

Share SIRA Transnational Conference Strengthening and Expanding Social Orientation and Integration of Newcomers in Rural Areas

23 November 2022, 9h-17h15,
European Committee of the Regions (Rue Belliard 99/101, 1040 Brussels)

The Share Network, the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) Europe and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are organizing a one-day **Share SIRA transnational conference on 'Strengthening and Expanding the Social Orientation and Integration of Newcomers in Rural Areas'** on 23 November 2022 at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels.

Rural areas are today at the heart of the environmental, digital, social and demographic transition. Representing 80% of the EU's total surface area and home to 30% of its population, EU's rural territories cover a wide diversity ranging from inland regions, mountain areas and islands to coastal areas. Small and rural communities face similar structural challenges, such as demographic decline, poor digital and transport connectivity, difficulties in meeting employment needs and access to services due to overconcentration in large cities. It is estimated that 5.5% of the population of rural areas in the EU has a migrant background.

In recent years, and particularly since 2015, rural communities have emerged as important actors in the reception and integration of newcomers (asylum seekers, refugees, migrants) due to resettlement programmes, national placement policies, community sponsorship and other forms of civic engagement, which add to the traditional demand for migrant labour. Whether as a result of top-down distribution processes or bottom-up responses, small and rural territories have undeniably become testing grounds for new integration practices.

In a rapidly migration context, it is crucial to build inclusive rural territories to ensure that these can respond to new challenges and needs. When effectively mainstreamed into rural policymaking across demographic, social, economic and development sectors, migration can be a key driver of rural revitalisation, or the long-term positive transformation of rural areas and communities. At the same time, integration policy and programmes must specifically address the ways in which structural challenges for rural territories can amplify the common integration barriers faced by refugees and migrants and involve both newcomers and local communities.

The transnational Share SIRA conference aims to explore the conditions for successful inclusion in small and rural communities, highlighting inspiring grassroots practices and linking them to current research and policy frameworks. It will present the outcomes and lessons learned of the **AMIF-funded [SIRA project](#)**, which has piloted innovative integration actions and used multi-stakeholder approaches to **strengthen inclusion in 10 rural regions** in Greece, France, Poland and Spain. The conference will bring together representatives from EU institutions, national, regional and local authorities, civil society and refugee/migrant-led organisations, research projects and academia, the private sector and foundations, as well as rural stakeholders, to discuss how to enhance synergies between integration and local development strategies and identify future opportunities for engagement.



DRAFT PROGRAMME

9.00 – 9.45	<i>Registration & Welcome Coffee</i>
9.45 – 10.00	<p>Opening Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Niina Ratilainen, CIVEX, Committee of the Regions (TBC) • Petra Hueck, Director, International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) Europe • Paola Alvarez, Senior Thematic Specialist Labour Mobility and Social Inclusion, International Organization for Migration Regional Office in Brussels
10.00 – 11.15	<p><u>High-level Panel Discussion – Setting the scene: Promoting the inclusion of newcomers in rural areas in a changing EU migration landscape</u></p> <p>Against the background of recent developments in Afghanistan and Ukraine, this panel will explore how to engage local communities and newcomers more directly in shaping the programmes to ensure an effective distribution of capacities across territories and to seize the opportunities that migration can bring to rural territories.</p> <p>Chair: Petra Hueck, Director, ICMC Europe</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giulio Di Blasi, Member of the private office of Commissioner Ylva Johansson, European Commission • Alain Régnier, French Interministerial Delegate for the Reception and Integration of Refugees • Miriam Benterrak, General Director for Inclusion, Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration (TBC) • Marion Eckhardt, President of the European LEADER Association for Rural Development & President of Local Action Group in Sweden • Daniel Putkiewicz, Mayor of Piaseczno, Poland (TBC) <p><i>Questions for speakers:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How to develop reception and integration strategies in rural areas that feed into integrated strategies of local development? 2. What can small cities and rural territories teach about integration? 3. How can local communities and newcomers be better involved in both contingency and long-term integration planning?
11.15 – 11.30	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11.30 – 13.00	<p>Presentation of the Share SIRA project outcomes & lessons learned</p> <p><i>Testimonies from representatives of Share SIRA consortium will highlight the main achievements of the Share SIRA project. The floor will be open at the end for questions from participants.</i></p> <p>Chair: Paola Alvarez, Senior Thematic Specialist Labour Mobility and Social Inclusion, IOM Regional Office in Brussels</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of the Share SIRA project in a glimpse: Andrea Soler, ICMC Europe • Strengthening regional multi-stakeholder dialogue & coordination for orientation & integration: Eleni Bletsas, Regional Development Agency of Karditsa & Ania Szlezinger, IOM Poland





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piloting and evaluating bottom-up approaches for orientation in rural areas: Isabel Mestre, <i>Entraide Pierre Valdo</i> • Enhancing knowledge and capacities of local integration actors through targeted training, peer learning and transnational best practice sharing: Maria Jouve, <i>IOM Spain</i> & Irene Almazan, <i>Cepaim Foundation</i> • Mapping and expanding evidence-base of integration approaches to inform practice and policymaking at European, national, regional and local level: Andrea Soler, <i>ICMC Europe</i> & Marine Sabria, <i>IOM Regional Office in Brussels</i>
13.00 - 14.00	Lunch
14:00 - 14:50	<p><u>Panel Discussion: Designing and implementing bottom-up integration actions within multi-level cooperation frameworks</u></p> <p>Small, medium-sized and rural municipalities play a key role in the implementation of integration policies and serve as a bridge between local actors and multi-level governance. To what extent can small and rural municipalities be facilitators or initiators of integration processes? What challenges do they face and how do they mobilise resources? How do they work with other actors? This panel will explore the role of small and rural municipalities in the design, coordination and implementation of integration programmes and policies. It will discuss effective multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation frameworks and strategies to enhance participation of newcomers.</p> <p>Chair: Andrea Pettrachin, <i>Whole-Comm (Horizon2020 project), University of Turin</i></p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jean-Marc Vaillant, <i>Departmental Directorate of Employment, Labour and Solidarity Corrèze, France (TBC)</i> • Political representative of a German municipality (TBC) • Political representative of Karditsa Municipality (TBC) • Christos Lazaris, <i>Communication Officer and Head of Strategy at the Greek Forum of Refugees</i> • Lea Enon-Baron, <i>Coordinator of the ANVITA Network (TBC)</i> • Sévérine Aufort, <i>Entraide Pierre Valdo, France</i> • Jasmijn Sloopjes, <i>Migration Policy Institute</i> <p>Questions for speakers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent small and rural municipalities can contribute to initiating or facilitating integration processes? 2. How to expand multi-stakeholder partnerships for reception and integration at the local level, that involve newcomers as well? How to sustain alliances? 3. What appropriate responses can be provided to the multi-level governance challenges? 4. What type of services for integration can efficiently be shared among small-sized and rural municipalities and larger cities? 5. To what extent are small and medium rural cities isolated from national/European networks?
14.50 - 16.05	<p><u>Panel Discussion – Resilient, inclusive rural territories: developing place-based approaches for sustainable integration & rural revitalization</u></p> <p>Although less visible and less resourced than their urban counterparts, rural actors are actively developing place-based integration approaches that harness local opportunities and benefit both newcomers and the host community. This panel will look at grassroots approaches to welcome,</p>





	<p>inclusion and engagement of communities, with a focus on small municipalities and shrinking areas. Can such whole-of-society approaches lead to long-term integration and social cohesion? What are the advantages of targeted versus mainstream approaches to integration? This panel will explore how innovative practices and local policies can contribute to attract and retain migration in small towns and how they can foster the local economy. It will take into account different types of immigration schemes, such as resettlement, community sponsorship, and attracting immigrants who already reside in the country. The discussion will also seek to identify strategies to find and leverage support on regional, national, and international levels.</p> <p>Chair: Adolfo Paton Monge, <i>Fundacion Cepaim</i></p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juana Pagan Lopez, <i>Director General Policies against Depopulation, Spain (TBC)</i> • Alex Brichet-Billet, <i>Mayor of Notre-Dame de l'Oisier (Isère, France)</i> • Ricardo Corredor, <i>Mayor of Tardelcuende, Spain (TBC)</i> • Annalise Zoomers, <i>Welcoming Spaces (Horizon2020 project), University of Utrecht</i> • Representative of Au Maquis, <i>Share SIRA farming pilot action, Vacluse, France</i> <p>Questions for speakers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What strategies are being put in place by rural territories with shrinking population to attract all types of newcomers (labour migrants, refugees, youth)? 2. What type of conditions supports long term inclusion? 3. How are small and rural towns receiving migrant and refugee families addressing structural challenges linked to rurality and stimulating the re-emergence of service provision for the whole community? 4. Does civil society in small and medium sized towns play a different role in migrant integration than in large cities? 5. How can national and regional authorities support these bottom-up practices?
16.05 – 16.20	<i>Coffee Break</i>
16.20 – 17.00	<p><u>Open discussion: Enhancing complementarity between EU funding & policy frameworks: addressing needs, gaps and opportunities for integration actions in rural territories</u></p> <p>This panel will explore areas of future engagement to better respond to needs and improve integration capacities across territories. It will take stock of the policy and funding frameworks at EU level in the field of integration and rural development and discuss future strategies to enhance complementarities, while tapping into the potential of the response to Ukrainian arrivals.</p> <p>Chair: TBC</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beate Gminder, <i>Deputy Director-General, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission (TBC): gaps, needs</i> • Maria Gafo Gomez Zamalloia, <i>Head of Unit Social Sustainability, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (TBC)</i> • Petra Bendel, <i>Heinrich Stiftung Foundation (TBC)</i> • Representative of the Cooperative Bank of Karditsa, Greece (TBC)
17.00 – 17.15	Concluding Remarks
17.15 – 19.30	<i>Reception</i>

