



# Interreg



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Improving institutional capacities and fostering cooperation  
to tackle the impacts of transnational youth migration

# Local strategy for improving governance capacities and services linked to youth migration

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**MUNICIPALITY OF  
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## Local strategy for improving governance capacities and services linked to youth migration

### MUNICIPALITY OF SFÂNTU GHEORGHE, ROMANIA

This Local strategy was developed in the framework of the project 'YOUMIG – Improving institutional capacities and fostering cooperation to tackle the impacts of transnational youth migration'.

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## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

The present document is a Local strategy for the Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe (Sepsiszentgyörgy), Romania on youth migration. Its objective is to provide a strategic outlook on possibilities for improving local governance capacities, as well as local services linked to the emigration, immigration and return migration of young people.

The Local strategy was developed within the transnational project *'YOUMIG – Improving institutional capacities and fostering cooperation to tackle the impacts of transnational youth migration'*, co-financed by the European Union.

The document was written by members of the YOUMIG consortium, including research institutions, statistical offices and local authorities from eight countries. Authors of each subchapter are referenced in footnotes.

The Local strategy is structured as follows. A short executive summary of the main recommendations and an overview of the YOUMIG project are presented at the beginning of the document, followed by four chapters.

Chapter 1 presents the conceptual and empirical starting points of the YOUMIG project in general, and the main findings for the Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe in particular. This chapter explains why the migration of young people is of crucial importance for local level policymaking, how the first phase of the local research was designed, and what the most important trends are for the Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe.

Chapter 2 presents the project's statistical achievements. Based on data available at statistical or administrative institutions and a local survey conducted in Sfântu Gheorghe, researchers produced statistical indicators that can provide complex quantitative information about youth migration and its local context. Local decision makers can use these indicators for monitoring local development, and for carrying out evidence-based planning in policy areas that are affected by the immigration, emigration or return migration of young people.

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<sup>1</sup> Author of the Introduction and editor of the YOUMIG Local strategies series: Béla SOLTÉSZ (Hungarian Central Statistical Office)

Chapter 3 presents the project's achievements related to local policy design. YOUMIG's researchers collected several existing good practices from other European countries, with the objective of applying them to the context of the Danube Region. Based on these examples and on the findings of the local research, the Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe implemented two project activities: the testing of a targeted policy intervention on a migration-related local social issue (Pilot Activity), and the introduction of an information sharing mechanism for young immigrants, emigrants and/or returning migrants (One-stop-shop).

Chapter 4 presents the project's findings concerning building transnational and multi-level partnerships. Municipalities cannot tackle all migration-related problems on their own. However, they can cooperate with EU level institutions, national level institutions and with municipalities from other countries. YOUMIG's policy recommendations formulated for Romania's national authorities are summarised in this chapter.

An Annex presents the Data Toolkit. This software contains all the locally relevant data collected by the YOUMIG project, as well as its expert studies and analyses. Local stakeholders can use the Data Toolkit to access all of YOUMIG's results, and to continue monitoring and evaluating the trends on youth migration beyond the end of the project.

All project documents referenced in the Local strategy, as well as the documents created by other project partner municipalities, are available at YOUMIG's website: <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/youmig/outputs>.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY<sup>2</sup>

According to a recent UN projection, **Romania is among the countries with the fastest shrinking populations worldwide.** Moreover, this phenomenon is hardly an isolated one: the top 10 countries in this group are all in Eastern Europe, or in the Baltic area. In these former communist countries, population decline began in the early 1990s, with low fertility rates – and relatively high mortality rates, population aging, and massive out-migration – the main factors behind it.

Romania's fertility rate fell gradually from 3.7 births per woman in 1967 to 1.58 births per woman in 2016 – with a record low of 1.3 between 1995-2004. The demographic impact, however, goes far beyond this in that **the country has become the second largest sending community worldwide**, particularly since its accession to the European Union in 2007. In spite of this, **Romania has neither reliable data on migration nor a long-term national strategy and action plan on how to counterbalance this massive population loss.** According to population projections, some regions are seriously threatened by the prospect of outright depopulation – especially the rural areas and less developed towns. Although, in recent years, sociologists have identified the phenomenon of small-scale circular migration, this in itself cannot provide a solution to population loss in the longer term.

With a central location in the country, in the historical region of Transylvania, the city of **Sfântu Gheorghe has witnessed a dramatic decrease in population over the past three decades**, losing around 20% of its population, mostly due to internal and external migration. Although the city is the county capital of Covasna County, home to approximately 56,000 inhabitants according to the 2011 census, and an important mainstay of the region's economic and cultural life, **it cannot compete with the higher salaries and better working, studying and living conditions of larger cities – both national and abroad. Sfântu Gheorghe is currently facing increasing outward mobility** on the part of its youth, but its administration neither possesses the tools to manage this situation, nor to turn it to its advantage.

In its role as a YOUMIG project partner, the **Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe focused on two main tasks with regard to youth migration.** First, to **achieve a better understanding of this phenomenon** by means of a diverse range of instruments, and second, **develop specific services and tools** to manage more effectively the effects of youth migration. As immigration is not an issue in the region, and the integration of the few newcomers in general presents few difficulties for the administration, attention was turned to young people from Sfântu Gheorghe with a migration profile. **The primary objective of the pilot action was to both**

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<sup>2</sup>Author of the Executive Summary: Gergely BUJA (Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe)

**encourage and facilitate return migration to the city** and its surroundings, while in essence, adopting a new perspective on migration. In this respect, the availability of data on this phenomenon would have been of crucial importance, and its current lack can be considered a major obstacle.

To get a better insight into youth migration at the local level and understand the mechanism and dynamics of this phenomenon, an integrated and complementary approach was applied. **Data and data sources were identified, migration-related indicators were tested, and a local status quo analysis was elaborated**, using different methods. This process was quite problematic because migration and return migration data in Romania display serious deficiencies at both the local and national level, owing to the lack of de-registration of citizens moving abroad, in addition to incompatibilities with data collection at the EU level. Since the data available even at the national level could not be considered reliable, **data were provided by Eurostat and mirror statistics. In addition, some of the most relevant data were obtained in a small-scale survey conducted in Sfântu Gheorghe in 2018.**

One of the key documents produced at the local level within the YOUMIG project is the **Local Status Quo Analysis (LSQA)**, which is based on both qualitative and quantitative methods. In relation to our project, statistical data analyses, population projections, semi-structured interviews (with both representatives of local institutions and returnees) and focus group interviews were carried out to get a clearer picture of youth migration at the local level. Moreover, identifying the specific push and pull factors at play, and understanding the perceptions of key stakeholders were both of vital importance. **Return migrants shared stories concerning their decisions to emigrate, the challenges of returning home** and the process of reintegration; highlighting specific administrative issues, and the lack of policies and support on the part of official actors.

By the end of the pilot, LSQA goals were met, and relevant information useful for local decision-makers, policy-makers and stakeholders was obtained. Some of the document's main findings relate to the **express need to improve the quality level of the services of different public institutions**, which, based on the experiences of returnees, lag some way behind that of equivalent institutions abroad. From the perspective of migration, the lack of digitalisation and transparency, sluggish bureaucracy and ever-changing legislation are the characteristics of the Romanian administration system that, along with better economic conditions abroad, represent the most important push factors for prospective emigrants. To mitigate this effect, **the municipality has adopted an integrated approach to improve the quality of services, and which exemplifies good practice for other authorities.**

Among measures considered, two were implemented within the framework of the YOUMIG project. **A One-Stop-Shop (OSS) was established in the Registry and Public Relations Office of the City Hall, which citizens can visit to find relevant information on different services offered not only by regional and local institutions, but also other organisations, such as businesses and NGOs, with a focus on the practicality of having ‘many services under one roof’. As a second step, a virtual one-stop-shop was launched on a new platform, SEPSINET, dedicated to young migrants and offering easy access to specific information grouped by topic. This provides a complex service hosted on the new website, in effect, creating a communication network for the local community, diaspora and return migrants.** Thus, major news stories, events and opportunities can be shared on this platform, as well as inspirational video interviews with young people who have studied or worked abroad, deciding later to return home.

It is no small achievement that **the series of YOUMIG events brought together a group of local stakeholders consisting of representatives of relevant institutions, youth organisations and return migrants; all motivated to work together** in managing the effects of youth migration. Bearing in mind that cross-sector collaboration is needed for a comprehensive approach to youth migration, characterised by efficient communication with the target group and integrated interventions in various spheres, **Sfântu Gheorghe has taken the first steps in this regard, and is now better prepared to handle the challenges of youth migration.**

## Recommendations

1. **Data collection on migration has to be improved;** local authorities need good quality and easily accessible data that facilitate effective decision-making and planning processes.
2. **Lack of deregistration has to be handled;** better tracking of returnees is needed.
3. **The diaspora needs to receive clear messages** at both the central government and local level; returnees have to be offered help to ease the process of reintegration. To this end, new communication channels are required, taking in account the specific circumstances and requirements of the target group.
4. **Perceptions towards youth migration are in urgent need of change.** Although migration results in considerable population loss, affecting both the local economy and the community’s reproductive capacity, it also has its upside. Returnees bring back financial resources, know-how, a fresh perspective, and can contribute to the development of both the economy and the wider community. Remittances sent home



by migrants boost the economy in several ways; and it is the role of public authorities and professional organisations to facilitate investment in local businesses, while downplaying individual consumption in favour of enterprise and the development of services, with benefits for the whole community.

5. **Ties between local communities and the diaspora need to be strengthened.** Improved channels of communication bring benefits for both parties, and even emigrants that do not return home can be supportive of their hometowns in various ways. To achieve this, special tools have to be developed – the physical and virtual One-stop-shop and SEPSINET have already been tested and can be recommended to other communities.
6. **Youth migration management requires a cross-sector approach;** local stakeholder groups should act together and it is desirable that good practices be disseminated at least at the regional level.
7. **Public policies and long-term strategies are needed** to counterbalance the negative effects of youth migration and find solutions to the challenges of population loss.
8. **Transnational cooperation has to be treated as a priority,** especially in connection with migrant receiving countries, not only to get a better picture of our fellow citizens living abroad, but also to learn about, and eventually adopt public policies and instruments used by other local authorities.

**Map of the Danube region and location of the YOUMIG partners**



**YOUMIG – Improving institutional capacities and fostering cooperation to tackle the impacts of transnational youth migration**

A project of the Danube Transnational Programme.

- Start date: 01-01-2017
- End date: 30-06-2019
- Budget: 2,718,853 EUR (ERDF Contribution: 2,055,179 EUR, IPA Contribution: 255,846 EUR)
- Call number: Call 1
- Priority: 4 (Well-governed Danube Region)
- Specific objective: 4.1. (Improve institutional capacities to tackle major societal challenges)

Project partners:

- Lead partner: Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HU)
- Work package leaders: University of Vienna (AT), Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (DE), Maribor Development Agency (SI), INFOSTAT – Institute of Informatics and Statistics (SK)

- ERDF partners: Municipality of Szeged (HU), City of Graz (AT), Institute for Economic Research (SI), Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities (RO), Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe (RO), National Statistical Institute of the Republic of Bulgaria (BG), Burgas Municipality (BG), Municipality of the City district of Bratislava-Rača (SK)
- IPA partners: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (RS), Institute of Social Sciences (RS), Municipality of Kanjiža (RS)
- Associated Strategic Partners: Statistics Austria (AT), City of Karlsruhe (DE), Federal Institute for Population Research (DE)

YOUMIG, in which 19 partners from 8 countries work together, wishes to support local governments in capitalising on the developmental potential of youth migration, leading to a better governed and more competitive Danube Region. The project aims to boost their institutional capacities to enhance the scarce local evidence on youth migration and contribute to improved policymaking with a focus on human capital. Statistical offices and academic organizations are teaming up with local governments in a complex, customised multi-level, and transnational cooperation to create local developmental strategies based on improved impact indicators of youth migration and to introduce transnationally tested tools to manage local challenges. As a result, institutions and stakeholders obtain increased capacities through intensified cooperation.

YOUMIG's work is structured in six work packages (WPs). Aside from management (WP1) and communication (WP2) issues, the thematic work is distributed as follows. In line with the Conceptual Framework, all partners contribute to the development of improved evidence on youth migration and its developmental impacts at the EU, national and local level by elaborating local status quo analyses for local partners (WP3). Through a comprehensive evaluation of the locally available indicators of youth migration, the project identifies shortcomings in measuring local challenges, and elaborates and tests new or improved indicators of youth migration (WP4). At the local level, the project improves capacities for managing related processes by jointly testing and introducing good practices and institutional units, tailored to local needs (WP5). The project concludes with transnationally tested tools for all governance levels contributing to better strategies, policies and services related to the issue of youth migration (WP6).

YOUMIG's outputs are uploaded to

<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/youmig/outputs>.

## CHAPTER 1

### YOUTH MIGRATION IN SFÂNTU GHEORGHE: CONCEPTUAL AND EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND<sup>3</sup>

#### 1.1. A conceptual framework for studying youth migration in the Danube Region: main concepts<sup>4</sup>

**Focussing on youth is a key factor in understanding the dynamics of migration. Over the course of life, the likelihood of migration is greatest between childhood and adulthood.**

Important life events play a role in migration: the start of tertiary education, the end of compulsory schooling, the transition to working life, living in a partnership – or independently. Reasons for migration are related to the desire to improve one’s living standard and are influenced by socio-economic and personal factors (e.g., capital, migration biography or lifestyle, etc.).

**Migration has important effects on the countries and cities of the Danube Region.** In countries or regions of emigration, the share of young and educated people leaving is very high. The loss of young people not only leads to a change in population size, but also a decline in the potential labour force, innovation and know-how. In arrival countries, newcomers need to be integrated.

**Migration is also a challenge for the individual.** While young people often leave with high expectations of improving their standard of living, there is no guarantee that labour markets in the country of destination can supply jobs that match their particular skills. Owing to language barriers and discrimination, the phenomenon of overqualified workers in low-skilled jobs can be observed. This ‘brain waste’ carries substantial economic costs, lowering educational incentives and undermining the possibility of ‘genuine’ brain gain.<sup>5</sup>

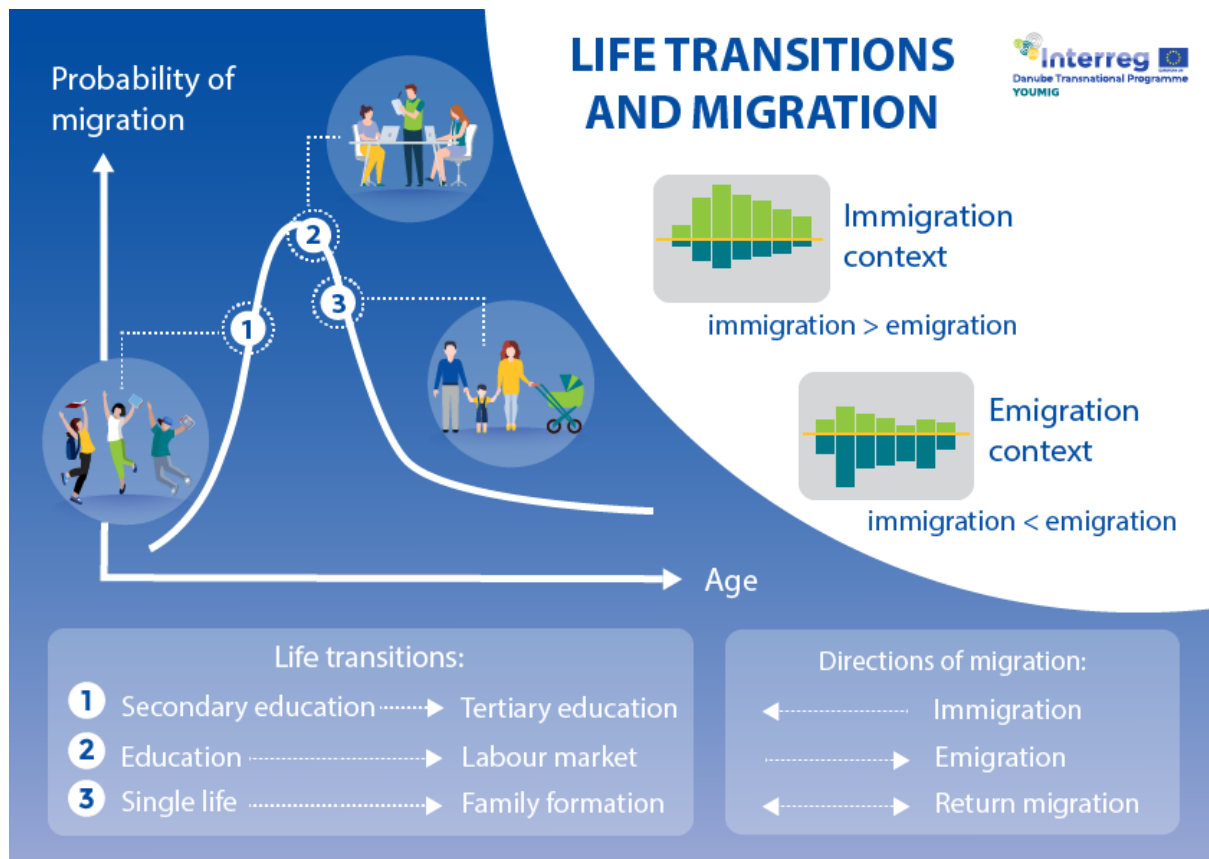
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<sup>3</sup>Chapter 1 is connected to the Data Toolkit through the following expert studies. The 'Conceptual framework for the study of youth migration in the Danube region' and 'Local status quo analyses: methodology and main findings of the comparative analysis of the 7 municipalities' are accessible in the Data Toolkit in the 'YOUMIG - Main outputs' part, through the buttons *Conceptual framework* and *Status quo analyses*. The Local status quo analysis for the given municipality is accessible in the 'Municipality' part through the button *Local status quo analysis*. In addition, basic information and basic data for the given municipality are accessible in the Data Toolkit in the 'Municipality' part through the buttons *Basic information* and *Basic data*.

<sup>4</sup>Author of the subchapter: Elisabeth GRUBER (University of Vienna)

<sup>5</sup>GARCIA PIRES, A. J. (2015) 'Brain Drain and Brain Waste', *Journal of Economic Development*, 40(1): 1-34.

**Figure 1. Idealised model of life transitions and migration events**



**Three important determiners of youth migration: labour, education and family.**

**Labour** has a strong influence on migration and can be categorised into groups including manual labour, work requiring particular qualifications or experience, or high-skilled employment. Migration for labour is often motivated by the desire for better opportunities abroad, improved job security and income. Youth unemployment, job insecurity and wage levels are important factors for migration. Wage differentials might also attract ‘target earners’ that put up with over employment for a specific period to buy property on returning.<sup>6</sup> Owing to higher salaries and languages barriers, migrants often accept jobs that require levels of skill far below their own.

<sup>6</sup>KING, R., LULLE, A., MOROSANU, L. and WILLIAMS, A. (2016) ‘International Youth Mobility and Life Transitions in Europe: Questions, Definitions, Typologies and Theoretical Approaches’. Working Paper No. 86. University of Sussex. Sussex Centre for Migration Research.

**Education** induced youth migration occurs mostly in relation to tertiary educational attainment.<sup>7</sup> Crossing local or regional borders might be necessary in order to attend secondary school or college. Despite the fact that education-orientated migrants are not easy to identify and follow due to different subtypes and insufficient statistical data sources, the number of international university students is observed to be rising<sup>8</sup>. Moreover, most students do not consider themselves migrants and neglect to register. University student mobility can be distinguished between ‘credit mobility’ (students that take single courses or study for only a few semesters abroad) or ‘degree or diploma mobility’ (students that go abroad for a whole study programme, such as a master’s degree).<sup>9</sup> Student mobility in the Danube Region does not appear to be a standalone phenomenon but is often combined with aspirations related to improved career and earning prospects abroad.

**Family** migration is also an important factor. Partnership formation, marriage and childbearing usually happen in the transition phase from youth to adulthood and have a strong influence on choosing a place of residence. While family migration statistics have been concerned mostly with describing internal migration patterns, in periods of globalization, the relevance of international family migration in terms of emerging travel and study abroad has been increasing. Love migration or the ‘transnationalisation of intimacy’, plays an increasingly important role in migration decision-making.<sup>10</sup> Migration can further affect families indirectly; when single members of a union change their residency, families and partnerships become separated. When partners or young families move to a new country of destination, it affects their children or future grandchildren as part of the following generations.

The YOUMIG project not only observes and categorises the **challenges** related to youth migration, but also aims to find possible strategies to deal with these challenges by developing new perspectives. Emigration and immigration are often perceived as threats to the societies of origin and destination respectively. The project endeavours to widen perspectives in order to find **positive aspects** in all developments observed in the region.

One of the foremost positive aspects is **return migration**. For a long time, migration was evaluated negatively by the country of origin. It was seen as a one-directional process, ending with the final decision to emigrate; but in recent years, a number of studies have started to

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<sup>7</sup> WATERS, J., BROOKS, R. and PIMLOTT-WILSON, H. (2011) Youthful Escapes? British Students, Overseas Education and the Pursuit of Happiness. *Social and Cultural Geography* 12(5): 455–469.

<sup>8</sup> GMG (=GLOBAL MIGRATION GROUP) (2014): Migration and Youth <http://www.globalmigrationgroup.org/migrationandyouth> (retrieved: April 5th 2017)

<sup>9</sup> KING, R. AND FINDLAY, A. M. (2012) ‘Student migration’. In: Martiniello, M. and Rath, J. (eds) ‘An Introduction to Migration Studies: European Perspectives’. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 257–278.

<sup>10</sup> KING, R. (2002) ‘Towards a new map of European migration’. *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF POPULATION GEOGRAPHY*, 8: 89-106.



broach the issue of return migration.<sup>11</sup> In general, four types of return can be distinguished: the return of failure, conservatism, innovation, and retirement.<sup>12</sup> 'The return of failure' is characterised by the returnee neither succeeding in integration in the new society nor having enough ties to go back easily to the country of destination. In contrast, the 'return of innovation' describes the returnee as having successfully integrated into the foreign labour market. The person characterised by this type of return subsequently goes back to their country of origin with the financial resources and know-how to effect considerable changes in their social status and that of others in the sending country. Recent studies have focused on the beneficial role of return migrants for economic development.<sup>13</sup> Today, therefore, return migration is considered a means of bringing back financial, social and cultural capital, as well as importing knowledge. However, in reality, returning – even if initially intended – does not always happen. Often new personal relationships or enrolment to the labour force hinders attempts to return. It is often difficult for high-skilled migrants in the Danube Region to return to their region or country of origin due to the mismatch of labour demand and supply in relation to their specialised knowledge. Nonetheless, it is also important to see the full potential in return migrants and provide more incentives to return.

**Diaspora networks** offer a potential strategic means to gain from emigration. Expatriate communities play an increasingly important role as 'support actors' in the sending location, but also act as networks for receiving migrants and help in their integration. Nowadays, more than half of UN member states have their own diaspora department.<sup>14</sup> Diaspora policies have very diverse priorities. They may try to reach bilateral tax exemptions, for instance, for money transfers or visas, which play a more important role in countries outside the EU. Nowadays, networks try to develop and maintain contacts with emigrants to ease any future return, and for the purpose of investment or business cooperation. In addition, maintenance of national identity and the need for continued political engagement (participation in elections) in the country of origin provide a further role for diaspora networks.<sup>15</sup> In the modern sense, diaspora networks can lead to better cooperation between new and old countries of residence and the

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<sup>11</sup>See KING, R. (1986) 'Return Migration and Regional Economic Problems'. Routledge. London.

<sup>12</sup>CERASE, F. P. (1974) 'Expectations and Reality: A Case Study of Return Migration from the United States to Southern Italy'. *The International Migration Review*, 8(2): 245-262.

<sup>13</sup>DE HAAS, H. (2005) 'International migration, remittances and development: Myths and facts'. *Third World Quarterly*, 26: 1269–1284.

<sup>14</sup>COLLYER, M. (ed.) (2013) 'Emigration Nations. Policies and Ideologies of Emigrant Engagement.' Palgrave Macmillan. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire.

<sup>15</sup>HERNER-KOVÁCS, E. (2017) 'Nation Building Extended: Hungarian Diaspora Politics', *Minority Studies*, 17: 55-67.

realisation of transnational lifestyles. Former migrants may become ‘development agents’, responsible for improvements in their home communities.<sup>16</sup>

In the countries and cities of immigration, **the integration of newcomers** is certainly a challenge, but also a major potential benefit, if decision makers can help to lower the barriers. Language barriers are just one of the challenges for successful integration into new societies. Integration measures – in the light of increasing diversity – need to cover a broader range of topics such as language skills and education, labour market integration, habituation to cultural norms, and so on. Integration is a topic that warrants attention on the part of hosting societies in order to learn more about accepting and welcoming newcomers.

**Adapting a new perspective on migration** is essential. Migration can provide new opportunities for youth that may be unavailable in their countries of origin. The potential outcome is one of economic gains for destination countries, and benefits for origin countries in terms of skills brought home and networks, i.e., a **triple win**:

- A win for the country of origin
- A win for the receiving country
- A win for the individual migrant<sup>17</sup>

Adapting the focus on how individuals can profit from migration is important for future policy development<sup>18</sup>.

## 1.2. Methodology and main findings of the comparative analysis of seven municipalities in the Danube Region<sup>19</sup>

In the framework of YOUMIG, seven **Local Status Quo Analyses (LSQAs)** were carried out by thematic experts employed by local partners. LSQAs relied on a common methodology, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Through LSQAs, researchers aimed to obtain an integrated analysis of migration, demographic and developmental processes. Figure 2 synthesises the methods and phases of local level empirical research and analysis.

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<sup>16</sup>CASTLES, S. (2008) Development and Migration – Migration and Development: What comes first? SSRIC Migration & Development Conference Paper No.2. New York: Social Science Research Center.

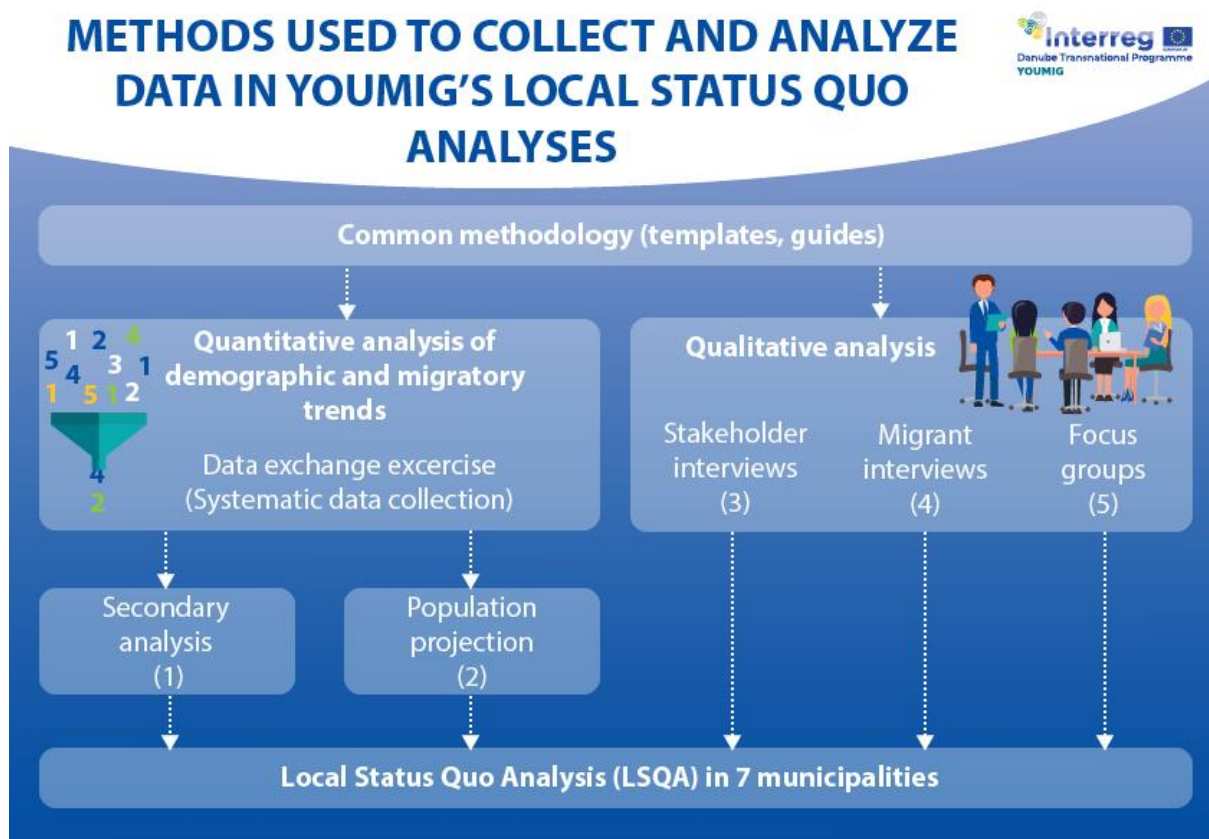
<sup>17</sup>SVR (=Sachverständigenrat deutscher Stiftungen für Integration und Migration) (2016): Viele Götter, ein Staat: Religiöse Vielfalt und Teilhabe im Einwanderungsland. Jahresgutachten 2016 mit Integrationsbarometer.

<sup>18</sup>See FASSMANN, H., GRUBER, E., NÉMETH Á. (2018). ‘Conceptual overview of youth migration in the Danube Region’. YOUMIG Working Papers, No.1.

<sup>19</sup>Author of the subchapter: Tamás KISS (Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities)



**Figure 2. Methods used to collect and analyse data in YOUMIG’s Local Status Quo Analyses**



1) The main aim of the **quantitative analysis** was to describe the migration processes and demographic trends in the municipalities. In the comparative analysis, researchers constructed a typology of the municipalities according to their developmental positions and with regard to the demographic and migration processes they face.

There are important **developmental differences** between the project partner municipalities related to the regional developmental position of the country (in the Danube Region), and the internal developmental position of the municipality (in the country):

- Concerning the **developmental positions of the respective countries**, Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia have a semi-peripheral position in Europe, with an emphasis on low value added industries and subsistence agriculture. These are emigration countries<sup>20</sup>, where no major immigration is expected. Slovenia, Hungary and Slovakia have the characteristics of semi-core economies and some parts of these countries are

<sup>20</sup> See FASSMANN, H. et al. (2014): Longer-Term Demographic Dynamics in South–East Europe: Convergent, Divergent and Delayed Development. Central and Eastern European Migration Review, 3(2), pp.150-173.

integrated in the industrial production of the western core. They also send emigrants to Western Europe; however, in far lower numbers than countries belonging to the first category. As these countries face labour shortages, they might theoretically become countries of immigration at some point, though probably only for a short period. Finally, Austria might be considered part of the Western European core. It has a positive net migration rate and receives an important number of immigrants. Contrary to other countries observed in this project, Austria turned from an emigration to an immigration country well before the fall of the Iron Curtain.<sup>21</sup>

- Concerning the **developmental position of the municipalities within the respective countries**, researchers have classified Bratislava-Rača, Maribor, Graz, Burgas and Szeged as main regional poles, while Kanjiža and Sfântu Gheorghe can be defined as ‘zonal’ urban centres.

**Demographic developments** in the project partner cities have certain common characteristics. All of them are facing low fertility rates and rapidly ageing populations; and for all of them, migration trends make a difference in terms of demographic processes and prospects. At the national level, four types of demographic change can be distinguished. Bulgaria and Romania, both witnesses to drastic population decline, fall into the first category. Serbia would also be in this category, but forced migration caused by the wars of Yugoslav succession increased its population, therefore it fits into in the second category, experiencing a modest decline in population, along with Hungary. In the third category, Slovenia and Slovakia can be found, where the populations are slowly growing. Finally, Austria belongs in the fourth category, characterized by dynamic population growth. At the municipality level as well, demographic processes are shaped by internal developmental positions. Burgas, for instance, as a major regional pole in Bulgaria has faced relatively balanced migration trends. Situated next to high-level outflows, the municipality has been the target of both internal and international immigrants. In contrast, in the cases of Kanjiža and Sfântu Gheorghe, outflows have far exceeded inflows.

2) As part of LSQAs, local level **population projections** were also carried out based on the cohort-component method, which began modelling the evolution of mortality, fertility and migration in the seven municipalities in 2017 (continuing until 2035). These are not forecasts, but rather ‘what-if’ type statements on possible pathways of population change. Hypotheses took into account both the existing trends and the anticipations of local experts and

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<sup>21</sup> See FASSMANN, H. and REEGER, U. (2012) Old Immigration Countries in Europe. The Concept and Empirical Examples. In: OKÓLSKI, M. (ed.) (2012) European Immigrations. Trends, Structures and Policy Implications (65-90) Amsterdam: Imiscoe Research/Amsterdam University Press.

stakeholders. An important result was that in several municipalities, such as Szeged, Sfântu Gheorghe, Kanjiža and Maribor, neither experts nor stakeholders could imagine that their municipalities might become the target of immigration.

3) The **interviews with institutional actors** (stakeholders and decision makers representing important city institutions) were based on a common interview guide. This research phase was aimed at mapping the existing policies focussing on migration and youth, as well as identifying discourses concerning migration and understanding how decision makers connect local development and migration – whether they perceive migration as a threat or an opportunity. Both immigration and emigration were taken into account, even in localities where immigration was barely relevant statistically. Researchers took into account the differences in perception of highly skilled and low-status migrants, as well as those of persons belonging to the majority society and ethno-cultural minorities.

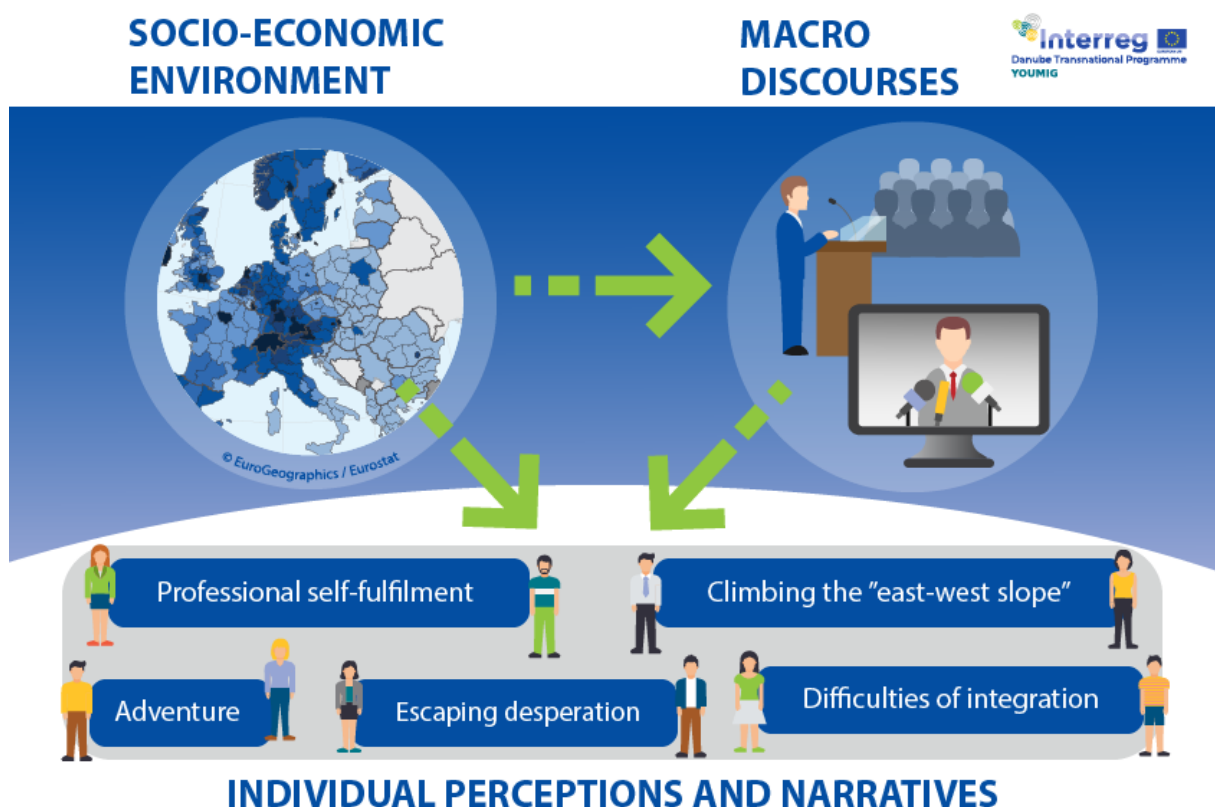
4) In the case of the **interviews with young migrants**, researchers conducted narrative-biographical interviews with 8-10 young migrants per locality, based on a previously fixed technique of conducting and interpreting interviews. Researchers did not subordinate the stories (i.e. self-representation) of migrants to scientifically or politically motivated narratives. The interviewees had the opportunity to present their stories in an unconstrained manner. Persons aged 18-35 of different educational attainment, genders, family status and type of migration experience (emigrants, immigrants, returning migrants, daily commuters between different countries) were interviewed. Well-educated and middle class background young interviewees were overrepresented, perhaps due to deliberating over emigration ('brain drain'), which is a serious issue to be tackled.

5) **Focus group interviews** with young migrants followed the individual in-depth interviews. The topic of the talks focused primarily on the participants' experiences, paying special attention to the administrative aspects of the migration process. They were asked about their contacts with the local (and other level) administration, the problems they encountered, and their opinions on the policies employed by the relevant authorities etc. One discussion per locality was conducted, with 6-10 participants in each group. All participants were aged 18-34 with migration experience. In sending localities these were mostly returning migrants, while in the case of receiving municipalities, immigrants were selected. In municipalities with a mixed pattern of migration, both immigrants and return migrants could participate in the focus group. An audio recording and report on the focus group was made according to a previously fixed template. Participants were asked about personal experiences with the authorities relevant to migration issues (work permits, residence permits, recognition of diplomas, etc.), and to provide suggestions concerning migration policies.

The first main thesis of the **comparative analysis** was that massive regional inequalities and socio-economic developmental hierarchies are a conduit for different **macro-level discourses concerning migration management**. Populationist views (or demographic nationalism) were dominant in municipalities with a lower status on the developmental scale. According to this discourse, migration management relates mostly to the reproduction of the ethno-nation. In contrast, an utilitarian framework that perceived migrants as labour force was dominant among stakeholders in municipalities with a higher position on the developmental ladder.

The second main thesis was that **strategies of self-representation of young migrants** (as shown by the biographic narratives) are affected by both ‘objective’ developmental differences and macro discourses concerning development and migration management. In this respect, biographic narratives, as such, can be perceived as strategies of status reproduction or status improvement.

**Figure 3. The effects of the socio-economic environment and macro discourses on the individual perceptions and narratives of young migrants**



The following **quotes** illustrate the main discursive patterns identified in the interviews.

## Macro discourses:

- Populationist views (or demographic nationalism): *'They're arrogant and behave like colonisers, not immigrants.'*
- Utilitarian framework: *'I hear the managers of large manufacturers want to import foreign, non-EU workers; there is a lot of pressure on us.'*

## Narratives of young migrants:

- Professional self-fulfilment: *'If I remained in Serbia, my professional career would be over, and I would end up like my parents.'*
- The 'adventurer': *'I've always hated settled life; I prefer freedom to routine.'*
- Climbing the 'East-West slope': *'Germany has always attracted me; not just its wealth; somehow, I share its mentality.'*
- Escaping desperation: *'I felt I just couldn't have a normal life here.'*
- Difficult integration: *'When I go out to a nightclub, I somehow feel out of place.'*

### 1.3. Local Status Quo Analysis in Sfântu Gheorghe: main findings and recommendations<sup>22</sup>

The Local Status Quo Analysis (LSQA), Transnational Youth Migration in Sfântu Gheorghe: Processes, Effects and Policy Challenges was carried out in 2017 by external expert Andrea Sólyom, PhD. The main aim of the LSQA is to understand the effects of youth migration, and to identify the policy challenges related to it. The findings on Sfântu Gheorghe were presented to various local stakeholders and institutional actors in the frame of a migration forum held in 2018.

The Municipality of **Sfântu Gheorghe** is a small city placed in one of the smallest and poorest counties in the central part of Romania. It can be characterised by a **weak economic situation** (low wage levels, low added value; the local economy is dominated by the food processing industry, which does not need a high level of education). One of the most important **strengths** of the city is its **calm atmosphere** and **cultural events**, which serve as attractions for young people, families, and returning migrants. In spite of its problems, local 'optimists' are certain, that with inter-institutional collaboration and good local policies they can turn Sfântu Gheorghe into 'a family-filled city' and a flourishing community.

It is hard to draw a picture of migration at the local level, due to **the lack of availability and reliability of data**. **Sfântu Gheorghe**, like other towns and cities in the region, **lost around 10%**

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<sup>22</sup>Author of the subchapter: Delin ANTAL (Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe)



**of its population between two censuses in the last decades.** The main reason for the decline in population size was international emigration, which mostly affected the younger generation, with the city's financial and labour market characteristics functioning as push factors. We can affirm that **in Sfântu Gheorghe emigration is the most important migration trend.** In contrast, immigration characterises the situation only to a limited extent; newcomers are typically Romanian citizens (internal migrants), for the most part from the rural surroundings. Given the dominant role of emigration, **all population projection scenarios assume a serious decrease in population size until 2035.**

Regarding youth emigration, most institutional actors agree on the importance of encouraging and investing in **local entrepreneurship** – from the perspective of developing a dynamic economic sector and that of ameliorating the trend of young people moving away to other communities. Products in this area are diverse, consisting of **business incubators, co-working spaces, the stimulation of start-ups, the development of a community career centre, etc.** The development of 'entrepreneurial spirit' at the local level is essential.

Youth migration is considered problematic since it limits **workforce resupply**, which in turn hampers local development in the longer run. Institutional actors agree that the **low number of attractive local work opportunities** and a general lack of investment in local enterprise represent an important push factor in relation to youth emigration. Moreover, low salaries, especially for entrants, act as a further disincentive for young people to stay in the municipality.

**Dialogue between the business sector and educational institutions** should be enhanced and secondary and technical college courses should be geared to labour market demand. Further, long-term collaboration between local companies and schools could help to facilitate the integration of young people into the labour market.

In addition to attracting business investment, **increased state support for entrant employees and employers** may provide young migrants with a valid reason for coming home.

The interviewees all agreed that return migration is highly desirable. There can be no doubt that emigrants returning home with fresh perspectives and new skills will contribute greatly to the development of Sfântu Gheorghe. On the other hand, migrants that stay abroad to achieve a higher standard of living are, some argue, turning their backs on their communities for the sake of individual gain – communities that have invested time, money and attention in them. In this case, returns on the young person's accumulated foreign experiences stay unrealised.

Of course, young migrant interviewees deliberating on whether to return home have their own economic priorities based on the number and range of employment opportunities in their native country. Such **finance-based priorities** (related to the number of available jobs and salary levels) in addition to **the general quality and standard of life back home** determine the degree to which young emigrants are willing to return home.

The migrant interviewees faced **various problems after returning to Romania** that can be compared to the migrants' experiences in their host countries. These problems can be divided into **seven types**:

- Communication problems with the authorities
- Bureaucratic processes
- The attitude of authorities
- Problems regarding naturalisation
- Poor infrastructure
- Labour market problems
- The local mentality

The problems of some interviewees appear to be genuine enough; and their expectations seem broadly realistic from the perspective of the average citizen. However, the problems of other interviewees sometimes demonstrate unrealistic levels of expectation in their demand for extra services from the authorities. Some of these problem areas, where well founded, occur at the level of the local authority and can be resolved (or at least mitigated) by changing practices, allocating resources, etc., while others can be referred to the relevant institutions at the national level.

Overall, the young interviewees benefitted from spending a period abroad, and most of them think it can be useful from the city's perspective, too. They saw marked improvements in their foreign language skills, met new people and experienced different cultures, accumulated financial capital, gained work and study experience, formed new habits and ideas – these 'social remittances' can be considered some of the positive aspects of emigration.

Based on the interviews, certain **policy measures** should be considered by the Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe, as summarised below.

## Recommendations

A **user-friendlier administration** with easy communication practices based on phone or email should be adapted in Sfântu Gheorghe. A more predictable administrative system based on up-to-date technology, skilled and motivated employees and representatives characterised by a trustful, positive attitude toward citizens, organisations and companies in addition to simplified processes would help to make young returning migrants feel more welcome.

**Greater job diversification** is needed in the local labour market in Sfântu Gheorghe because only a few sectors dominate the local economy. A qualified and flexible work force that is open to change is also essential. Moreover, a shift in employers' perceptions in relation to employee performance appraisal, salary levels, and longer term planning will facilitate the return of youth.

**Tax breaks for new enterprises in the municipality could encourage potential entrepreneurs** and help to boost the local economy. This could provide more employment and self-employment opportunities for returning youngsters.

Initiate a **programme in which 18-19 year old young people live abroad for one or two years** and accumulate specific work/study experience on the condition that they return after the programme's completion armed with new skills (and a new outlook). This scheme could be facilitated by local scholarships offered by representatives in the public and private sector. Strategic approaches to migration like this one are necessary to bring about improved job opportunities back home.



## CHAPTER 2

### BETTER INDICATORS ON YOUTH MIGRATION AND ITS LOCAL CONTEXT<sup>23</sup>

#### 2.1. Developing youth migration indicators: priority areas and methodology<sup>24</sup>

In general, the management of migration is directed by national objectives. Related challenges and opportunities are measured and evaluated at the country level. Nonetheless, migration processes can look quite different at the local level. The emerging literature 'points to how regional and municipal outcomes differ significantly from national ones'.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, **building capacities that measure and evaluate the effects and contexts of migration at the local level is crucial.**

While the European Union and nation states provide general guidelines for the integration of migrants, the ability to undertake practical action usually depends on municipalities. Newcomers have to rely on services provided by local governments looking to find solutions for their integration. Similarly, emigration calls for action at the local level, for instance, when dealing with the lack of labour in areas of outward migration.

Thus, in order to plan for the provision of services or to predict changes in production structures, local governments should monitor the trends of all the components of demographic population movements, namely fertility, mortality, as well as immigration, emigration and return migration.

Besides the basic figures on demographic development, however, the socio-economic context of migration should also be taken into account. Indicators can help local decision makers to quantify the relevant tendencies in different dimensions of local development. OECD – based on the recommendations of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe<sup>26</sup> – defines

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<sup>23</sup>Chapter 2 is connected to the Data Toolkit through one expert study. The 'Evaluation report of youth migration indicators including the identification of shortfalls', is accessible in the Data Toolkit in the 'YOUMIG- Main outputs' part through the button *Indicators*. In addition, all indicators (core and extra) for the given municipality are accessible in the Data Toolkit in the 'Municipality' part, through the button *Indicators*.

<sup>24</sup> Authors of the subchapter: Ekaterina SKOGLUND (Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies - IOS Regensburg); Zoltán CSÁNYI (Hungarian Central Statistical Office)

<sup>25</sup>SCHMIDTKE, O. (2014). Beyond National Models? Governing migration and integration at the regional and local levels in Canada and Germany. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 2(1), 77-99., p. 79.

See among others: BENDEL, P. (2014). Coordinating immigrant integration in Germany. Mainstreaming at the federal and local levels. Migration Policy Institute Europe, Brussels, 1-32.

CAPONIO, T., and BORKERT, M. (Eds.). (2010). The local dimension of migration policymaking. Amsterdam University Press.

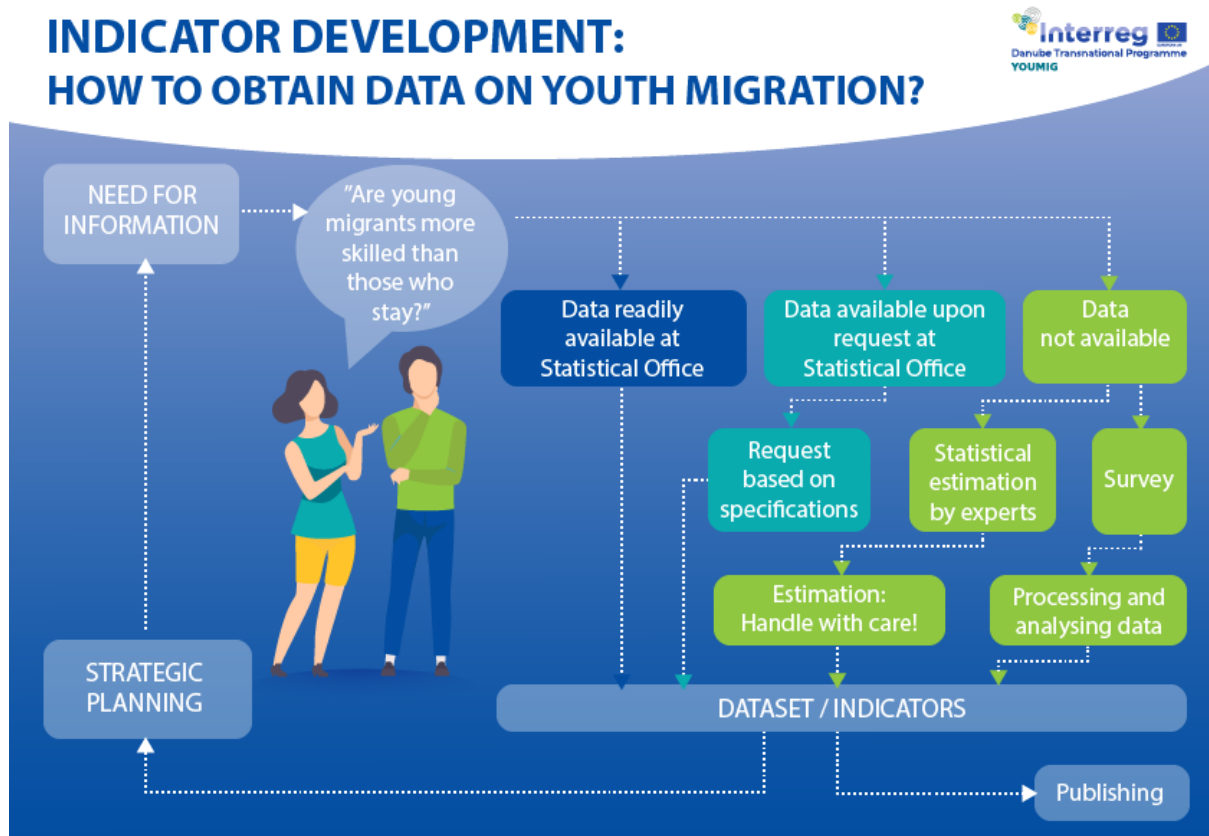
SCHOLTEN, P., and PENNINX, R. (2016). The multilevel governance of migration and integration. In *Integration processes and policies in Europe* (pp. 91-108). Springer, Cham.

<sup>26</sup>United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), "Terminology on Statistical Metadata", Conference of European Statisticians Statistical Standards and Studies, No. 53, Geneva, 2000

**statistical indicators** as ‘data elements that represent statistical data for a specified time, place, and other characteristics’.<sup>27</sup> In practice, indicators are simply ‘statistics, or a combination of statistics, that are populated by data [...] Indicators suggest, or indicate, a characteristic of a system’.<sup>28</sup>

The data for producing indicators can be obtained in various ways. There are datasets readily available and accessible to the public at national (or international) statistical institutions or administrative bodies, while others are available upon request or for a fee. Further, in the case of nationally and regionally representative surveys, statistical methods may be used to produce local (municipality) level values. When no data source is available, necessary data might be produced using local surveys. During the YOUMIG project, all of the above methods were tested to obtain the data necessary for designing local level statistical indicators on youth.

**Figure 4. The process of obtaining data on youth migration and its social context**



<sup>27</sup> See also the Eurostat definition at [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Statistical\\_indicator](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Statistical_indicator)

<sup>28</sup>GAULT, F. (2011). Social impacts of the development of science, technology and innovation indicators. MERIT Working Papers 008, United Nations University - Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology (MERIT).

International organizations and national statistical services use many indicators that might in terms of relevance, differ from the purposes of local level migration management across the Danube Region. Therefore, the **YOUMIG project followed a step-by-step selection process**, including consultations with the project partners and relevant stakeholders. These steps were as follows:

- 1) A list of 214 possible indicators in seven areas related to migration and development at different geographical levels was compiled. These seven areas were the following: Demographics and population, Health, Education, Social development and social capital, Economic development, Income and living conditions, Urban and Regional development.
- 2) The relevance of each indicator was discussed by experts from the participating statistical and research institutions, representatives of the partner-municipalities, and relevant stakeholders (see the Local Status Quo Analyses). The indicators classified as ‘Not relevant’<sup>29</sup> were removed from further consideration.
- 3) The remaining 120 indicators were assessed concerning (a) their availability at the national, regional, and municipality levels; (b) their effectiveness in helping evidence-based decision making in the sphere of youth, migration, and local development policies.
- 4) Based on this evaluation, a TOP-16 list of ‘Core indicators’ was drawn up, and each measure specification was refined by partners from statistical offices.
- 5) Partner institutions within each participating country gathered information on the 16 ‘Core indicators’. In view of the differences in data availability, up to five ‘Extra’ indicators were added to the national indicator lists. This measure was taken to balance the amount of work across partner countries, and to allow municipality partners to add locally relevant topics not covered by the core indicators. As mentioned above, the data was retrieved from open access sources, provided by statistical or administrative bodies on request, or collected by local YOUMIG surveys. All seven project partner municipalities carried out a local survey in the second half of 2018.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> See the 'Evaluation report of youth migration indicators including the identification of shortfalls', Table 2, column 2, available on the YOUMIG website and in the Data Toolkit.

<sup>30</sup>It should be added that beyond the aims of indicator development, the local surveys also served the purpose of getting relevant information on other migration-related issues (a common questionnaire was used in the YOUMIG partner municipalities – except for Graz – that could be optionally broadened with municipality-specific questions).

6) The resulting sets of indicators were evaluated using a framework for assessing the quality of secondary sources recommended by the international statistical community<sup>31</sup>, adapted to the needs of YOUMIG. For the evaluation, we used the 'six usual dimensions of quality': a) relevance; b) accuracy; c) timeliness; d) accessibility; e) interpretability and f) coherence. To provide an option to add information or comments outside these six quality dimensions, a seventh field was added: 'further critical comments'.

The 16 core **YOUMIG indicators** are as follows:

- Population by sex, age, urban/rural, country of citizenship, country of birth
- In-migration, internal/international
- Out-migration, internal/international
- Top 5 sending countries (of migrants)
- Number of returnees registered, by sex and education level
- Completed education of persons aged 15-34 by sex, age groups, native/foreign (country of citizenship)
- Student outbound mobility ratio at tertiary level, by sex
- Skill level of return migrants
- Regional product (Regional GDP) per capita
- Business demography: number of active enterprises, by size, ownership (national/foreign)
- Disposable household income per capita
- Population by activity status, by sex, 5 year age intervals, native/foreign
- Subjective well-being in the population
- Tolerance towards foreigners (foreign workers)
- Intentions to migrate within the next 5 years, [if possible] intended destination, duration of absence
- Healthcare sector outlook: work force in health care; shortage of work in healthcare; healthcare workforce gap

During the indicator development process, the following key **data gaps and statistical challenges** were identified:

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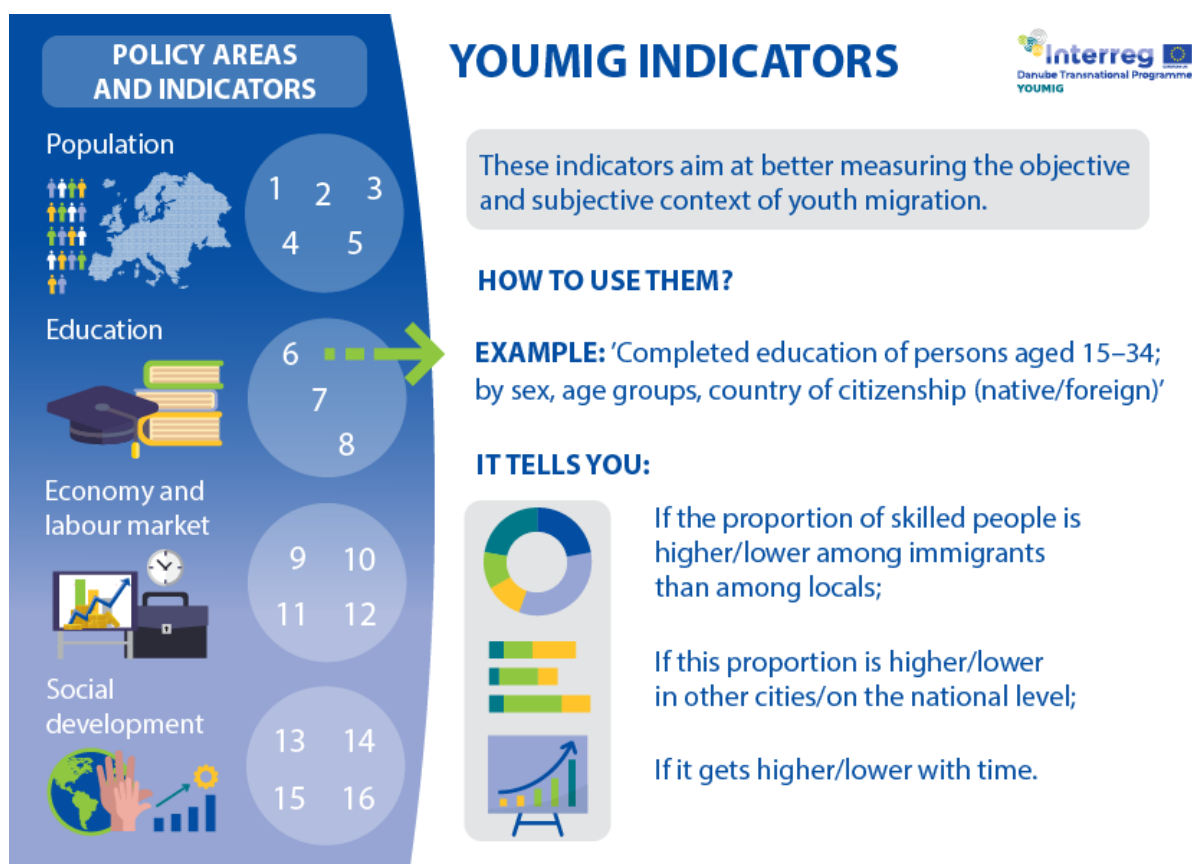
<sup>31</sup>See recommendations of the Statistical Network Responsible for Developing Methodologies for an Integrated Use of Administrative Data in the Statistical Process (SN-MIAD). Available online at:[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cros/content/miad-methodologies-integrated-use-administrative-data-statistical-process\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cros/content/miad-methodologies-integrated-use-administrative-data-statistical-process_en)

- First, while information on the resident population and immigrants is widely accessible (from as low a level as LAU2), there are major **difficulties in the identification of** such groups as **emigrants** (still registered at the sending municipality), **returning migrants and second-generation migrants**. Similarly, a description of the mentioned groups with the help of socio-economic characteristics (e.g., age, length of immigration experience, education level, and country of return) is rarely possible or can be evaluated only with the help of proxies. Identification of transnational and reunified families and their characteristics is also seldom made; and the information on local programmes of temporary out-migration is rarely collected and systematised.
- Second, the **main demographic and labour market indicators may be unavailable concerning the division of natives and foreigners** and with respect to different age groups, and education levels. Moreover, differences in the definitions of native and foreign categories can be expected, as in some cases only a disaggregation based on the country of birth or the country of citizenship might be available.
- Third, a range of **subjective indicators** such as 'Subjective well-being', 'Intention to migrate', 'Aspirations of youth', 'Trust levels' is not collected by statistical institutions of partner countries; and some information can be gathered on less than a yearly basis from representative household surveys. LAU2 level indicators of this kind should be collected separately within small-scale surveys.
- Fourth, while 'Economic development (as GDP per capita)' is a widely accessible indicator, **Information on business dynamics** (e.g., working and closed enterprises) may be missing, especially in cases where a grouping is required by the number of employees, or the ownership status. Similarly, data on wages across industries and occupations is often collected, while information on family incomes can be evaluated only from representative surveys. Poverty indicators may be unavailable at lower sub-national levels. Information on the indebtedness of households is rarely collected.

During the data collection stage, local partners encountered a range of other, **procedural challenges**, including the long response time of statistical bodies to data requests, the availability of data requiring a fee, and data use restriction requirements.

YOUMIG's indicator collection process was finalised in December 2018, and **the obtained datasets – where no data use restriction is applied – are available for consultation and analysis on the YOUMIG website and in the Data Toolkit.**

Figure 5. YOUMIG’s indicators on youth migration and its social context



## 2.2. Accessing data and using the new indicators related to youth migration in Romania<sup>32</sup>

Among the countries participating in the YOUMIG project, **Romania clearly belongs to the category of migrant-sending countries**. Of course, immigration into Romania does occur, and especially the influx of citizens from certain neighbouring countries (primarily the Republic of Moldova) is a relevant and relatively well-researched phenomenon. Yet, all this is countered by the existence of a **Romanian diaspora numbering several million persons** in addition to demographic trends that provide less than optimistic reading, with some regions facing outright **depopulation**.

While internal regional differences are considerable, and some (primarily metropolitan) areas less affected by negative trends, the city of **Sfântu Gheorghe** – one of the local partners

<sup>32</sup>Author of the subchapter: István SZÉKELY (Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities)



participating in the YOUMIG project – is severely affected by emigration. Its population has fallen from 68,359 in 1992 to 56,006 in 2011. Consequently, this local partner focussed primarily on the phenomenon of return migration within the YOUMIG project; likewise, the pilot and the OSS were designed with return migrants as one of the most important target groups. In this regard, the **primary objective of the local partner is to encourage and facilitate return migration** towards the city or its surroundings. The availability of data on this phenomenon would be of central importance and the current lack of such data is a major obstacle.

Moreover, it should be noted that over **75% of Sfântu Gheorghe’s population are ethnic Hungarians**, which creates **special conditions** with regard to the public policies intended to tackle migration processes and encourage return migration. These particularities have been detailed in the LSQA, most importantly the need to use the Hungarian language in public administration and the level of Romanian language proficiency for migrants as a factor that does not encourage return. These issues will be discussed in detail in section 4.3.

While attempting to satisfy the requirements concerning not only immigration-related indicators but also those of other domains, the Romanian YOUMIG team prioritised the **data collection** and assessment process of those indicators **related to emigration and return migration**. In the YOUMIG Needs Assessment Report, these domains had already been assigned a high priority, and several of these were thoroughly debated at the Ambition Setting and Vision Development Workshops. The availability of the data on returnees (indicators ‘Returnees’ and ‘Skill level of returnees’) was discussed at both expert workshops, while the indicator ‘Student outbound mobility’ was on the agenda of the Ambition Setting Workshop.

Despite the very high salience of the phenomenon of return migration for both Romania in general and the local partner in particular, this domain also proved to be the most **problematic** in the case of Romania. All that the team was able to submit with regard to these indicators were some rather **rough proxies**:

- First, at the suggestion of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, **Eurostat data** (migr\_imm6ctz) on immigration to Romania was used as a proxy for the number of returnees (setting immigrants’ citizenship to Romanian). Although this ‘proxy method’ was not only used with regard to Romania, but also other partner countries, the problem of lack of data is, nonetheless, rather serious. Furthermore, Eurostat data are **only available at the national level**. Consequently, nothing can be said about the NUTS3 or LAU2 levels, which would be of the utmost interest to the local partner, especially given the specific ethnocultural features of the above mentioned area.

- Second, the **small-scale survey** was also used to gather information on return migration, more specifically the education level of persons who had spent at least one year abroad in the past. However, this data **can only be compared to the results of similar surveys** which had previously only been conducted sporadically. Consequently, the data obtained by this means are **not really commensurable** with anything, and although the survey method would be suitable for obtaining time-series data at least at the level of the municipality, the costs of this method are rather high and the municipality might not be able to commission such surveys at regular (therefore meaningful) intervals.

It should be noted that the scarcity of data on return migration in Romania is a consequence of a broader problem, namely the **lack of valid emigration data**. The roots of this can be found in the administrative processes of data collection.

- First, the process of operating the **population registers** underwent a process of **imperfect decentralization** in 2006-2007, whereby local municipalities were entrusted with operating the population registers, but received almost zero control over the methodology of collection and over processing. Only access to the same data produced by central-level organs (various directorates of the Ministry of Interior that send the data to the National Institute of Statistics - NIS) was granted, as in the case of ordinary citizens.
- Second, the **legal framework** in operation contains a number of elements that act as **disincentives for citizens leaving the country to comply with legal requirements** (e.g. deregistering, handing in identity documents, declaring a domicile leased/bought abroad, etc.), thus contributing to data validity problems that stem from underreporting. Given that no valid data is available on emigrants, ascertaining the number of those who return to the country becomes an even more challenging task.

Within the framework of the YOUMIG workshops, several possible options were considered for the purpose of **improving the processes of both administrative and statistical data collection and dissemination**. These were framed primarily with regard to the indicators on migration (emigration and return migration). However, they could (especially in terms of the third and fourth proposals) in principle also permit the collection of a number of other indicators that proved to be rather problematic and/or could only be collected through the small-scale survey, that is, 'Subjective well-being', 'Tolerance towards foreigners/immigrants', 'Migration potential', and 'Disposable household income per capita'.



In the following subchapter, the information gathered by the **small-scale survey** in Sfântu Gheorghe is presented, while the recommendations for the collection of administrative and statistical data (requiring substantial legislative changes that can only be initiated and carried out by the government and parliament) are presented in subchapter 4.4; together with other recommendations for national level policy actors.

### 2.3. Small-scale survey: main findings for the Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe<sup>33</sup>

The small-scale survey aimed to test several indicators that could provide information on the selected variables at the municipality level. It was also a goal to collect **exact information concerning several aspects of youth migration and related processes**. The Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities was in charge of the methodological coordination and supervision of the survey, while the fieldwork was carried out by TRANSOBJECTIVE S.R.L, a firm specialised in opinion polls and social research with a lot of experience in qualitative and quantitative research in multi-ethnic and multi-lingual environments. The fieldwork was coordinated by Barna Grigore, a sociologist.

A **stratified multi-level random sampling method** was used to achieve a representative sample of the total, and ages 18-34 population of the municipality. In the first phase, a random sample of streets was elaborated, while in the second phase the households were selected according to a starting point and a systematic sampling method. Gender and age quotas were used to select the respondents among the members of the already selected households. **Only persons resident in Sfântu Gheorghe were interviewed**, regardless of whether they were Romanian citizens or foreigners. Furthermore, the ethnic composition of the city was also used as a stratification criterion, with questionnaires being printed in both the Hungarian and Romanian languages.

The face to face (traditional pencil and paper based) questionnaires were administered in the respondents' domiciles. The operators, who asked questions in Hungarian and/or Romanian, were fluent in both languages and **respondents had the possibility to decide whether to be questioned in either Hungarian or Romanian**. The interviews were conducted in the respondents' households only. No questionnaires completed in public places (streets, bars, pubs, etc.) were allowed. The fieldwork was carried out between 30 October 2018 and 29 January 2019.

In what follows, we briefly present those **survey results** directly relevant to the set of indicators included in the YOUMIG activities. In the case of several of these indicators, the

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<sup>33</sup>Author of the subchapter: István SZÉKELY (Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities)

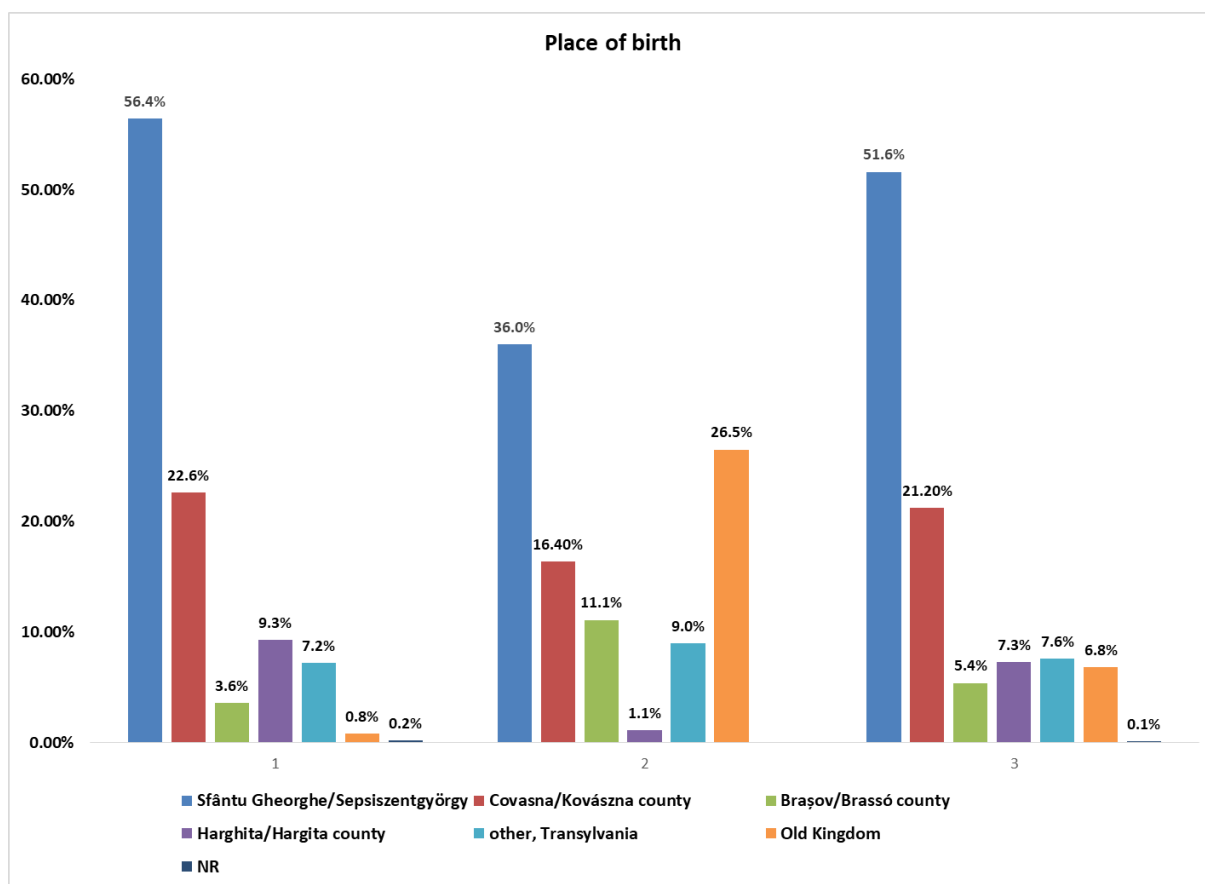
small-scale survey was the only possible data source, while for some other indicators alternative data sources were also available, even if not at the same level of aggregation (but, for instance, at NUTS2 or national level).

### Characteristics of the sample

**Table 1. The sample according to the language of the questionnaire**

Hungarian	590	73.11%
Romanian	217	26.89%
Total	807	100%

**Figure 6. The composition of the sample according to place of birth**

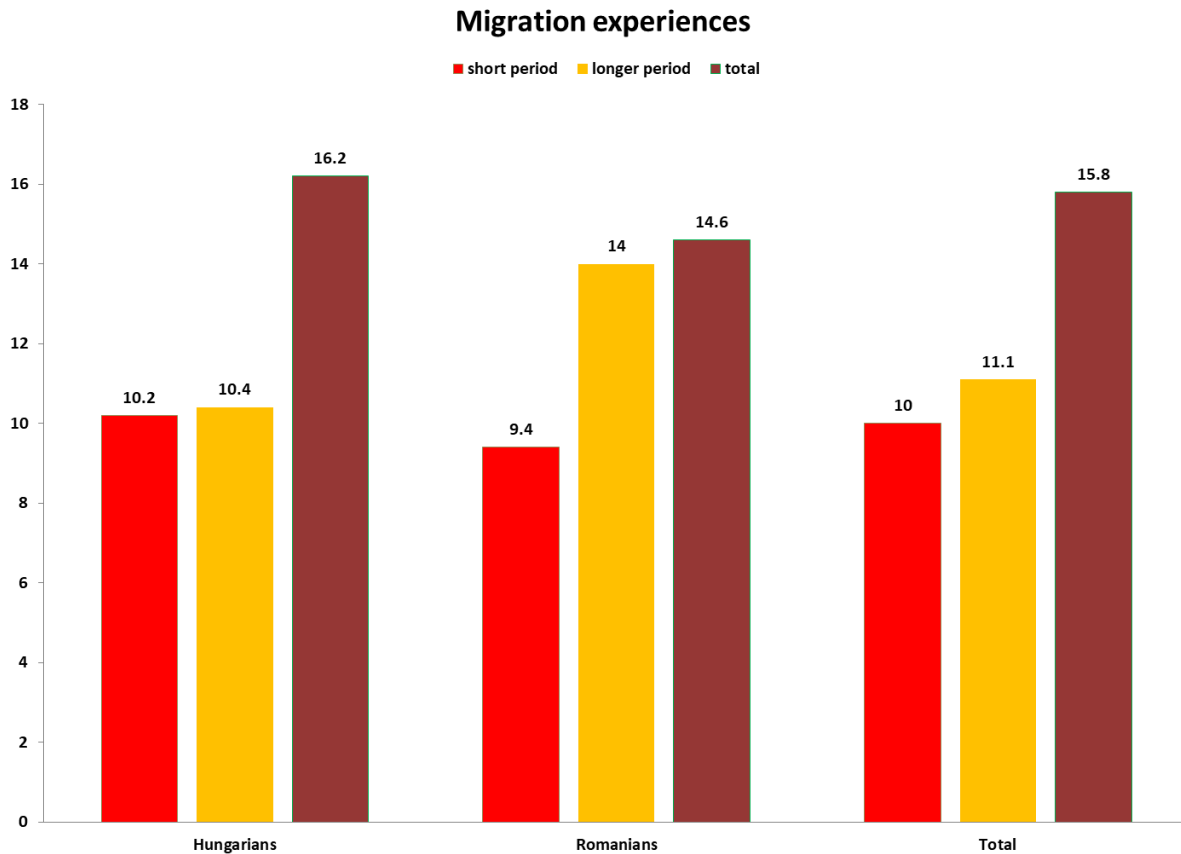


Although as stated earlier, immigration is not a real issue in Sfântu Gheorghe from YOUMIG's perspective; a summary of the composition of the sample according to the birth place of respondents is duly reported, since the data reveal considerable **internal migration**, even if no international migration. It can be seen that there is a **considerable difference between**

**ethnic Hungarians and Romanians concerning their place of birth**, the latter being born in considerably higher proportions outside the city or the county, thus being technically internal immigrants.

**Migration**

**Figure 7. Previous migration experiences/return migration**

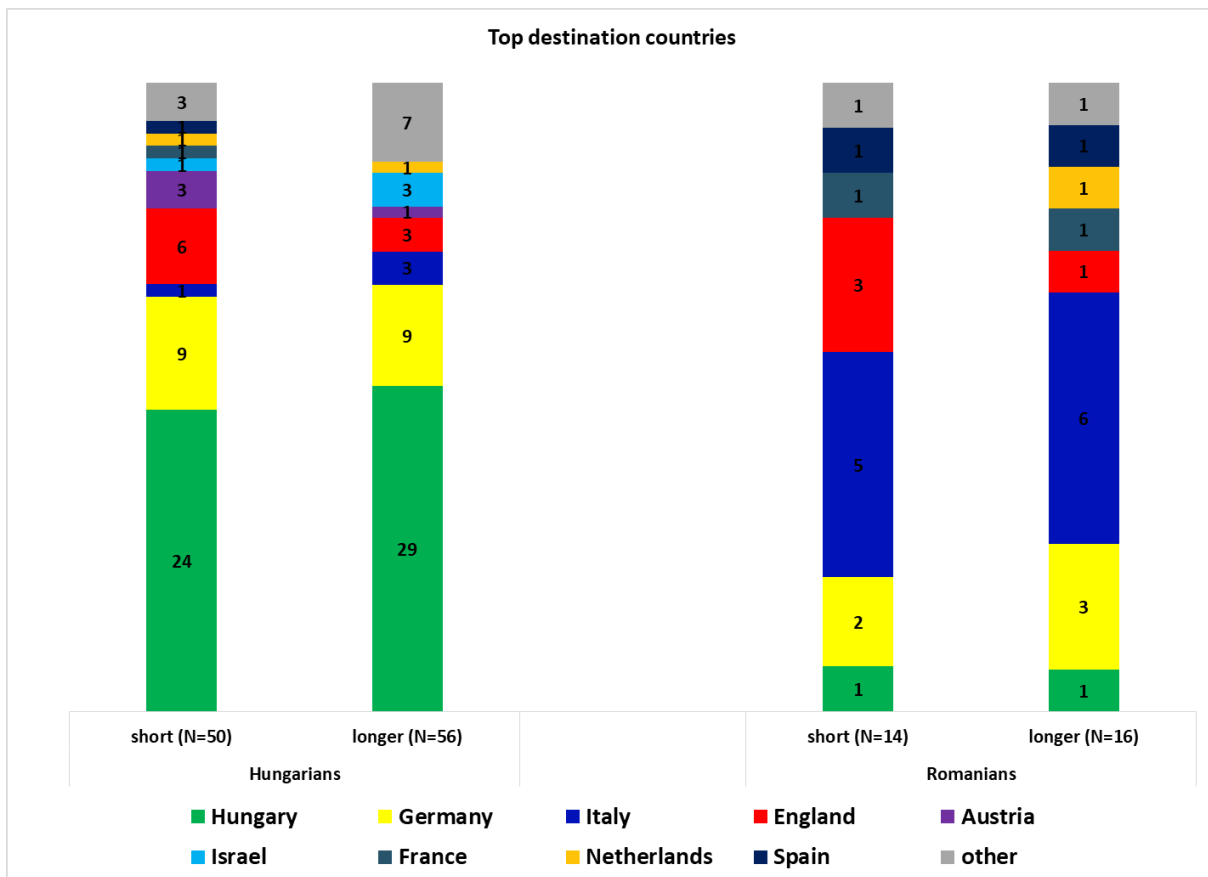


A little more than 10% of all respondents had spent a shorter (at most one year) or longer (more than one year) period of time abroad, and **approximately 16% had been engaged in either short- or longer-term migration** (responses to the two survey items have been processed and are reported here independently from each other). **It can be seen that Romanians display higher proportions concerning long-term migration than Hungarians, while there is no significant difference concerning shorter-term migration.** All in all, the survey findings are indicative of the fact that a quite significant proportion of the population of the city are or have been involved in migration, proving the need to tackle the phenomenon through public policy measures.

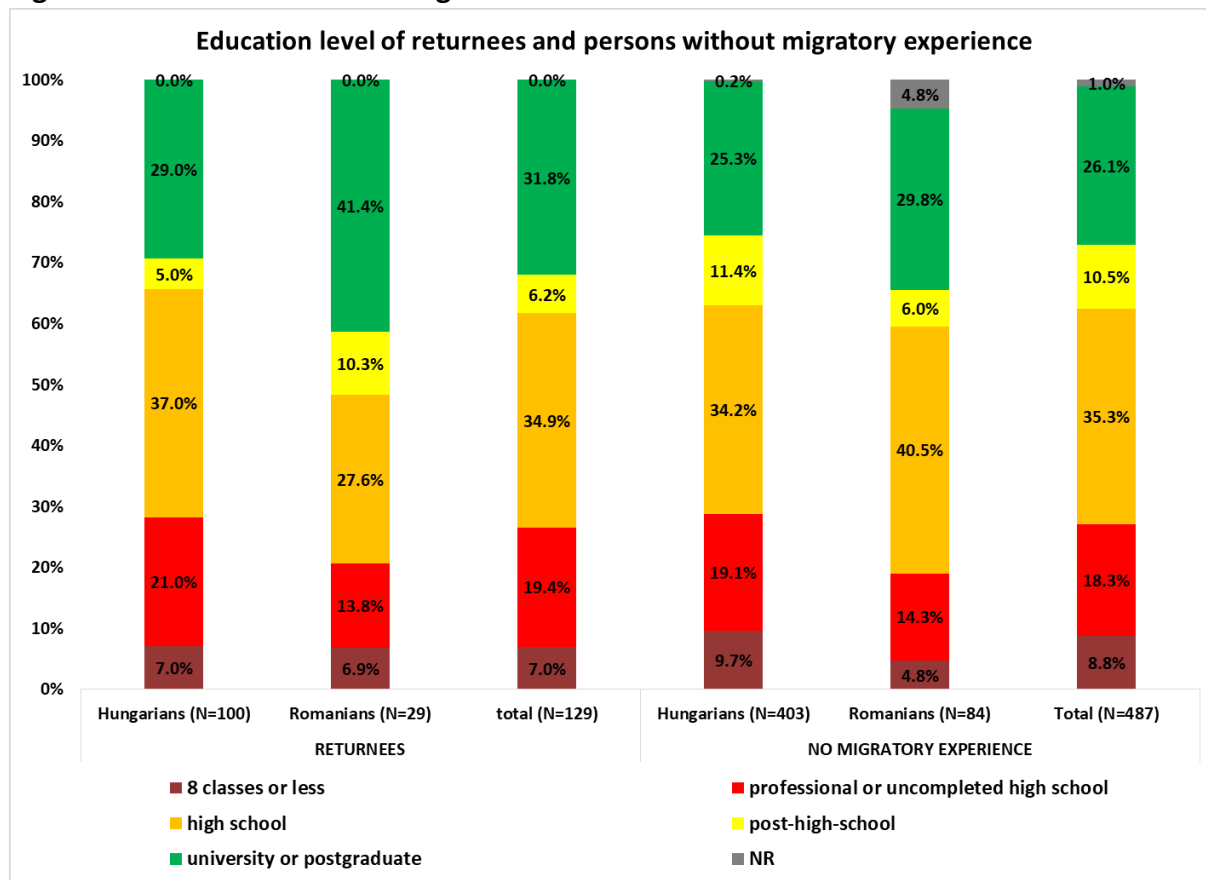
**Top destination countries**

Given that reaching out to potential return migrants is a top priority for the municipality, knowledge of the most relevant migration destinations is certainly important. However, caution is needed when interpreting these results, as only a relatively low proportion of the respondents responded ‘yes’ to the items asking whether they had spent a shorter or longer time in a foreign country. The data shows that the **top destination countries** (where our respondents had accumulated migration experience) **are quite different in the case of ethnic Hungarians and Romanians. Among the former – quite unsurprisingly – Hungary is the most popular destination, followed by Germany, England and Austria, while among Romanians Italy is first, followed by Germany and England.**

**Figure 8. Top destination countries**

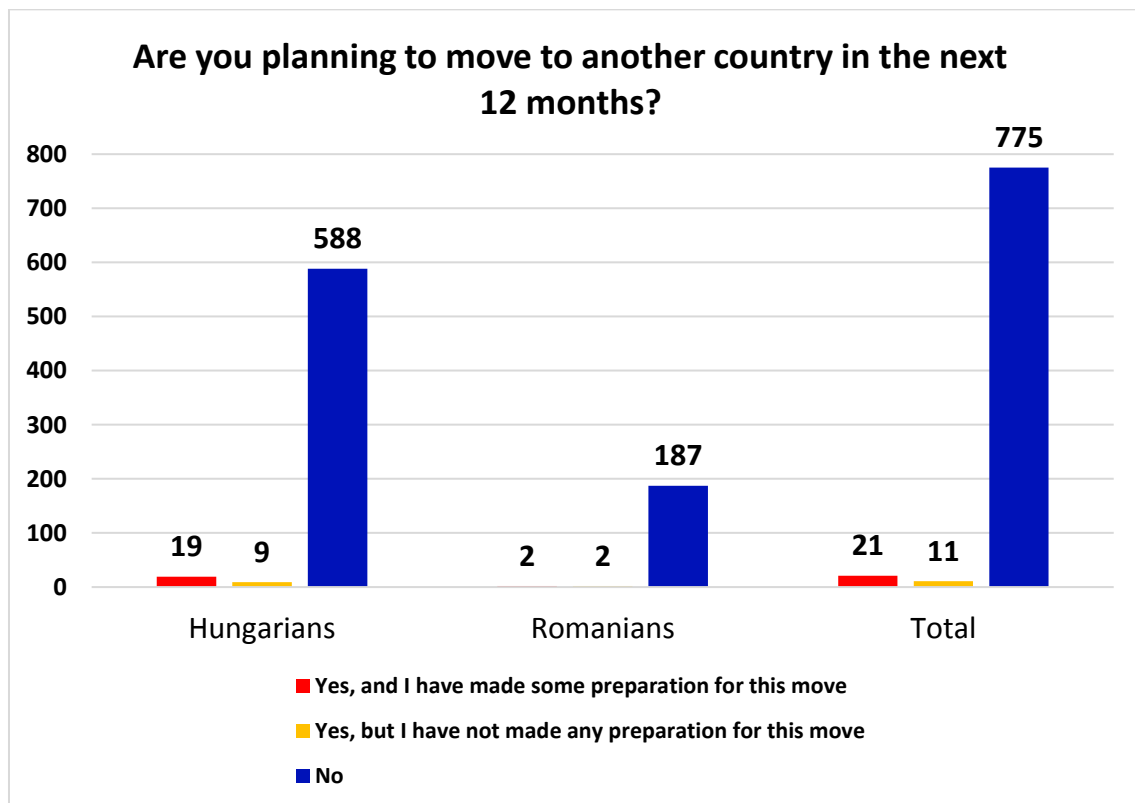
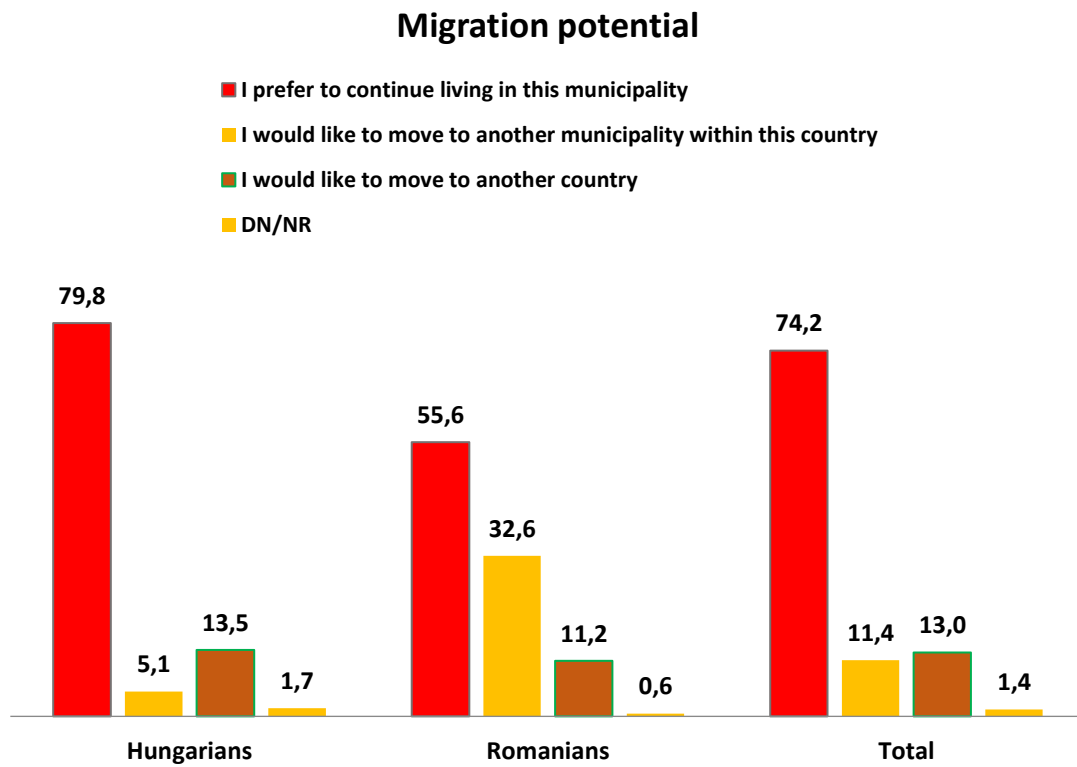


**Figure 9. Skill levels of return migrants**



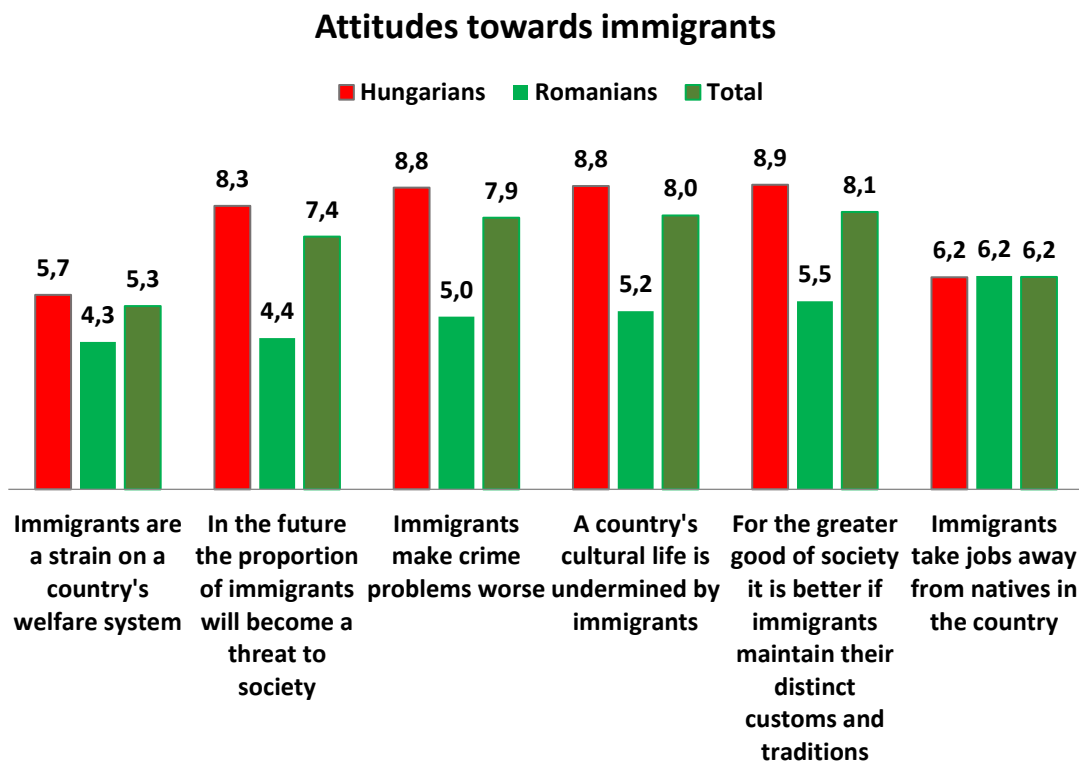
Obtaining information on the ‘Skill levels of return migrants’ was important owing to the scarcity of data available from any other sources in this area; this indicator has been singled out as being of high relevance for the YOUMIG project. The **difference in skill levels between persons who have spent some time abroad** (less than one year or more than one year, pooled) **and those without migration experiences is more pronounced in the Romanian subsample**. Among them, persons holding a university or post-graduate degree are clearly overrepresented. Within the Hungarian sample, secondary school graduates are slightly overrepresented among return migrants, while post-secondary school graduates somewhat underrepresented.

**Figure 10. Migration potential**



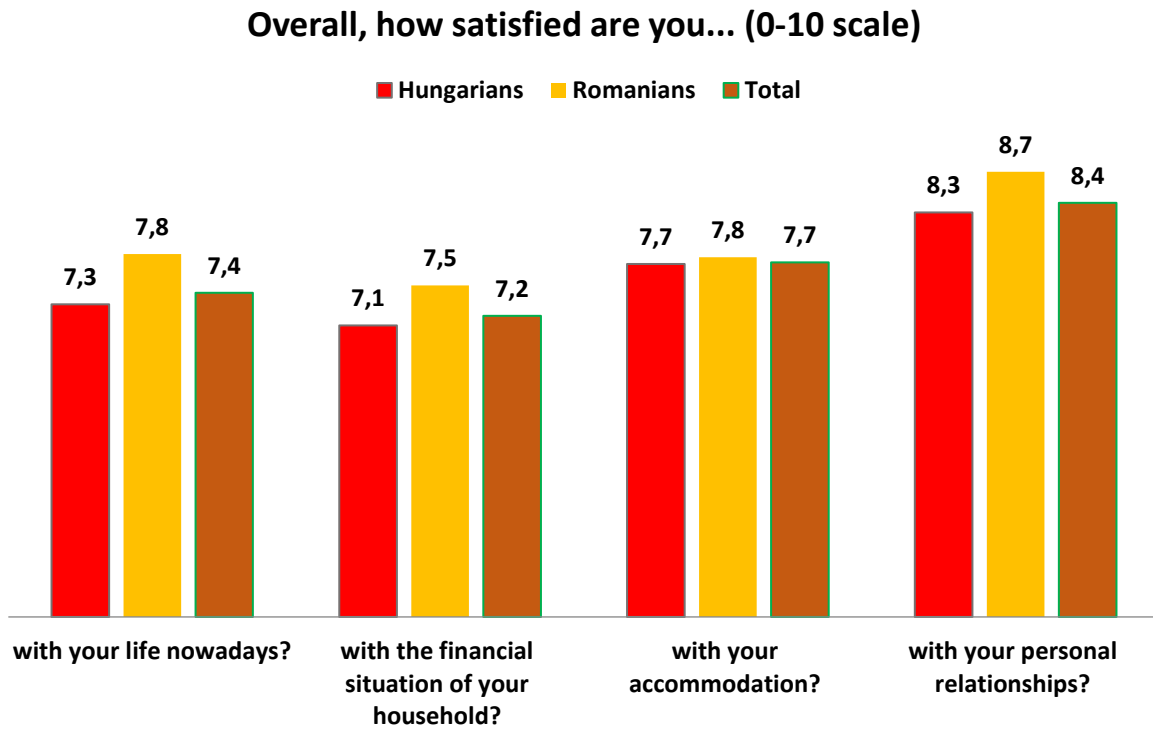
Perhaps even more important for policy considerations than previous migration experience are the current intentions to migrate. The responses to the questions dealing with migration potential indicate that approximately 13% of all respondents are contemplating the option of leaving the country. This is similar to what we have found with regard to previous migration experience, showing that the phenomenon is not waning. However, in response to a subsequent question there were those who indicated an intention to leave regardless of whether they had already made any preparation for this move. Among ethnic Hungarians, only approximately one-third stated that they had already taken concrete steps, while in the case of ethnic Romanians half of the would-be migrants responded in this way (note, however, that only four ethnic Romanian respondents stated an intention to leave, so this result must be interpreted with care). Among ethnic Hungarians who are **considering moving to a foreign country, the most attractive destination countries are Hungary (mentioned by 44 respondents), Germany (40) and the UK (20); among ethnic Romanians the UK (10) and the USA (7)**. Note, however, the low number (N) of those who responded to this item, especially in the Romanian subsample (the rest of the respondents did not express an intention to migrate).

**Figure 11. Tolerance towards immigrants**



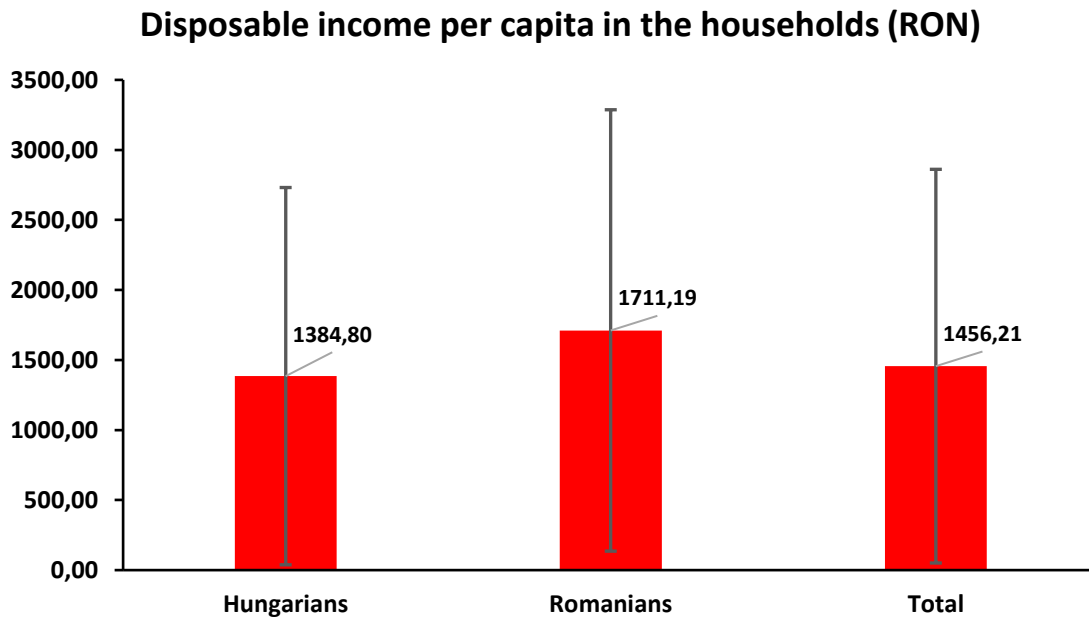
One of the most striking findings of the small-scale survey is that **the ethnic Hungarian subsample displays considerably more negative attitudes towards immigrants than the Romanian one**; the average scores of the former (on a 1 to 10 agreement scale) being very close to the complete agreement endpoint in four of the six statements. This indicates an almost **unanimous rejection of immigrants**, which is a rather disturbing finding.

**Figure 12. Subjective well-being**





**Figure 13. Household income**



### Recommendations

**Migration potential:** about 15% of both Hungarians and Romanians are considering the option of leaving the country, but only approximately half of these have made any preparations in this regard. Therefore, the decision of the local partner to focus on emigration and return migration within YOUMIG has proved to be justified. It is suggested that the local authorities continue monitoring the trends concerning migration and migration potential, and invest in the development of an action plan that could mitigate them. Of course, migration processes are too complex and their roots cannot be tackled by local governments alone; given their low level of competencies and limited resources. However, with regard to return migration, local municipalities should invest in means of encouraging this movement by creating friendly conditions for potential returnees. Migrant reintegration should be the goal of any such actions, primarily in an administrative sense (e.g., providing a user-friendly environment along the lines of the OSS, taking over some administrative burdens from them, and actively seeking out contacts with the diaspora – as in the framework of the pilot, by developing the SEPSINET platform into a genuine online community).

**Levels of satisfaction** (subjective well-being) **are quite high.** While the downside of this finding is that subjective well-being does not seem to be sufficient for keeping migration intentions at a low level, the upside could be that, at least in principle, the potential for both remaining

at home returning would be there. This very finding could be used as part of a communication strategy highlighting the municipality's friendly and welcoming environment as a draw factor for potential returnees. Beyond this, however, the local government should further invest in researching these subjective elements of well-being, focussing especially on those to which respondents have been less responsive. While the results show that respondents are essentially satisfied with their material well-being, thereby limiting the possibility of local government initiatives that go beyond the usual platitudes of 'encouraging the creation of well-paying jobs' and the like, perhaps in the case of housing the municipality has more effective means that could be deployed. Therefore, it is suggested that the local administration performs an analysis concerning the quality of accommodation and housing stock in the city and focuses on improving conditions in this area.

There are a number of further important findings with regard to the small-scale-survey, to which, in relation to policy measures, it would be rather difficult to assign concrete recommendations. Some of these are clearly indicative of structural problems that go well beyond the scope of action of a local municipality in Romania. Two related results of the survey should be mentioned in this respect. First, there is a rather **significant difference between the incomes levels ethnic Hungarians and Romanians**, the former being in a clearly disadvantageous position. Second, we have found **higher education levels characteristic of return migrants (as compared to the non-migrating population) only in the case of ethnic Romanians**. All of this points to an asymmetry in the system of ethnic stratification, in which ethnic Hungarians are increasingly placed at a disadvantage. While this can be traced back to deep structural (including political) factors, the best the local municipality can do in the current situation is to focus on education. As a concrete recommendation, the suggestion already formulated with regard to the LSQA should be reiterated: initiate a programme that sends 18-19 years olds abroad for one to two years so as to foster their professional development, as well as cultivate a more positive outlook and mentality. This idea could be facilitated by local scholarships offered by representatives of the public and private sectors.

It is strongly recommended that **the small-scale-survey** be repeated at least every second year, with a similar battery of questions (suffice to say, while updating the questionnaire according to current needs).

Furthermore, we would recommend **carrying out similar surveys for broader geographical/administrative areas** (primarily Covasna County), or alternatively administering a representative sample for the county with the county's central city (Sfântu Gheorghe) oversampled. The Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe should also **initiate and form partnerships**

**with other cities or counties**, carrying out surveys with similar questionnaires to facilitate the production of commensurable data.

Although immigration in Romania – and Sfântu Gheorghe – was not the original focus of this YOUMIG project, it has served to highlight a very important, even striking finding of the small-scale-survey, namely concerning **attitudes towards immigrants**. The survey data point to the negative attitudes of ethnic Hungarians, even if immigration in practice is not a very relevant issue in Romania as a whole. Therefore, our most important conclusion with regard to this issue within the framework of the project is that local authorities should be sensitised to this problem and prepared to take action in order to influence and counter such negative, even hostile attitudes. Of course, this phenomenon needs to be interpreted in the context of Hungarian political/media communication since ethnic Hungarians in Sfântu Gheorghe are heavily influenced by the mass media of the kin-state, and as such, any room for policy intervention is probably rather limited.

## CHAPTER 3

### BETTER MANAGEMENT OF YOUTH MIGRATION THROUGH LOCAL POLICIES<sup>34</sup>

#### 3.1. Existing good practices and pilot activities for the better management of youth migration at the local level<sup>35</sup>

**Local governments are facing increasing challenges from the inward, outward, and return migration of youth, but often lack the capacities and tools to cope with such challenges.** In view of this, a collection of good policy practices and actions linked to youth migration was prepared by the YOUMIG project<sup>36</sup>, keeping in mind the different local contexts - namely that some cities are predominantly migrant-sending communities, while others receive more migrants than the number of emigrants they send.

A 'good practice' is a solution to a particular issue that has been tested in practice and positively evaluated. According to the UNESCO model<sup>37</sup> developed for **best practices in immigration planning**, the four main characteristics of best practices are that:

- 1) They are innovative
- 2) They have a positive and tangible impact on the living conditions, quality of life or environment of the individuals, groups or communities concerned
- 3) They have a sustainable effect
- 4) They are replicable

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<sup>34</sup>Chapter 3 is connected to the Data Toolkit through two expert studies. The 'European and global good practice collection of relevant services and actions linked to youth migration' is accessible in the Data Toolkit in the 'YOUMIG – Main outputs' part through the button *Good practices*, and the 'Evaluation reports of the local pilots' is accessible through the button *Pilot activities*.

<sup>35</sup> Authors of the subchapter: Nada STROPNIK and Nataša KUMP (Institute for Economic Research, Slovenia), Amna POTOČNIK and Borut JURIŠIĆ (Maribor Development Agency)

<sup>36</sup>YOUMIG Good Practice Collection is available at: <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/youmig/outputs>

<sup>37</sup>Cited by: PORTUGAL, R., PADILLA, B., INGLEBY, D., DE FREITAS, C., LEBAS, J., and PEREIRA MIGUEL, J. (eds.) (2007) *Good Practices on Health and Migration in the EU*, Final draft, Conference on "Health and Migration in the EU: Better health for all in an inclusive society", Lisbon, September 2007. Original publication by UNESCO - Management of Social Transformations Programme (MOST): *Best Practices on Indigenous Knowledge*. UNESCO, 1999.

The objective of the ‘European and global good practice collection of relevant services and actions linked to youth migration’ was to provide YOUMIG local partners with a pool of already existing and tested solutions from which they could select one good practice for their local pilot activity. The good practice collection is based on the accumulated knowledge and experience made available on the European Website on Integration ‘Migrant Integration Information and good practices’<sup>38</sup>, the Cities of Migration website ‘Good Ideas from Successful Cities’<sup>39</sup> and the website of CARIM-East – Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration.<sup>40</sup> Where a lack of good practices for solving important problems related to migration and migrants was apparent, authors of the collection exceptionally included non-tested potentially good practices that were agreed on by focus groups or in the Delphi surveys, or recommended by professionals in the field.

The YOUMIG Good Practice Collection underscores the **utmost importance of local governments and local stakeholders in supporting the social inclusion of migrants** with effective policy measures. Considering the project’s purpose and aims; YOUMIG’s good practice collection focused on the young population (aged 15-34), and on local level stakeholders (local authorities, groups of citizens, associations, NGOs, etc.). Only those policy areas were targeted where local authorities have grounds to implement changes – in other words, for which they are responsible. The beneficiaries of these practices might be immigrants, return migrants, emigrants, diasporas, sending or receiving communities, etc.

In the YOUMIG framework, good practices were grouped in relation to the major target group (immigrants, emigrants, and returnees), and also the issues they were expected to solve. It was found that **the majority of existing good practices focus on immigrants**. There appears to be a reason for this bias: the practices tend to address people who are present in the country rather than those who are away; and most good practices are designed and implemented in richer countries where immigration rather than emigration, is the main issue.

An important group of good practices deals with **information services** that help young people with a migration background to improve their chances of (re-)integration (linguistic, social, educational and professional) and that encourage their participation in all areas of the social, economic, cultural and political life of the host local community. These services can be provided through information centres, as individual support, through the provision of professional advice, group and educational courses etc.

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<sup>38</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/home>

<sup>39</sup> <http://citiesofmigration.ca/good-ideas-in-integration/municipal/>

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.carim-east.eu/publications/research-reports/integration-and-reintegration-of-migrants/>

In the field of **education**, there are good practices for providing immigrants with the language skills necessary for them to become literate enough to participate in social and political life, get a better job, be able to help their children with homework, be able to deal with administrative matters, etc. The employment of learning mentors in schools is a good practice that promotes educational achievement among migrant children.

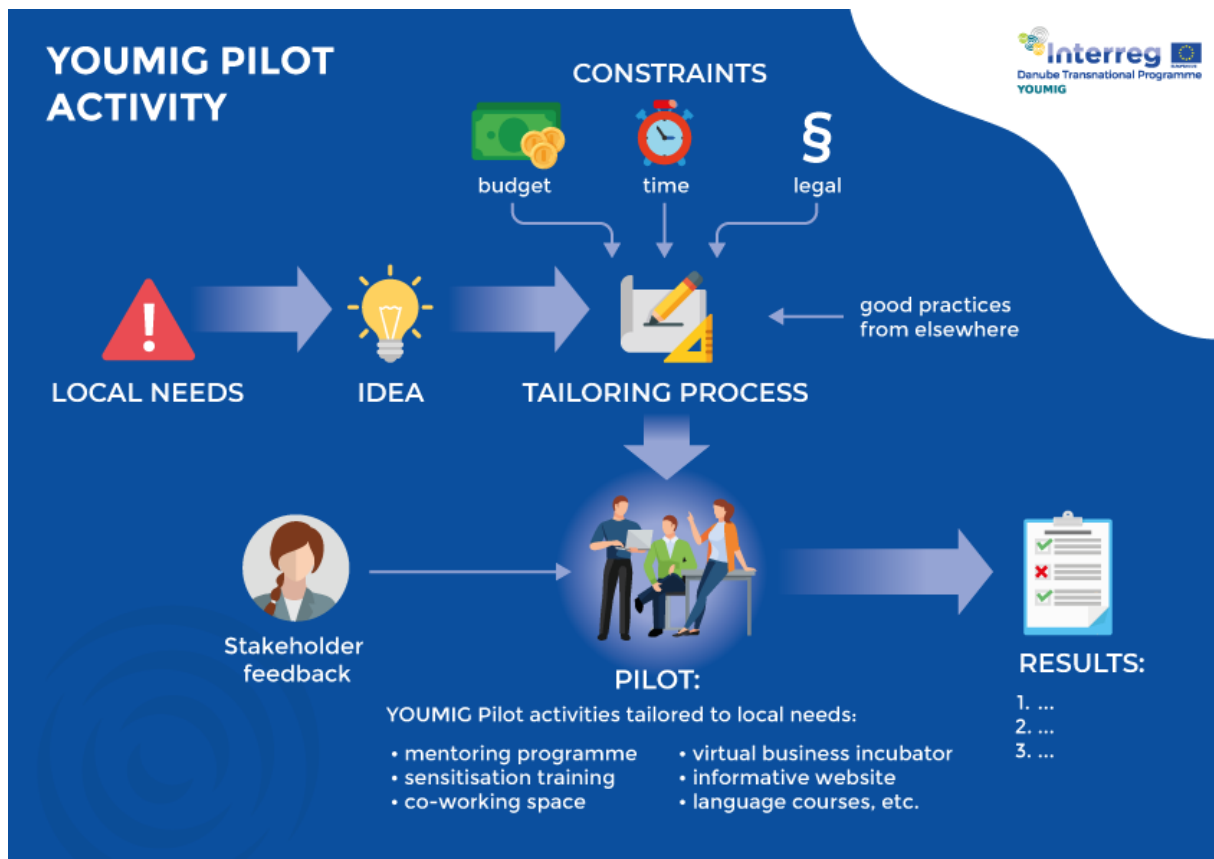
**Labour market inclusion** of immigrants is also of crucial importance. Good practices deal with guidance, support and training services for immigrants, improving their employment outcomes, challenging stereotypes, counselling immigrant entrepreneurs, setting up centres for the support of migrant initiatives (such as business incubators), etc.

There are some good practices in the area of **health care**, such as health promotion, migrant friendly health centres, and cultural mediators in health care. Providing support in the search for rental housing is an example of good practice in the area of **housing**.

Good practices focused on **emigrants**, including those engaging diaspora students, promoting labour market opportunities, leveraging remittances for economic development, supporting emigrants' children, linking diaspora health professionals with medical institutions in sending countries, and engaging diaspora in the local development of sending countries. Selected practices targeting return migrants mainly cover the labour market reintegration of qualified returnees and investments by returnees in their countries of origin.

Local YOUMIG partners were encouraged to skim through the collection of existing and tested good practices and actions linked to youth migration and choose ideas to guide them when designing their own interventions. All **pilot actions** were adapted to local contexts. Their implementation was supported by feedback from stakeholders sought at local Migration Forums.

**Figure 14. YOUMIG’s pilot actions, tackling identified local challenges**



To address the challenges, obstacles and benefits of youth migration in sending or receiving communities, YOUMIG's Local Status Quo Analyses (LSQA)<sup>41</sup> provided an overview of trends in youth migration and of related social phenomena. Through applied research, a screening of responses provided by local authorities to challenges related to in- and out-migration of young people was performed. A related goal was to identify management and capacity gaps in institutional mechanisms of local authorities to address youth migration and related phenomena.

Based on the challenges and needs revealed in the Local Status Quo Analyses and on collected good practices, **local partners tailored existing practices to their own needs**, in order to provide better services for immigrants, emigrants or returning youth migrants. Each YOUMIG local partner elaborated a Roadmap adapting existing practices and/or designing new ones. These documents described pilot interventions that offered new services to immigrants, emigrants or returnee youth. Local partners discussed their plans with stakeholders, and

<sup>41</sup>Local Status Quo Analysis can be obtained at:<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/youmig/outputs>



implemented the pilot activities in order to address one or several challenges identified in the Local Status Quo Analysis, based on a common methodology.

**YOUMIG partners opted to design and implement the following pilot activities:**

**Burgas** (Bulgaria): Creating a virtual business incubator for supporting entrepreneurship among young returning migrants and immigrants

**Graz** (Austria): Designing a mentoring programme for girls with a migration background, focusing on natural science and technology, with a view to applying for vocational training

**Kanjiža** (Serbia): Creating a co-working space as a hub for young entrepreneurs and the self-employed, as an alternative to emigration

**Maribor** (Slovenia): Rearranging an existing co-working centre to assist young locals and migrants in creating self-employment

**Rača** (Slovakia): Mapping the capacities of local primary schools to become spaces of integration for young migrant parents, through language courses and social events

**Sfântu Gheorghe** (Romania): Revitalising an informative website about the municipality, targeting young emigrants who are thinking of returning to the city

**Szeged** (Hungary): Sensitisation and multicultural training for the municipality's front office workers and preschool teachers that regularly meet young migrants

An evaluative description of all seven pilot activities can be found on the YOUMIG website.

### 3.2. Local challenges and solutions in relation to youth migration: the SEPSINET portal in Sfântu Gheorghe<sup>42</sup>

According to the Local Status Quo Analysis, in Sfântu Gheorghe it is hard to draw a picture of migration at the local level, due to the lack of availability and reliability of data. Similarly to other towns and cities from the region, Sfântu Gheorghe lost around 10% of its population between two censuses in the last decades. International emigration, then, as now, is the main reason for this decrease in population size, which mostly affects the younger generation, with the city's financial and labour market characteristics acting as push factors. This pilot project sought to **attract young people back from abroad**, as a counter to the significant loss of local youth aged 15-24.

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<sup>42</sup>Author of the subchapter: Emőke Melinda PÁL (Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe)

Sfântu Gheorghe's pilot project is based on the online platform called SEPSINET [www.sesipnet.ro](http://www.sesipnet.ro), which is basically an online community where emigrants, returnees and locals can meet and share their experiences and information with those who are considering returning home and even with those who want to leave. The platform gives access to municipality programmes for returning migrants (e.g., in relation to housing, business start-ups and any kind of facility relevant to young people's needs). Further, it provides a channel through which young people, whether at home or abroad, can **keep in touch with the local community**, and know what is 'going on' in the city – both socially and in terms of new opportunities.

Uploading returnees' video stories to the SEPSINET website allowed us to present Sfântu Gheorghe and its community in a positive light to young people. These stories were typically ones of success: the marketing manager and sales manager who left Dubai to move home, the couple who left catering work in the United Kingdom to open a vegetarian diner, the topographer and his wife who moved home from Budapest. The **message in each case was broadly the same: that each returnee found their place socially and economically**, and that connection to one's local community, family and friends reaps benefits for everyone.

Our hope was that the website could become a virtual meeting place for people from Sfântu Gheorghe – both at home and abroad, with the opportunities and advantages of living in the city being a common topic of conversation.

We interviewed about **15 young returnees from Sfântu Gheorghe** for the SEPSINET project, all of them highly educated and with a success story to share. Over a period of three months, the video interviews received 750 views, and the number of visitors to the page continued to rise. However, this did not result in much feedback on the videos. Our expectation was that the SEPSINET platform would provide a space where emigrants could share their problems and concerns related to moving back home, but in reality, this was not the case.

The platform, as a means of a direct communication channel between people from Sfântu Gheorghe living abroad and the municipality was not a great success. We received just two emails from persons living abroad who were considering returning and wanted to know more about opportunities in the municipality.

To increase the level of **customer feedback**, we agreed in future to share surveys and make the most of the website's interactive communication features to help break down the wall between the audience and the municipality.

SEPSINET also functions as an **information platform on local institutions** following the One-stop-shop approach (see subchapter 3.4). In this respect, though, it has not been a huge

success because the city is small, and most people can find the information they need simply by asking family and friends. Another factor limiting SEPSINET's information platform is that in Sfântu Gheorghe any administrative activity (e.g., getting a new ID card, applying for a certificate, wedding registration, enrolling a child to preschool and school, etc.) ultimately requires the applicant/customer going in person to the relevant office.

**Capacity gaps in national-level administration**, the attitude of national authorities, the lack of trust, financial difficulties in business administration, ever-changing legal rules; such issues are palpable in Sfântu Gheorghe, and are perceived as discouraging factors for potential returnees.

Our team hosted a few **events for stakeholders**: The Workforce Agency and Chamber of Commerce, the Incubator House, the Junior Business Club, and the LAM foundation all collect useful data and information relevant to SEPSINET. Based on our discussions with these institutions, it was concluded that **this web service should be closer (in functional terms) to a hub of useful links than a huge online platform**. The set of **information** we wanted to share on the SEPSINET platform, provided by stakeholders, requires coordination and data collation with all of them on a weekly basis – a process fraught with difficulties due to the **rapidly changing situation** at the national level.

The information provided by the website on potential **administrative challenges**, such as the validation of foreign certificates, recognition of time spent working abroad; tax and health care issues, etc., are mostly contacts that often require several discussions with different local officers, which is again a discouraging factor. Due to the absence of a database, the site does not offer information on labour market supply and demand; which would be very useful since the employment situation is currently quite unstable. However, the majority of **the platform's video interviewees mentioned that the biggest challenge of moving home is not finding a job, but finding suitable accommodation while negotiating the bureaucratic chaos** that undermines the efforts of all institutions from the city hall to schools and the police force, at the municipal and central government level alike. As a reward for their perseverance, returnees can enjoy all kinds of cultural services both popular and highbrow, and slowly re-establish work, communal and family ties.

The success of a digital platform such as SEPSINET is mostly down to its **content**, which owing to its dependence on Romanian bureaucracy can make it seem labyrinthian in nature. Gloom-mongers among us might point to this website as a metaphor for the country's woes. On the other hand, this same platform, as a space where 'life-affirming content' such as videos, interviews, photos and articles can be uploaded, can provide a sunnier view of the city for those who currently live and work 'outside' of it. It is hoped that the content creators of this

‘sunny window’ will one day be the (former) returnees, and that association with this website will become a source of pride for youngsters.

In conclusion, revitalizing the SEPSINET website is a slow but promising development. Its aim is to serve as a communication channel for the city where young returnees, in spite of seemingly ever-present bureaucratic barriers, can not only get an insight into the positive side of life in Sfântu Gheorghe, but also exert a positive influence on the city themselves in terms of the knowledge, skills and experience they return home with.

## Recommendations

**SEPSINET will remain a sustainable website until resources are depleted.** It is vital that we appeal to **small local communities** led by those with a migration experience, such as entrepreneurs, fitness and nutritional experts, crèche and preschool teachers, environmentalists, etc. to start sharing their experiences through SEPSINET and to motivate them to talk about the positive benefits of the new approaches brought home by them.

**The municipality should cover the costs of the platform’s maintenance** and delegate human resources for updating and gathering the new sets of information provided by stakeholders.

As mentioned earlier, SEPSINET has to become a **direct channel between the emigrants and the municipality**; for this we need to create more direct means of communication with the audience, and motivate them to give feedback.

### 3.3. One-stop-shop approach to managing youth migration<sup>43</sup>

Over the past few decades, national governments have often received criticism for **poor coordination between the different sectors of governance**. The problem is systemic – most governments are organised as 'silos', or separate vertical structures, dividing responsibilities among ministries and governmental agencies, with poor coordination of activities between them. In order to achieve greater efficiency, the Committee of the Regions of the European Union, among several other institutions, has promoted a multi-actor approach in policy fields such as migration.

In YOUMIG, local partners identified key policy actors, and set up a plan involving several institutions in the provision of better services for youth migrants. Its objective was to reach

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<sup>43</sup> Authors of the subchapter: Amna POTOČNIK and Borut JURIŠIĆ (Maribor Development Agency)

an agreement on the key values, principles and processes underpinning the provision of services, and to achieve better coordination, commitment and transparency in offering high quality services easily accessible to young immigrants, emigrants or returnees.

Local partners introduced and tested a **'One-stop-shop' pilot unit (OSS) within the local authority**, which was conceived as a **hub providing information about all local services linked to youth migration** (e.g., integration of immigrants, keeping in contact with emigrants, re-inserting returning migrants). One-stop-shops in customer services usually gather all the necessary administrative parts of a process under one roof, so that the customer does not have to move between buildings located in different parts of the city. A well-known example of the One-stop-shop approach was the headquarters of the High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (ACIDI) in Lisbon, Portugal, where over 30 different services were made available for immigrants in one location.<sup>44</sup>

For YOUMIG, however, resources were insufficient to open a unified customer service space. Instead, **the objective of local partners was to involve the whole range of national, regional and local institutions in providing migration services (including those for youth groups), in a strengthened cooperation.** The One-stop-shop approach, especially the platform for stakeholder involvement, helped to facilitate accessibility to the public administration offices, and to improve the quality of those services. The activity aimed to empower young migrants by providing relevant and location-specific information concerning their rights, obligations and opportunities, and any administrative procedures to be undertaken in the city.

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<sup>44</sup>[http://citiesofmigration.ca/good\\_idea/one-stop-shop-mainstreaming-integration/](http://citiesofmigration.ca/good_idea/one-stop-shop-mainstreaming-integration/)

Figure 15. YOUMIG's One-stop-shop approach to customer services for young migrants



The YOUMIG One-stop-shop approach is based on two pillars:

- First, **the improvement in quality of available information** (the collection, monitoring and evaluation of quantitative and qualitative data on youth migration in the Danube Region, and in particular in the selected local community)
- Second, the **provision of new or improved services for young migrants** (in addition to recording the identified problems and accomplishments of the provided services) (Note: the monitoring and evaluation of the OSS implementation within each local partner was based on joint methodology)

The YOUMIG OSS services were set up to overcome a whole range of **challenges** faced by local communities, in both receiving and sending communities, such as:

- The wide range of institutions involved in migrant integration processes
- The lack of cooperation between governmental services and their dispersed locations
- The diversity of procedures within a complex bureaucracy
- Communication difficulties owing to cultural and linguistic diversity
- The difficulties of young migrants participating in local decision-making

The YOUMIG OSS services involved both governmental and non-governmental actors, and brought together relevant institutions that young migrants needed to contact in the sending or receiving community (place-based approach). The **target group was very heterogeneous** having: differing age groups between the ages 15-34; immigration, emigration or return migration backgrounds; different reasons for migration (education, work, family reunification, personal reasons, involuntary migration, etc.), distinct legal statuses (EU- or non-EU citizens, double citizenship holders) and various expectations and demands in relation to stakeholders and the service users.

The YOUMIG OSS model was designed to provide services for both migrants (immigrants, emigrants and returning migrants) and stakeholders dealing with migration. The latter, as an integral part of the local environment, are the most important group in the integration process. Some examples of relevant issues for **local stakeholders** in relation to migrants are:

- A local company that would employ foreign workers, but is put off by the bureaucracy involved in hiring non-citizens
- A local medical facility, not familiar with international health insurance
- A local school or nursery, not having the linguistic or cultural disposition to accept foreign speaking children
- Local incubators supporting self-employment, not realizing the needs or potential of migrants

The basic principle of the YOUMIG OSS network is that **a person who needs support should contact one point only**, where they receive the help (or relevant contact information) from the person responsible for resolving the issue. Therefore, it was conceived as an upgraded information point, covering several stakeholders. The advantage of this is that a person is not left alone to find the information needed to resolve a migration-related issue. Instead, by contacting the network, they are already seeking a solution. Further, the YOUMIG OSS network facilitates the collection of documented information on typical administrative issues pertinent to young migrants, (e.g. de-registration in the event of emigration).

### 3.4. One-stop-shop for youth migration related issues in Sfântu Gheorghe<sup>45</sup>

The express need for a One-stop-shop (OSS) approach in local administration regarding youth migration issues was clearly expressed in the initial phases of the project's implementation in Sfântu Gheorghe. Participants in local stakeholder meetings, migration forums, and other YOUMIG events would mention that **institutions and service providers lacked flexibility**, that

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<sup>45</sup>Author of the subchapter: Gergely BUJA (Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe)



they were unwilling to communicate properly with certain segments of the population, including the younger generation. In an era of **digital technology** in which social media have transformed the scale, utility and accessibility of communication networks in a very short period, the generation gap seems to be wider than ever, even in less developed Eastern European countries, such as Romania. **One explanation for this phenomenon is that the communication and problem solving channels used by young people** tend to remain hidden, poorly understood (particular by non-digital natives), and **unexploited by the traditional, more rigid structures of society** (local and regional authorities and institutions) that maintain overly complicated bureaucratic procedures within the framework of an overly centralised system.

The LSQA migrant interviews conducted in Sfântu Gheorghe revealed the **different types of problems experienced by returnees to Romania**. Migrants who had come home for a short visit and returnees who had spent a considerable time abroad both mentioned similar problems that we can divide into seven categories: communication problems with the authorities, bureaucratic processes, the attitudes of authorities, problems regarding naturalisation, poor infrastructure, labour market problems and challenges regarding mentality. The most frequently mentioned of these relate to the **problem solving capacities of diverse Romanian public institutions**, in comparison to those experienced by migrants in foreign countries where citizens' problems are not treated with mistrust and indifference, as is often the case in Romania. **A lack of transparency** on the part of public services is exacerbated by the **slow adoption of digital solutions** that if adopted, could both facilitate and speed up information provision and the problem-solving services of the authorities.

With regard to a **user-friendly administration**, the young interviewees advised that straightforward communication practices based on the phone or email should be adopted in the Romanian administrative system. The interviewees recommended a more predictable administrative system based on new technologies, skilled and motivated employees and representatives characterised by a positive and trustful attitude towards citizens, organizations and companies, alike.

In response, the **Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe is determined to improve the quality of services in several ways** and keep pace with digital developments with regard to administration. It has the following plans:

- First, a **complete overhaul of the institution's website** with a completely redesigned structure that by means of different functions facilitates access to information, providing online solutions to some of the main administration-related obligations that migrants have to deal with, such as **paying local taxes, making appointments in different departments, obtaining various permits etc.** The website is currently being tested, and will be fully operational by the summer of 2019. It is expected that its revamped features will be appreciated and used by young people from the outset.
- Second, a **complementary intervention concerning the institution's procedures and functions** will be carried out over a longer period in a project co-funded by the European Union's social fund, and the national and local budget. Over the project's 30-month span, **all departments, interior procedures and functions will be exhaustively audited, and new systems and standards will be set up** in the local public administration to simplify and optimise both back-office and front-office procedures orientated towards beneficiaries, citizens and companies alike. A more transparent and **easy to follow operation system**, backed up with digital archives will improve the efficiency and efficacy of the internal bureaucratic system, and, as result, better serve the municipality.

In contrast to projects in other YOUMIG cities, the **One-stop-shop in Sfântu Gheorghe** has both a **physical** and a **virtual** version, in response to the real needs of the population.

**The physical One-stop-shop** was set up in June 2018 in the **Registry and Public Relations Office of the City Hall**. Here, all kinds of information are available, courtesy of a dedicated public official – and not only in relation to migration. The service was set up in the following way:

- As a first step, all the **local branches of the centralised institutions** and the **local and regional authorities** were appointed and specific information was requested: contact information, a list of services provided for the wider public, opening hours, documents needed for the most common issues they face and for which they have jurisdiction. This information was necessary to create a comprehensive database.
- Only a small number of institutions responded to the first round of the **official request** and actually provided relevant information, others justified their lack of interest with the argument that all the information was already available on their own website. The first official request had to be insisted on several times along with a further round of phone calls before all the information was received.

- In the second round, the **data of different service providers that dealt with migration issues were gathered**. These services included: translation bureaus, legal representatives, medical service providers, educational institutions, etc.

**The upshot (after much effort) is that all the institutions now have a distinct page in a printed out portfolio.** The data is also available in the form of a **digital table**, meaning that a public official can easily respond to a request and find the relevant information in seconds. The new service is appreciated by the public and is used foremost by locals and occasionally by tourists. The exact number of OSS customers with a migration profile remains unknown, as most of them are returnees, migrants visiting their families, or people seeking solutions to specific issues. Regardless, from the perspective of an issue simply needing a solution, the migration background of the customer is of no bearing.

**There are citizens who choose to keep their migration status unknown.** They have several possible reasons for doing so: to continue claiming social or housing benefits or to avoid certain legal and financial responsibilities (e.g., the authorities have to be informed if parents move abroad and leave minors behind, but there are tens of thousands of cases in Romania, in which this legal step was not taken). **Few Romanian citizens meet the legal requirements in terms of deregistering when they move abroad**, therefore, central and local authorities are left no alternative but to plan and implement policies on the basis of inaccurate statistics with regard to population size – Sfântu Gheorghe being a case in point. In line with other Romanian towns and cities, Sfântu Gheorghe and the entire region has suffered serious population loss since the 1990s, a phenomenon that has only accelerated since the country's accession to the European Union in 2007. By way of contrast, immigration in Sfântu Gheorghe is insignificant, consisting of a couple of hundred people from other countries – primarily Hungary and Moldova – who have settled over the past two decades. Suffice to say, the language barrier has not represented an issue for them and there have been no substantive integration challenges on the part of the municipal government.

In the physical OSS, the **most common youth migration related issues** concern requests in relation to the following: **expired personal identification documents, the issue of new birth certificates, marriage registration, and property construction permits.** Customers have requested information on how to **start a new business**, how to **obtain health insurance**, or a **new job**. The municipality's **'Return home!' programme** has generated a lot of interest. Under the scheme, young people are provided with a plot of land and design plans for a house with the proviso that they return to Sfântu Gheorghe. Other visitors have stopped by to collect information about exchange offices, translation bureaus, notary's offices, legal representatives, the latest job opportunities or properties to rent. Approximately 30-40

persons with migration profiles visit the OSS per week. There can be no doubts about the utility of such a service, bearing in mind that many citizens do not know the exact sphere of authority of certain institutions nor who to approach in relation to their particular issues.

**Table 2. Common administrative issues for a young immigrant/return migrant and their respective local policy competencies**

MAIN CATEGORIES	CONCRETE ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES	MUNICIPALITY COMPETENCIES  (PLEASE SPECIFY THE DEPARTMENT)	CENTRAL GOVERNMENT COMPETENCIES  (PLEASE SPECIFY THE INSTITUTION)
<b>OFFICIAL PERSONAL DOCUMENTS</b>	Obtaining or renewing an ID card, residence permit, registration certificate	Municipality – Personal Registration Department in accordance with the Directorate for Personal Records and Databases Management, Unit of the Ministry of Administration and Interior Regulations	
	Obtaining or renewing a driving license		Administrative Unit – County Police
	Registration of change of residence	Municipality – Civil Status Department	Public Notary, Court of Justice
	Registration of change of marital status	Municipality – Civil Status Department in accordance with the Directorate for Personal Records and Databases Management Unit of the Ministry of Administration and Interior Regulations	
	Registration of the birth of a child	Municipality – Civil Status Department in accordance with the	

		<p>Directorate for Personal Records and Databases Management</p> <p>Unit of the Ministry of Administration and Interior Regulations</p>
	Registration of property or vehicle purchase	Municipality – Tax office
<b>WORK</b>	Receiving a work permit	For work permits, EU citizens need to request a personal identification number from the Immigration Bureau of Covasna County (Department of County Police). Non-EU citizens need a job offer first, then request a personal identification number from the Immigration Bureau, Covasna County.
	Founding a business	Administrative Unit – Ministry of Justice National Trade Register Office
	Receiving support in finding a job	County Employment Centre  County Chamber of Commerce
<b>TAXES</b>	Obtaining a tax identification number	We do not have a personal identification number
	Paying income taxes, receiving a tax refund	Administrative Unit of the National Agency for Fiscal Administration
	Paying local taxes (please specify what taxes)	Municipality – the Tax Office: vehicle tax, area tax, building tax,

		special taxes, penalties, parking tax	
<b>HEALTHCARE AND SOCIAL TRANSFERS</b>	Obtaining health insurance (or access to public healthcare services)		Administrative Unit of the Health Insurance Agency
	Receiving financial social assistance (of any kind)	Municipality – the Directorate of Social Assistance	
<b>EDUCATION</b>	Enrolment to preschool (ages 3-6)	The Municipality is responsible for infrastructure and the Ministry of Education is responsible for all other management	Administrative Unit – the Ministry of Education
	Enrolment to primary school	The Municipality is responsible for infrastructure and the Ministry of Education is responsible for all other management	Administrative Unit – the Ministry of Education
	Enrolment to secondary school	The Municipality is responsible for infrastructure and the Ministry of Education is responsible for all other management	Administrative Unit – the Ministry of Education
	Enrolment to vocational training	The Municipality is responsible for infrastructure and the Ministry of Education is responsible for all other management	Administrative Unit – the Ministry of Education
	Enrolment to university		Administrative Unit – the Ministry of Education
	Nostrification (recognition of an education certificate issued in another country)		Immigration Bureau, Covasna County
	Language learning (subsidised)		

Given the nature of Sfântu Gheorghe's pilot within the YOUMIG project, namely the creation of the **SEPSINET website** for young migrants from Sfântu Gheorghe, it was an obvious next step to load the information gathered in the physical OSS in a well-structured manner in a so-called **virtual OSS**.

SEPSINET's website structure and main graphic elements were completed by October 2018, but it started to be filled with content only by the end of the year. The **target group** was defined as **young persons, originating from Sfântu Gheorghe, both returnees and those who live, work, or study abroad**. The website was to function as a bridge, a **communication channel** between communities, strengthening relationships with those far away from their hometown and helping to reintegrate the ones who return or plan to return home. It follows that local news and events were (and are) shared in two languages – Romanian and Hungarian, along with information concerning new investments, plans for the city, information on youth programmes and details on locally supported youth policies.

The virtual OSS, as part of the SEPSINET platform was designed as a **practical tool for those looking for basic information in several areas of public interest**. There are **seven main topics** defined and information is categorised in big domains such as **Live, Study, Work, Be Healthy, Have fun, Be mobile, Be an entrepreneur in Sfântu Gheorghe**. Two major Municipality programmes have supplemented these: 'Return Home!' and the second one dedicated to large families, providing multiple benefits for families with three or more children, such as free parking, discounts on sports, recreational facilities and cultural events.

Since its launch, **the website's audience has grown continuously**. Visitors from around the globe can click on articles, videos, interviews, and features of the virtual OSS. In less than three months of activity, the site has accrued **more than 20,700 visits**. Although lacking a structured media campaign to promote the site, the content shared on its **social media profile, such as Instagram and Facebook, has helped to directly promote the recently launched website to young users**. Videos are the most popular, with over 1,000 clicks on the more interesting ones and almost 2,800 hits on the most viewed one, but articles and written interviews have also received a lot of attention. Most visits come from Romania, of course, followed by countries such as Hungary, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, Austria, and the Scandinavian countries, but also (for us) less expected places such as Brazil, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines and China. To date, the **topic section** of the virtual OSS has been visited 470 times, and according to data analytics, the number of users continues to grow.



Feedback has been mostly positive and constructive, providing us with further ideas for the site's improvement. Perhaps our biggest achievement so far, as operators of the portal, is that **two young people**, one from the UK, and the other from Hungary, **contacted the Municipality through SEPSINET, requesting, among other things, information on job opportunities to inform their decision to return home.**

In conclusion, after operating both the physical and virtual OSS for several months, we are convinced that **there is a demand for this kind of service.** Although it takes time and effort to develop the framework of such a service, gather all the information and check periodically the data's validity, in the end it is all worthwhile, particularly in the light of positive feedback from both satisfied customers and public officials. Originally, a service providing help and advice on immigration related issues, it has turned out to be useful for a much larger segment of the population, tourists included. **The Municipality intends to maintain the OSS and SEPSINET, improving these tools** beyond the lifespan of the YOUMIG project. On completion of the institution's new website and with a set of new, improved, re-standardised and transparent internal procedures available, these high quality services, appreciated by young and old, will no doubt have a very positive impact on those both inside and outside of the municipality. Indeed, it may even provide the extra 'push' needed for some young migrants to return home.

## Recommendations

The **sustainability of the physical OSS goes beyond the issue of finance.** The service has to be a basic provision in the **Registry and Public Relations Office of the City Hall**, and civil servants have to keep the printed-out portfolio and database regularly updated, in addition to the latest information regarding services offered by institutions, NGOs and actors in such areas as business, economics and social services.

Given that **the virtual OSS is hosted on a website**, and appreciated foremost for its constantly refreshed content of news, events, and young migrants' work/life stories, it is essential to maintain visitors' interest with attractive, dynamic content, otherwise fewer people will make use of the uploaded information bank. If no funding and human resources can be found beyond the project's end, **SEPSINET's existence can be ensured through the wide collaboration of local stakeholders**, not only those of youth organizations, but specifically those with the expertise to produce engaging content, manage the profiles created in social media and promote the website by means of a range of communication tools.

In the event of waning public interest in SEPSINET, **the virtual OSS should be transferred to the Municipality's dedicated website**, in a format and structure in harmony with the existing functions of the site.

**Both the physical and virtual OSS models have to be shared and recommended to other local authorities as examples of good practice;** SEPSINET as well, considering that not many other Romanian cities have developed a clear strategy, or adopted policies to manage the challenges of youth migration. In view of the impact of population loss and the side effects of this phenomenon in general, this is a surprising fact. Therefore, it is important that these tools be promoted among representatives of other cities, first through the Association of the Romanian Municipalities, as well as at fairs and regional gatherings of local authorities.

## CHAPTER 4

### BETTER COOPERATION BETWEEN POLICY ACTORS<sup>46</sup>

#### 4.1. Transnational cooperation schemes between municipalities<sup>47</sup>

Youth migration is a transnational phenomenon by nature; every migrant leaves a local context and arrives in a different one. **Better coordination and cooperation among migrant-sending and migrant-receiving communities is crucial** for managing its causes, processes and impacts efficiently.

YOUMIG's transnational cooperation schemes were aimed at **testing options for interaction between municipalities affected by youth migration**. A common methodology for testing such schemes was developed and implemented, with the following main objectives:

- To understand each other's local context: the places migrants arrive in, or depart from
- To begin cooperation in relevant fields (e.g. social services, education, labour market)
- To investigate and test win-win solutions

Another practical objective in terms of fostering cooperation between municipalities was to observe good practices for tackling the challenges of youth migration, and to create a practical guide for other local communities in Europe with similar migration profiles and challenges. At a local level, the acquired knowledge was intended as the basis of a local strategy to manage the impacts of youth migration.

**In the second period of 2017, each local YOUMIG partner visited a city within the Danube Programme area**, from/to where local young people migrate. Alternatively, twin cities or cities in which special ties exist could be selected.

**In the second period of 2018, a further round of study visits was undertaken within the YOUMIG partnership**. The objective of the visits was to assess the pilot actions performed among partners with similar profiles, and add to the range of transnational cooperation possibilities, providing opportunities for improving local services based on the evaluation report.

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<sup>46</sup>Chapter 4 is connected to the Data Toolkit through one expert study. The National Policy Recommendations (based on the main findings of the Ambition setting workshops and Vision development workshops) are accessible in the Data Toolkit in the 'YOUMIG – Main outputs part' through the button *Policies*.

<sup>47</sup> Author of the subchapter: Vesselina DIMITROVA (Burgas Municipality)

A common methodology for the preparation and carrying out of the study visits was prepared in both cases. Its main purpose was to equip local partners with a practical tool for the implementation of the visits, and provide general guidelines for reaching conclusions from the project's perspective.

The preparatory phase of the **first study visit** included identifying the city to be visited according to its profile, establishing contacts with the relevant authorities and units, engaging with the local diaspora, and arranging the visit. During the visits, **local partners discussed migration-related topics** that would provide possibilities for improvement. These were summarised in the infield experience reports that were used to formulate recommendations for YOUMIG's Pilot activities and One-stop-shops, and other local activities engaged in improving local services in the area of youth migration and the integration of migrants.

The experience of the **second round of study visits** among partners with similar profiles, and based on the type of pilot action – opened up the possibility of an external **in-depth assessment of the pilot services**, thus providing opportunities for their improvement. In the evaluation reports drawn up by partners, recommendations for transferable best practices were provided.

YOUMIG's study visits served as important inputs for local partners, and strengthened the transnational ties of the municipality, leading on to the discussion of several **local governance issues related to youth migration**, such as:

- Local strategies for collecting useful data on migrant groups coming to or going away from the municipalities, and data sources for local access and use (registers of local/national authorities or institutions, local or national surveys, research)
- Recommendations for the most useful data sources used for migration- and youth-related policymaking
- Migration-related data in policy decision-making and their importance for better management of these processes
- The identification of governance weaknesses, and how these should be addressed
- New practices or projects connected with the management of migration impact, implemented in the recent years, and their results
- Innovative migration management measures for further implementation
- Information available about young migrants' attitudes and needs in relation to local administration, (e.g., concerning their administrative obligations, satisfaction or conflict with migration-related institutional bodies, and main trends and issues related to youth migration, migrants' future plans and motivations etc.).

- Recommendations for improving the process of managing the impacts of migration, or the registration process
- Recommendations for cooperation opportunities with a local authority or migration office from a sending/receiving country

## 4.2. Improving transnational cooperation schemes between local governments – the experience of Sfântu Gheorghe<sup>48</sup>

For the purpose of building transnational cooperation schemes, **Salzburg, Austria** – a large city within the Danube Region – was selected as a place to visit, providing a means of learning about good policy practices in migration management. It is well known as a migrant-receiving city, and **a popular migration destination among young people from our region.**

The main purposes of the study visit were:

- To **observe good practices** and implemented projects that tackle the challenges of youth migration
- To **acquire knowledge** as the basis for both the local pilot activity and the local strategy in relation to better mapping the impacts of youth migration

The study visit included **meetings** with:

- Staff of the Salzburg City Hall's Integration Office (Integrationsbüro)
- The municipality's Vice Mayor
- Caritas
- The Romanian Orthodox Parish of Salzburg
- The Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF-Österreichischer Integrationsfonds)
- Young Romanian and Hungarian migrants living in Salzburg

There were no difficulties in relation to planning and performing the study visit, and all the city institutions provided insights into many interesting issues that have a direct bearing on the Sfântu Gheorghe community.

In Salzburg, there is an ever-growing community of Romanians. One of the main purposes of this visit was to acquire knowledge that could facilitate a better understanding of youth migration and its impacts, in addition to finding out more about **the motives driving migration** (push and pull factors). In the meetings, which were very productive, we discovered that most migrants sought to earn a living while abroad, and, perhaps owing to their youth, found it easy

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<sup>48</sup>Author of the subchapter: Delin ANTAL (Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe)

to adapt to their new environment, whether in terms of social networks (well-being) or employment. In terms of motives for migration, the wider opportunities that Salzburg offers, and the multicultural environment were mentioned. For young people, a diversity of experience and opportunity is very important; it is owing to this fact that youngsters are quite pessimistic about the social and economic developments in Sfântu Gheorghe. The slow bureaucratic system and the mentality of some of its citizens were mentioned as factors hindering the city's growth. Further, limited local opportunities, low salaries, and a lack of investment in the municipality were cited as other factors pushing youth towards the option of migration.

Stakeholders did not mention the existence of an information gap between the migrant community and institutional bodies in Salzburg.

The Parish Priest of the Romanian Orthodox Parish of Salzburg pointed out the importance of belonging to a **community**. In addition, community members emphasised the importance of having a place to meet – a place where help and support is available.

We are convinced that that the needs of **Sfântu Gheorghe's emigrants be addressed taking into account both 'socio-economic' and 'technological' factors**. Therefore, Sfântu Gheorghe's pilot activity – the SEPSINET website – presents a number of activities that have taken place in the city during the year, in particular, concerning (re)connecting migrants to their hometown, promoting opportunities that the city has to offer, and ameliorating the emigration of youth from Sfântu Gheorghe. On the technological front, the platform offers up-to-date information on city development schemes and business investment, job vacancies and new services provided by the Municipality that may be relevant to emigrants.

The **Integration Office (Integrationsbüro)** is a unique municipal structure that provides practical help and advice to immigrants, a large variety of programmes, and information related to migrant integration. In order to improve their services, in 2015 the office started to collaborate with NGOs, volunteers, migrant organizations, libraries and churches. The result of this collaboration, a **brochure called 'Welcome to Salzburg'** (translated in 13 languages) contains many useful pointers and addresses, in addition to numerous services provided by the municipality. This booklet provides genuine support for immigrants; through it, they are better placed to consider their social and economic needs, find help and assistance, and solve any administrative issues with the municipality more easily. The Integration Office has greater autonomy and pays more into the local budget; therefore, its functions and responsibilities are broader ranging. In general, this results in major differences in terms of the power of local authorities and the administrative services they provide.

The Republic of Austria's **Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF)** offers integration services at the national level. The ÖIF offers support (in the form of integration centres) to Austrian immigrants with integration issues. The scheme focuses on the basic needs of immigrants so that they can turn their attention to becoming more successful in education and at work.

An important observation for us is that both departments were people-orientated and friendly. Perhaps this is less typical of an administrative body, but it should serve as a good example and could be implemented (with little outlay) in our municipality.

All representatives of the local authorities told us that they had encountered no problems with the Hungarian and Romanian community. One issue they did raise concerned Romanian beggars, who are quite numerous in the city.

## Recommendations

**Better coordination and cooperation among migrant-sending and migrant-receiving communities** is crucial for managing its causes, processes and impacts efficiently.

**Examples of good practice from Salzburg municipality:** all functions of the administration are very well distributed and coordinated, and there are no gaps in the available information or the process of collection/type of collected data. Unfortunately this is not applicable in Romania unless a legislative change is made, giving municipalities more independence.

Contacts between various municipalities should be fostered as a means of increasing the exchange of experience and knowledge, and transferring the identified good practices to the local environment. The **possible fields of cooperation** between Sfântu Gheorghe as a migrant-sending municipality and Salzburg (or other migrant-receiving municipalities identified by Sfântu Gheorghe), could be the exchange of information regarding de-registration, databases, and the integration of good practices.

The **sharing of personal professional experiences** is crucial to the improvement of administrative services.



### 4.3. Multi-level governance cooperation schemes and policy recommendations<sup>49</sup>

**Multi-level governance (MLG)**, as defined by the European Union's Committee of the Regions<sup>50</sup>, **denotes coordinated action by the EU, its member states and local and sub-national governments** based on partnership, and entails operational and institutional cooperation in all phases of the policy cycle, from drafting to implementing policies. These actions require the coordination and distribution of competencies from national to sub-national levels, with high importance given to the EU transnational level, especially in view of the growing importance of MLG in migration and integration policy. Therefore, MLG refers to the dispersion of central government authority, both vertically to actors located at different territorial and administrative levels, and horizontally, to actors and domains at the same level of government.

Regional and local competencies on migration policies are not broad ranging. Nevertheless, **it is incumbent on local governments to provide certain public services for migrants**. Therefore, MLG cooperation is a basic necessity of local governance, and municipalities should be considered partners in national-level policy dialogues on migration and integration objectives and indicators.

**It is a challenge to develop and implement coherent and coordinated policies in the different policy areas and at multiple governance levels in the migration field.** Policies are often implemented in an uncoordinated manner, resulting in inconsistencies in the policies pursued at different levels of government. Therefore, it is important to develop strategies and policies that foster cooperation between different stakeholders and levels of administration, as well as effective coordination between national and sub-national administrations, local authorities, civil society sectors and other relevant stakeholders.

Through building multi-level governance cooperation schemes, the **YOUMIG project aimed to facilitate cooperation between different levels of governance** while providing a testing ground for knowledge exchange mechanisms. The activity outputs presented the modalities of cooperation between national administrative bodies, statistical offices, research institutions and local municipalities. The project sought to better measure, evaluate and

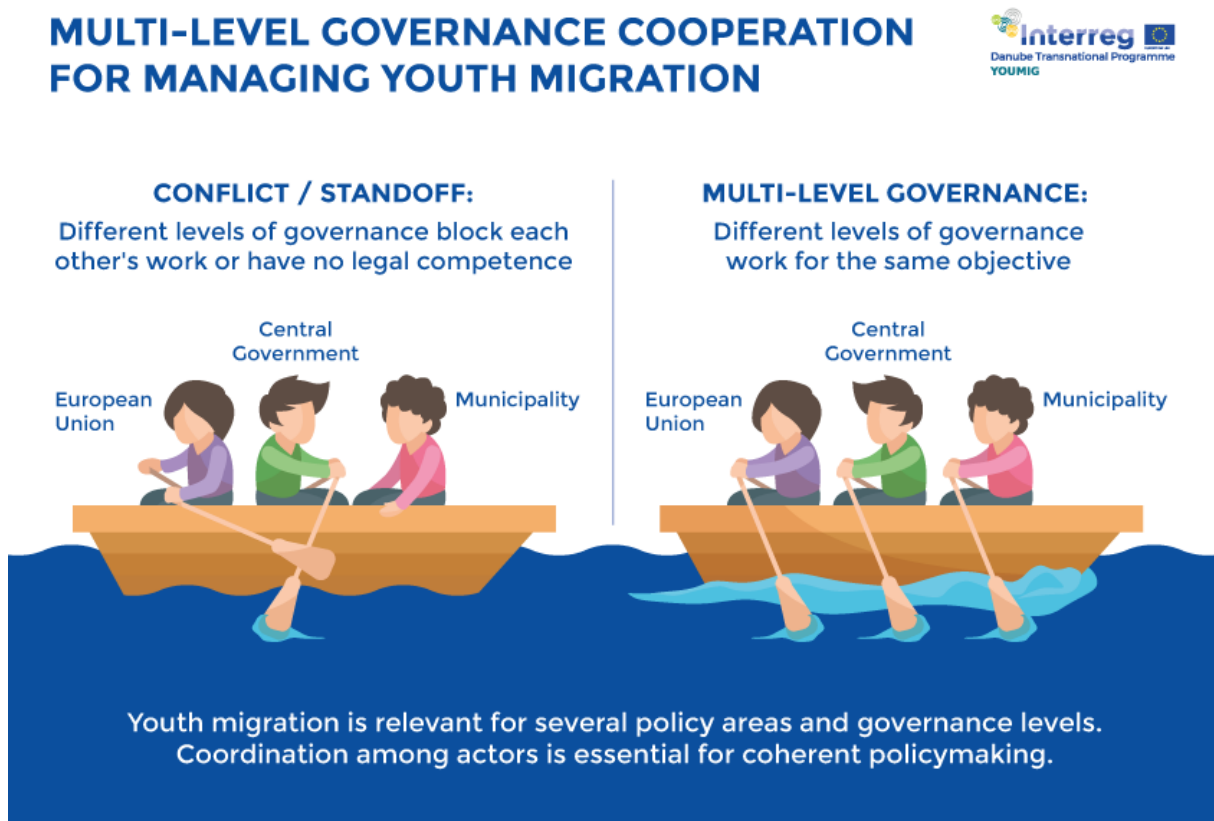
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<sup>49</sup> Author of the subchapter: Jelena PREDOJEVIĆ-DESPIĆ (Institute of Social Sciences, Serbia)

<sup>50</sup>In 2009, the Committee of the Regions launched the white paper on multi-level governance, followed by the Charter on Multilevel Governance in 2012, stipulating the fact of shared competencies and responsibilities between various levels of governance in the European Union that can result in greater economic, social and territorial cohesion in Europe if working in partnership. An overview of the beginning of the scientific debate is given, i.e. by BACHE, I.: *Multilevel Governance and European Union Regional Policy*, in: BACHE, I., FLINDERS, M. (2004) *Multi-level governance*. Oxford University Press, New York, USA. pp. 165-178.

manage youth migration in terms of its causes, processes and impacts, leading to improved MLG cooperation.

**Figure 16. Multi-level governance cooperation for managing youth migration**



The project sought to overcome specific challenges (identified via the work on the ‘WP 4.2 Set of new or improved indicators’ and the ‘WP 5.2 One-stop-shop’) by means of establishing channels of institutional cooperation at different levels of government.

The YOUMIG MLG scheme defined **coordination and governance processes** by means of the following steps:

- Identifying the most feasible solution for the indicator/policy issue
- Developing a stakeholder engagement strategy
- Identifying the key stakeholders
- Defining responsibilities and the decision-making process

The national-level policy recommendations sought to improve institutional capacities for all actors involved, as well as foster transnational cooperation.

To provide a framework for the project's implementation, two types of workshops at the national level were organised in every participating country, attended by YOUMIG-partners from the same country as well as the relevant national stakeholders who – in view of their knowledge and experience – contributed to the elaboration of the issues reviewed. First, **The Ambition Setting Workshop (ASW)** served to map existing knowledge and competencies, evaluate the current cooperation practices and define the need for and possibility of improved multi-level governance cooperation for selected indicators (core and local) and identified policy cases. The ASW exemplified how to establish channels of cooperation between the institutions concerned. Next, **The Vision Development Workshop (VDW)** facilitated the discussion and finalisation of the national-level policy recommendations, drawing upon the ASW results in addition to the experience of cooperation throughout the project's implementation. Two areas of intervention were included: actions geared towards improvements in the availability and quality of indicators, as well as those intended to tackle policy challenges on youth migration at different governance levels.

Regarding the benefits of this project activity, it is important to emphasise that engagement in constructive dialogue between professionals and national, regional and local stakeholders at the YOUMIG ASW and VDW workshops represents a significant step forward in the development of a constructive political response to the challenges of youth migration.

The proposed examples of MLG cooperation developed through the YOUMIG project's thematic activities (and found in the national recommendations) contain several benefits that can be divided into groups:

**Greater efficiency in relation to improvements in the institutional framework and more precise identification of roles and relationships in the decision-making process** – Generally, all YOUMIG partner countries within the MLG cooperation schemes have provided useful proposals for possible cooperation. These include the formulation of recommendations to improve the institutional framework in order to facilitate the management of youth migration at different levels of government. The improvement of transnational cooperation through bilateral or multilateral cooperation between the countries in relation to data collection is also emphasised. As stated in the Austrian report, cooperation needs to be implemented on a long-term basis and with a political mandate to work effectively. The Bulgarian case recommends the establishment of an inter-ministerial working group that would review the legislation and available regulatory documents. In addition, it would propose appropriate changes to the legislation to enable the production of relevant information on youth migration.

**Improved consistency among the national, regional, and local plans** – For example, the Slovenian report proposes that different levels of government – each making a significant

contribution to regional development agencies – share responsibilities in providing services related to migrants, arguing that such a provision is of strategic importance beyond municipal borders. Romania's report puts forward two parallel policy strategies related to the development of a multilingual local administration, which could represent a step forward in relation to the return migration option. Serbia's recommendations include the institutionalisation of the YOUMIG small-scale survey at the municipality level. This measure would provide essential data that strategically addresses youth migration issues and their management. Moreover, it would create opportunities to develop local strategic documents in line with adopted national strategies.

**Establishing a clear and consistent vision of development, strategic needs and objectives, as well as developing more favourable financial models** – Slovenia's report suggests the establishment of reliable return migration statistics as the basis of developmental strategies from the national to local level, through the establishment of a complex but functional, top-down governance structure to detect non-registered emigrants. The Bulgarian report contrasts the differing migration policies of centralised state administrations, which often have limited capacity to respond flexibly to local issues, and those of municipal governments, which have the authority to create and launch their own policies but often lack financial resources. The resulting situation can be one in which issues of youth migration become mired in bureaucracy and disowned by mainstream institutions. Therefore, it is recommended that central governments prioritise youth migration on their policy agendas by producing national strategies in this field and inviting regional and municipal authorities to integrate such policies into their local development strategies.

**More efficient communication and coordination among competent services; cooperation and knowledge exchange among professionals at different levels of government, with an emphasis on building local governments' capacities** – Slovakia's proposal 'Communicating OSS Services to Citizens and Institutions' shows that only well-established MLG cooperation and long-term coordinated efforts can achieve the concentration of resources necessary to build a strategically well-designed branding concept. Austria's recommendations indicate that MLG cooperation can improve inter-institutional cooperation and exchange, which is essential for enhancement in current data. Although Austria has well-organised statistical offices at both regional and local levels, other city departments are not always well informed about available data. An emphasis is placed on the promotion of professional and thematic cooperation as a means of increasing levels of cooperation in statistical offices and research institutions, as well as among political stakeholders to improve the quality of data collection.

**Establishing tools that enable a better understanding of migration issues, and continuous monitoring and subsequent evaluation of results achieved** – As one of several suggestions related to improving statistical accuracy, Hungary proposes the creation of an integrated statistical database that is able to use both primary and secondary sources, where determinants of the population will be available in a longitudinal approach. To achieve this goal, the long-term cooperation of different institutions is necessary, especially at the national level. For the improvement of data collection on migration flows, especially return migration, Romania recommends that various national level institutions conduct micro-censuses at regular intervals. Smooth collaboration between national institutions would contribute significantly to the provision of decentralised data for municipalities interested in quality data. The Serbian report proposes improvements in the quality of existing databases and the establishment of new ones, such as the YOUMIG Data Toolkit, specifically, in relation to the coordinative role it has played in the statistical system of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia.

#### 4.4. Policy recommendations on fostering cooperation between central public authorities and local governments in measuring and managing youth migration<sup>51</sup>

In Romania, the phenomenon of emigration in recent years has clearly been more pronounced than that of immigration. Furthermore, the Local Status Quo Analysis conducted within the YOUMIG framework not only underscored the desire of stakeholders to **encourage return migration** (which should be interpreted in the context of economic development, rising wages and labour force shortages), but also highlighted several critical **problems that discourage young people from returning home in general, and to Sfântu Gheorghe in particular**. Based on this knowledge, the policy recommendations formulated in the project were linked to the phenomenon of immigration in general, and return migration in particular.

First, it was proposed that the **current system of data collection**, production and dissemination concerning migration movements **should be modified to give a more important role to local municipalities and county-level or regional divisions of the NIS**. For instance, the latter could be empowered to collect data on migration processes directly, in addition to the current practice of relying solely on administrative data produced by the Directorate for Person's Records and Administration of Databases and the Inspectorate-General for Immigration. A process similar to the one used in the case of vital statistics could be implemented (in which county-level divisions of the NIS collect the data directly from the

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<sup>51</sup> Author of the subchapter: István SZÉKELY (Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities)

local municipalities). Further, **municipalities could be granted increased competencies over the process of data collection** concerning migration (both internal and international), including the possibility of appending additional forms to be filled out by citizens who contact the authorities within the administrative process.

Second, **the legislation should be modified so that the provisions that discourage citizens from declaring their migration movements to the authorities are removed.** For instance, it was suggested that ID cards and documents proving one's address should be separated, because under the current system by renouncing one's ID cards (which contain one's address on which temporary changes of residence are also recorded) one risks losing the capacity of conducting any official or administrative business.

Third, it was suggested that **Romania could carry out micro-censuses at regular intervals** between the censuses. In fact, the NIS does carry out a data collection practice that resembles a micro-census, but the data obtained in this manner is only used for internal purposes, for fine-tuning the sampling schemes for the large-scale surveys carried out on a regular basis (the Romanian equivalents of a Labour Force Survey and a Household Budgets Survey). This quasi-micro-census might be expanded to **include a number of further items related to other policy domains (including migration processes** and indicators in other domains deemed relevant within YOUMIG). Alternatively, the two systematically conducted surveys might be expanded in terms of both sample size and items asked. Consequently, the oversampling of local municipalities or counties could be proposed (even at the cost of having to foot additional expenses) so that estimations for lower levels of aggregation than the national or the NUTS 2 level could become possible for certain indicators. At present, these are only published at the NUTS2 level or not collected at all (e.g. 'Household income', 'Well-being', 'Intention to migrate').

Fourth, **the upcoming census of 2021 must be fully exploited.** Although the precise methodology and the included items are not clear yet, the census might gather relatively high-validity data concerning not only the current stock of persons who reside abroad, but also regarding the **previous migration experiences of the population.** This would also allow an assessment of the phenomenon of return migration. Further indicators might also be included, for instance, 'Student outbound mobility' and 'Intention to migrate'.

Within this broader subject, we have focused on **two interlinking problems:** 1) the **lack of usable indicators on return migration** and 2) the **obstacles of multilingual local administration**, more specifically the lack or limited availability of multilingual materials (information, forms, etc.) available at local administrative offices. In what follows, these **two areas of intervention** are briefly discussed.



**Area of intervention No. 1 – Development of indicators on return migration**

A central challenge in Romania is the **lack of information regarding return migration**. Although, the local municipalities are responsible for collecting data for the Directorate for Personal Records and Database Administration (DRPDA), they have no direct access to it, and neither does the NIS. Furthermore, **no institution in Romania systematically gathers information on citizens residing abroad** – except for the Directorate for Passports – whose data are plagued with serious validity problems. Finally, no institution provides any data on return migration at levels of disaggregation below the national level, and even the national-level data we used for the WP4 activities were derived from Eurostat sources.

The **policy recommendations** in this area address several national level institutions, which could collaborate in providing decentralised data for the municipalities interested in quality data on return migration. **Two different strategies** can be followed:

**Recommendations on the development of indicators in relation to return migration**

The **first strategy** would require the **decentralisation of the system** and the enhancement of the municipalities' competencies not only in the collection, but also in the accessing and processing of the data.

**Government and Parliament** Initiate the modification of *Law 290/2005 concerning the population records, domicile, residence and identity documents of Romanian citizens* in order to proceed towards the decentralisation of the data production system concerning emigration, immigration, and especially return migration.

**National Level Agencies**

1) The DRPDA and the IGI, in collaboration with the NIS should develop a new methodology for data collection concerning the migration movements of the population, with a special emphasis on return migration.

2) The NIS should make a concerted effort to cooperate with its partner statistical institutes to monitor migration from and to Romania.

A **second strategy** to improve data collection on migration flows – especially return migration – would entail **organising micro-censuses** at regular intervals.

**I. The Government**

Initiate legislation change in parliament in order to create the framework for conducting micro-censuses on a regular basis in Romania.



## II. Parliament

Proceed to the modification of the above-mentioned law and adopt the necessary laws for future censuses and micro-censuses.

## III. National Level Agencies

The NIS should develop a methodology for the micro-census and set down the guidelines for data collection. The role of the various ministries in this process, especially the Ministry of Internal Affairs should also be clarified.

### ***Area of intervention No. 2 – Development of multilingual local administration***

The Local Status Quo Analysis conducted within the YOUMIG framework pointed out several critical problems that discourage young people from returning home to Romania in general, and Sfântu Gheorghe in particular. One of these problems is related to the **services provided by local and decentralised authorities**. The consensus was that that administration tends to be slow, and is aggravated by the fact that relevant information is scattered between different institutions. In addition, migrants complained about the **lack of material written in languages other than Romanian** found in the different institutions. This problem is relatively specific to Sfântu Gheorghe, as approximately 75% of the population of the city are ethnic Hungarians. The fact is that **most of the return migrants are Hungarian native speakers whose language skills are far less developed in the Romanian language** (these competencies further deteriorate while they are away as they simply do not speak Romanian abroad, and even back in the home country, many ethnic Hungarians only use it for official and employment related issues. However, the issue of the linguistic competencies of migrants could also be pertinent to **other municipalities**, particularly with regard to languages of international circulation – **foremost English**. This issue was explicitly tackled at both workshops carried out in the city of **Cluj**, a large municipality with a significant number of immigrants (especially foreign students).

Analysis of the current legal and policy background indicates that **multilingualism is regulated only if a recognised minority language is involved** and that non-Romanian language use is hampered by several legal and fiscal procedures.

In order to address this issue, **two parallel policy strategies** can be followed. On the one hand, provisions concerning **language rights** could be strengthened and formulated more accurately; on the other, **regulation with regard to international language use in administration needs to be created**. To achieve both strategies, the following policy recommendations are proposed.

## **Recommendations on the development of multilingual local administration**

### **I. Governmental Bodies**

- 1) The government should commit itself to the development of multilingual local administration and formulate best practices regarding the use of international languages within public administration; also, decentralise institutions and public utility companies.
- 2) The various national ministries, agencies and national offices should re-evaluate their policies on multilingualism and elaborate the official forms in widespread use within their respective areas of competency, publishing them in the Official Monitor in at least one international language that is not an officially recognised minority language in Romania.
- 3) The government should re-evaluate the law on decentralisation and the laws on public audit in order to break down all legal barriers related to the financing of multilingualism within public administration.
- 4) The government should re-evaluate the vague and equivocal legislative articles related to language use (e.g., those grey areas or insufficiently regulated issues that leave too much to the discretion of controlling organs such as the Court of Accounts). Such articles discourage municipalities from both implementing multilingual administration and initiating its modification in parliament.

### **II. Parliament**

- 1) Introduce new provisions in Law 215/2001 that would expand and strengthen the language rights in decentralised institutions and public utility companies. (Re-adopt, in amended form, the new administrative code that was declared unconstitutional in 2018.)
- 2) Introduce provisions in the law, which focus on the development and use of minority languages or multilingual forms.
- 3) Remove barriers hindering language related issues, in particular, those concerning the laws on decentralisation and public audit.

### **III. The Court of Auditors**

- 1) Audit and change the Court's internal practices to enable local and regional state institutions to initiate spending on multilingualism.
- 2) Create budgetary guidelines on the real costs of multilingualism.

## ANNEX

### Technical guidelines for using the Data Toolkit<sup>52</sup>

**The Data Toolkit is user-friendly software that presents the results of the YOUMIG project in an 'all-in-one' approach.** All data and analyses produced on the municipalities involved in the project are available digitally in the Data Toolkit, the main aim of which is to support local governments in creating local databases based on indicators developed by the project.

**The Data Toolkit enables municipalities to measure and trace local processes independently, even beyond the end of the YOUMIG project.** Better use of migration data in strategic planning and decision-making in related policy fields is of utmost importance. Therefore, measuring youth migration and its impacts on local development should be a priority for every municipality affected by it.

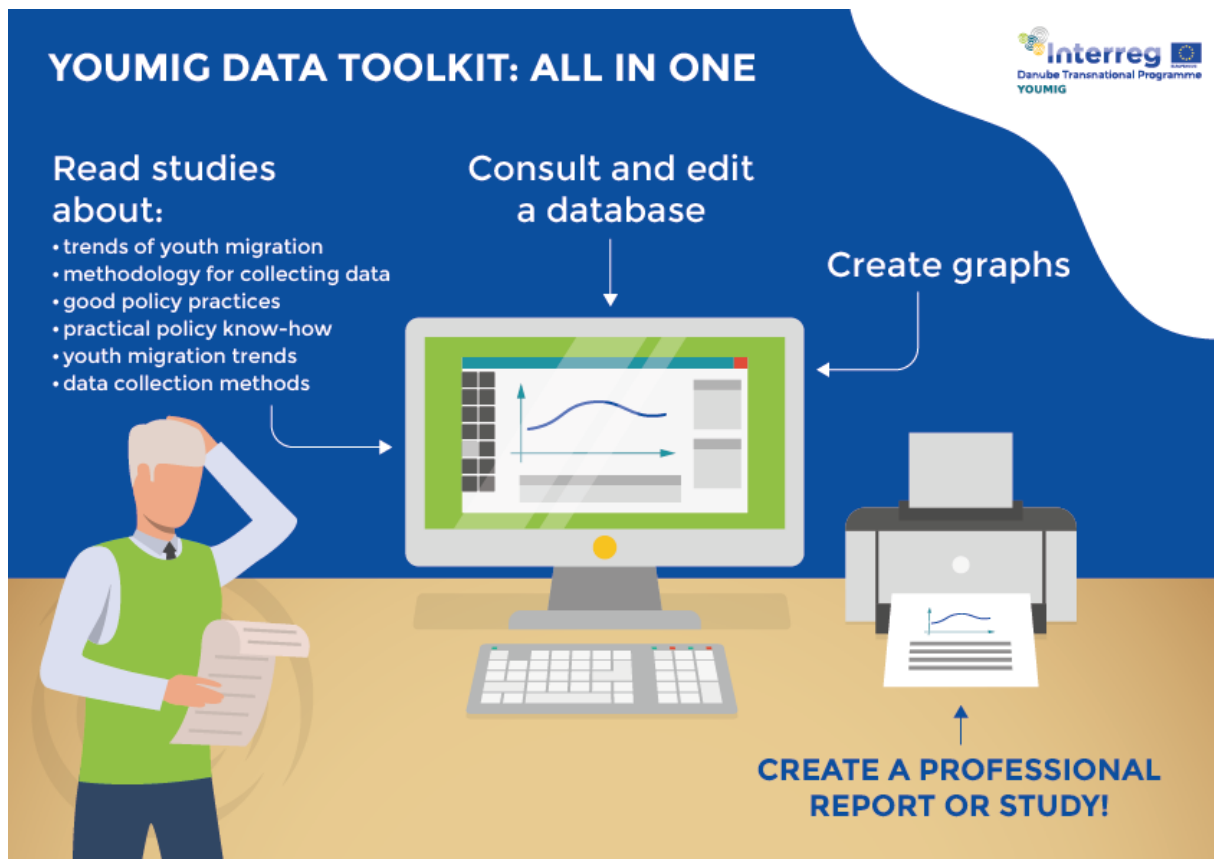
#### **The main ideas for the design of the Data Toolkit were:**

- Local municipalities' representatives should be able to trace local social processes on themselves, on a clear and easy to use platform
- A high quality, comprehensive and strategically useful dataset on (youth) migration, and its social and economic context should be provided
- The data should be available for visualizations, and help decision-making
- Local representatives and decision makers should have the opportunity to prolong the time series in future by adding their own data, in order to observe and analyse the data from a long-term perspective
- It should contain some basic benchmark values that facilitate the comparison of the levels and trends of the analysed indicators, and highlight when a trend starts to be 'negative'
- It should be a complementary and functional digital annex for the Local strategies (and vice versa), in an 'all-in-one' format
- It should be tailored for each project partner municipality (country), but it should also contain cross-country comparative datasets available for all users

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Figure 17. YOUMIG's Data Toolkit software



The **software** was created as a VBA (Visual Basic for Applications) application, running under Microsoft Excel as well as under Linux and Open Source software. The Data Toolkit is an extension to files in \*.pdf and \*.xlsx formats. All the files in the Data Toolkit are named analogically. They are stored in a folder structure. The content of the folders is editable by users; however, the names and the structure of the folders are not changeable.

Concerning its content, the Data Toolkit is divided in two major parts: information about the YOUMIG project and information and data about the municipalities involved in the project.

The **project presentation** part starts with general information such as its background and goals; it then presents the structure of the project and the major outputs. These are the following:

- Conceptual framework for the study of youth migration in the Danube Region
- Local status quo analyses which provide an overview of the trends in youth migration and related social phenomena for each local partner

- European and global good practice collection of relevant services and actions linked to youth migration
- Evaluation report on youth migration indicators
- Pilot activities based on existing good practices, testing innovative solutions to manage the processes and impacts of youth migration
- Policies and strategies aimed at evidence-based local youth policy measures, multi-level governance and transnational cooperation schemes

All information and data on the municipalities presented in the Data Toolkit come from the project's outputs. Based on these data, a comprehensive picture of youth migration (including indicators, forecast and status quo analysis) is presented for each municipality. Geographical, social and economic data were incorporated to characterise the municipalities in a general way, including GDP per capita and inflation rates.

The **basic data** are mostly of a demographic nature. The indicators tied to the area of population dynamics, such as natural increase, net migration and total increase are incorporated. Several datasets on internal and international migration – for instance the citizenship and country of birth of inhabitants, combined with their age and sex, are also presented.

The **indicators** designed and improved within the YOUMIG project are directed at the measurement and assessment of youth migration at the local level. There are two sets: core indicators and additional indicators. The core indicators are identical for all municipalities, whereas the additional ones are designed individually for the municipalities, based on the specificities of their migration situation.

The core indicators focus on four fields: population, education, labour market and other (locality-specific) topics. The Data Toolkit contains 16 core indicators per municipality and further additional ones (1 to 5 indicators).

Indicators tied to the major **demographic structures** are:

- In- and out-migration
- Top sending countries regarding the annual stock and flow of immigrants
- Registered returnees in some basic structures (age, sex, education level)

**Education** related indicators are:

- The level of completed education
- The skill level of return migrants

- Student outbound mobility ratio

**Labour market** oriented indicators include:

- Population by activity status
- Workforce in healthcare
- Household income
- Regional GDP per capita

The **specific indicators** are drawn from the three domains, namely:

- Subjective well-being
- Tolerance towards foreigners
- Intentions to migrate

The **population forecast** (with 2035 as the time horizon) was produced for each municipality. Four basic scenarios were calculated: medium, high, low and zero-migration scenarios. The main forecast results are shown in the 'Projection' part.

Last but not least, the Data Toolkit contains the **Local Status Quo Analysis (LSQA)** of the given municipality. The main focus of this analysis is on local processes of emigration, immigration and return migration. This detailed case study used multiple methods of data collection and analysis; it shows the position of the given municipality in the context of international migration and in the light of social-economic interdependencies. Data collection and data analysis were based on jointly used concepts, a uniform methodology and conventional processing and utilisation of data.