

How to support the social inclusion of migrants and asylum seekers

Prepared for the
ENRD Workshop on

LEADER/CLLD & networking supporting
social inclusion in rural areas

Economic migrants have become one of the cornerstones of today's rural economies. Some come from within the EU itself, some are legal migrants from third countries, others are undocumented migrants. Over the last year, economic migrants have been joined by over one million asylum seekers from war-torn countries around Europe. While the presence of migrants and asylum seekers presents a major challenge in many rural areas for both policy-makers and local inhabitants, it also offers new opportunities for rural development.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last year, economic migrants have been joined by over one million asylum seekers from the war-torn countries around Europe. Their rights and prospects vary as they are usually not allowed to work until their request for asylum has been granted. Both the time this takes and the chances of success vary considerably across Europe. While they wait, large numbers of people are being housed in refugee centres in rural areas across Europe. In some Swedish villages the arrival of asylum seekers has not only reversed a long term trend of rural population decline but has outnumbered the resident population (see image below).

The presence of both types of 'newcomers' to rural areas – the economic migrants and the asylum seekers – presents major challenges and opportunities for rural areas.

Steps to integrate migrants in rural areas

Immigration should not be seen only as a 'threat' but also as a new 'opportunity' – to harness the economic energy and skills of the newcomers, to breathe new life into local schools and services, and to cross-fertilise and enrich local culture.

Economic migrants and asylum seekers differ enormously in their needs, skills, aspirations and cultural backgrounds.

The first step is to **create safe spaces and opportunities for exchange**, mutual understanding and trust. This is essential for encouraging a welcoming attitude among the local population.

The second step is to **break down certain gaps and barriers such as information** about legal rights, language training and the recognition of skills and qualifications.

The third step is to build on the **possibility of earning an independent living** - this is vital for long-term integration. There are many good examples of projects providing personalised training, mentoring and placement pathways. These can be quite effective as migrants are often the most enterprising and motivated members of their own communities.

Finally, depending on their particular circumstances, migrants can be excluded from a **complex range of necessities** such as housing, healthcare, education, social services and so on. Personalised and joined-up approaches to these multiple causes of deprivation are essential.



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Undrom, Sollefteå:	85 inhabitants.	200 refugees.
Trensum, Karlshamn:	106 inhabitants.	300 refugees.
Långträsk, Piteå:	109 inhabitants.	52 refugees.
Byxelkrok, Borgholm:	129 inhabitants.	133 refugees.
Dalskog, Mellerud:	133 inhabitants.	124 refugees.
Blackstad, Västervik:	145 inhabitants.	120 refugees.
Gysinge, Sandviken:	149 inhabitants.	200 refugees.
Virestad, Älmhult:	155 inhabitants.	81 refugees.
Trehörningsjö,		
Örnsköldsvik:	160 inhabitants.	50 refugees.
Rätan, Berg:	195 inhabitants.	84 refugees.
Stavsjö, Nyköping:	212 inhabitants.	150 refugees.
Liden, Sundsvall:	254 inhabitants.	110 refugees.
Ramsberg, Lindesberg:	257 inhabitants.	55 refugees.
Hällnäs, Vindeln:	259 inhabitants.	500 refugees.
Åsarna, Berg:	268 inhabitants.	148 refugees.

In Sweden
small rural
villages
receive many
refugees



On 1 January 2014, the number of people living in the EU-28 who were citizens of non-member countries was **19.6 million** while the number of people living in the EU-28 who had been born outside of the EU was **33.5 million**.

Eurostat

The contribution of LEADER to social inclusion of migrants and asylum seekers

A variety of LEADER projects have supported the social inclusion of newcomers through activities ranging from socio-cultural integration to initiatives with a longer-term perspective, seeking to integrate them into the labour market.

✓ *Intercultural activities to promote integration*

The first step towards social inclusion of immigrants is their integration in the host society and culture. It is a two-way process that has to be wanted by both the host community and the new arrivals. This concept represents a fundamental feature of the EU's policy approach to integration.

There is evidence of several LEADER projects that give emphasis to promoting activities aiming at mutual acceptance and understanding between different cultures. LEADER aims to help integrate newcomers in the rural society - often very different from their country of origin.

In an excellent example from Finland, an 'integration coordinator' acts as an interface between immigrants and the local community.

LEADER has also supported a variety of cultural activities, which can prove to be effective in bringing together newcomers and the local population. They include sports and cultural activities and the set-up of spaces where all cultures can meet, exchange and integrate.

An 'integration coordinator' in Punkalaidun (Finland)

The municipality of Punkalaidun in southwest Finland hired an 'integration coordinator' who acts as the main contact for immigrants throughout their time in the area. She supports and guides them in accessing the services they require, including schools, jobs and healthcare.

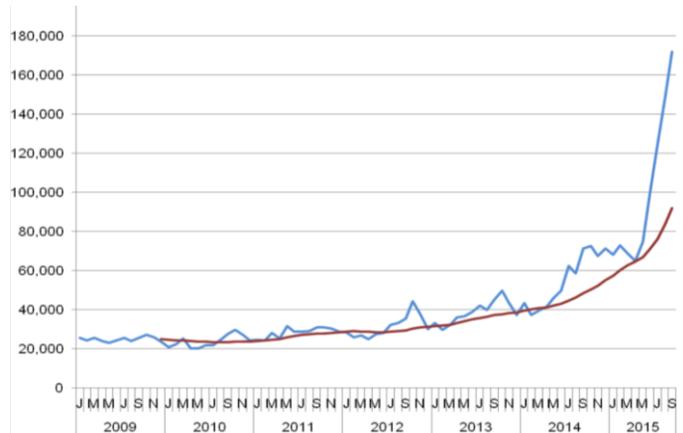
The integration coordinator is also on hand to solve everyday problems and help connect the immigrants with local residents through sport clubs, village development associations, church, and other groups. A number of activities were organised to bring communities together, including blueberry picking, football and dances.

Baking together, sharing experiences (Sweden)

The project 'Bröd i Bergslagen' (Bread in Bergslagen) used traditional bread baking in wood-heated ovens as an activity to bring locals and immigrants together.

The activity turned out to be an excellent way to bring people together around a shared activity, which crossed cultural divides. The activity left enough 'space' for real conversations to start, supported by trained volunteers. The concept is now spreading to other regions of Sweden.

Total monthly asylum applications in the EEA (2009–September 2015)



Source: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn-informs/xemn_policybrief_movementsmediterranean_final.pdf

Integrating refugees in Bad Berleburg (Germany)

The municipality of Bad Berleburg set up a central accommodation facility for refugees, which has housed 5000 people since 2014. Supporting actions have included international and youth cafés and an 'integration bus'.

In May 2016, LAG Wittgenstein is working with the municipality on a new collaboration which aims to strengthen the welcoming culture, establish efficient coordination, and help the municipality harness the potential of the refugees.

Integration support for asylum seekers in selected EU countries in 2015 or latest available year

Support measures	Countries
Language training	EL*, DK, EE, FI, DE, IT, LU, PL, SI, ES, SE, NL**
Adult education combined with long-term language training	BE, EL, IT, LU, PT, ES
Skills assessment	BE, FI*** (just planned), DE, PT, ES
Civic education	AT**** (in Vienna only), BE, DK, PT, ES
Job-related training	EE***** EL*, PT, ES

*Not systematic; ** Provided by volunteers only; ***Just planned; ****In Vienna only; *****After 6 months access to regular labour market services. Source: OECD, 2016, <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/klara-foti---eurofound-project-on-refugee-crisis.pdf>

✓ *Pathways to employment*

Social inclusion is more effective when immigrants are able to access employment, (including self-employment). There are several factors that help accelerate economic integration, including higher levels of human capital (language ability, education and work experience), ethnic ties and solidarity (e.g. having relatives in the host country) and access to active labour market measures for immigrants.

Family reunification is a common phenomenon and immigrants tend to arrive where they have links (family, relatives, friends).

LEADER builds on these challenges by contributing to enhance the levels of human capital through language learning and skills development (e.g. the RIKK project, the Växjö education initiative) as well as through more active labour market support including guidance and coaching on self-employment and business start-up, with a view to facilitate the economic integration of immigrants (GowBiz project, Borlänge farm links project).

RIKK: development of inter-cultural skills in Austria

The RIKK project was a collaboration between regional development associations, NGOs and two LAGs in Upper Austria. It established 'competence teams' involving representatives of particular professions to develop opportunities for migrants and refugees. It promoted intercultural skills and awareness to improve the interaction of people with different backgrounds.

The Växjö education initiative in Sweden

A local cooperative association introduced a seven-month training programme on practical skills in agriculture, forestry, livestock management and gardening. These topics were driven by the demand for labour in local rural areas. The course improved the trainees' language skills and built on their experiences of rural life to increase their prospects of finding work. The association also provides support with job applications and contacts with employers.

GrowBiz entrepreneurship support in Scotland, UK

The project provides community-based enterprise support in rural Perthshire, Scotland. As well as mentoring and one-to-one advice, it enables peer group support for migrant entrepreneurs. It has a number of clients from a variety of Eastern European and other countries who have come to the area initially for agricultural work. GrowBiz works with a local project, the Minority Communities Hub, to offer linguistic and cultural support. This has resulted in several successful businesses run by 'new Scots'.

The Borlänge farm links project in Sweden

The project is based on linking skills with labour market needs in the agricultural sector. It addressed newcomers (immigrants and refugees) from Somalia, Iraq, Kosovo, Chechnya and Azerbaijan. Close cooperation with farmers was necessary in order to identify their needs and motivate them to hire newcomers. To achieve this, the project involved the Swedish Public Employment Service (PES) and the Federation of Swedish farmers.

What can be done at the LAG level?

- ✓ As LAG partnerships represent a cross-section of the local community, they can play an important role in **bringing different stakeholders** together helping with all the steps required for integration.
- ✓ **Local 'development coordinators'** (such as the integration coordinators in Finland) can play a particularly important role in this process.
- ✓ The legal competences and funds of LAGs are limited and cannot hope to cover all the needs of migrants. However, they can support **small-scale actions and play an important coordinating role** between the different funds, departments and organisations required for integration.
- ✓ In this context, multi-funded strategies, especially coordination between ESF and EAFRD is important.
- ✓ Exchange of experience with regards to relevant LEADER practices is crucial; **transnational and inter-territorial cooperation projects** in this area need to be encouraged.

What can be done at the national level?

- ✓ Managing Authorities can play an important role by **raising awareness** and providing a lead to LAGs and other actors on the ground. They can encourage LAGs to be responsive to the situation within the bounds permitted by the regulations.
- ✓ Managing Authorities also have a key role in **unlocking the potential of different measures** (e.g. village renewal and basic services) and policies.
- ✓ Rural networks can facilitate the **exchange of views between key stakeholders**, including policy-makers, LAGs, immigrant organisations and business associations (the Swedish Thematic Group on migrants is a good example).

What can be done at the European level?

- ✓ European-level networks (including the ENRD) can contribute to exchanging about various LAG practices and through this can help to identify good practices that are transferable to other regions.
- ✓ At the same time, European-level exchange can be facilitated between key stakeholders to share views and best practices. An example includes the exchange between some of the National Rural Networks on how to facilitate the integration of migrants in rural areas.