice.

In France, cities voluntarily initiated a movement of solidarity and the government put in place three new financial mechanisms to support the cities to welcome refugees (CEMR, Report from the French Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions).

In Portugal, cities have also shown readiness to take their share of the solidarity in this humanitarian crisis. The National Association of Portuguese Municipalities was involved in Working Group on the European agenda of migration and a Memorandum of understanding with the national Migration and Frontier Service was signed in order to organise and coordinate the preparation and implementation of a national action plan.

In the Netherlands, some cities are now providing active support to regional refugee centres in the region. For example, the city of Amsterdam has taken a municipal initiative to support refugee camps in Jordan (EUKN).

As several examples from France, Portugal, the UK but also Denmark, Sweden, Germany have demonstrated, the involvement of various actors and governance levels, including civil society aimed at integration and inclusion of new comers is an important aspect to consider (CEMR, Report from the questionnaire addressed to CEMR member associations concerning local authorities faced with the huge inflows of asylum seekers).

Finally, at European level, the network of major cities, EUROCITIES has released a statement on asylum in May 2015, which was reiterated in September, stressing the important role cities play in receiving and integrating asylum seekers and refugees. This network and others such as EUKN and CEMR are actively engaging with European institutions to dialogue and emphasise the role of local and regional governments in contributing to a proper management and integration of migrants and refugees.

Migration and refugee inflow are at the top of the European agenda. The current Policy Brief compiled by ESPON in cooperation with CEMR, EUROCITIES and EUKN offers the latest evidence to policy makers on the territorial and urban aspects of the current migration and refugee inflow to Europe.

#### About ESPON

The ESPON 2020 Programme aims at promoting and fostering a European territorial dimension in development and cooperation by providing evidence, knowledge transfer and policy learning to public authorities and other policy actors at all levels. The objective of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme is to support the reinforcement of the effectiveness of EU Cohesion Policy and other sectoral policies and programmes under European Structural Investment (ESI) funds as well as national and regional territorial development policies, through the production, dissemination and promotion of territorial evidence covering the entire territory of the 28 EU Member States, as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

<http://www.espon.eu>

Sandra Di Biaggio – Senior Project Expert, Analysis ([sandra.di.biaggio@espon.eu](mailto:sandra.di.biaggio@espon.eu))  
Martin Gauk – Project Expert, Data, Toolbox and IT ([martin.gauk@espon.eu](mailto:martin.gauk@espon.eu))

#### About CEMR

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is the oldest and broadest European association of local and regional government. This organisation that brings together the national associations of local and regional authorities from 41 European countries and represents, through them, all levels of territories – local, intermediate and regional. CEMR promotes the construction of a united, peaceful and democratic Europe founded on local self-government, respect for the principle of subsidiarity and the participation of citizens.

<http://www.ccre.org>

Nathalie Noupadja – Research & Studies Officer ([nathalie.noupadja@ccre-cemr.org](mailto:nathalie.noupadja@ccre-cemr.org))

#### About EUROCITIES

EUROCITIES is the network of major European cities. EUROCITIES was founded in 1986 and currently it brings together the local governments of over 130 of Europe's largest cities and 40 partner cities across 35 countries. Through six thematic forums, a wide range of working groups, projects, activities and events, we offer members a platform for sharing knowledge and exchanging ideas. The objective is to reinforce the important role that local governments should play in a multilevel governance structure.

<http://www.eurocities.eu>

Thomas Jézéquel – Policy advisor social inclusion ([thomas.jezequel@eurocities.eu](mailto:thomas.jezequel@eurocities.eu))

#### About the EUKN

The EUKN is a network of national governments and knowledge institutes, deeply involved in EU policy-making. EUKN's focus is on generating a professional community that shares expert urban knowledge and best policy practice inspires policy makers, practitioners and researchers, benefiting urban development and city living. The EUKN is an urban specialist collective, providing pre-emptive and responsive action to the requirements of Europe's best urban practitioners and policymakers.

<http://www.eukn.eu>

Mart Grisel – Director EUKN EGTC ([mart.grisel@eukn.eu](mailto:mart.grisel@eukn.eu))

#### ESPON 2020 - More information

ESPON EGTC

4 rue Erasme, L-1468 Luxembourg - Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

Phone: +352 42 59 91 4700

Email: [info@espon.eu](mailto:info@espon.eu)

[www.espon.eu](http://www.espon.eu), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#)

The ESPON EGTC is the Single Beneficiary of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme. The Single Operation within the programme is implemented by the ESPON EGTC and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the EU Member States and the Partner States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

#### Disclaimers:

The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the ESPON Monitoring Committee.

This document does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the EUKN Assembly.

ISBN: 978-2-919777-94-5

© ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme

Reproduction is authorized provided the source is acknowledged and a copy is sent to the ESPON EGTC.

Published in November 2015