

REGIN PROJECT POLICY BRIEF

Regional Governance and Policy on Migrant and Refugee Integration: the interplay between REGIN results and the EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.Introduction	4
2.Comparing REGIN Governance results with EU Action Plan	6
2.1 Governance of migrant integration	6
2.2 Multi-stakeholders' partnership: what role for regional actors and stakeholders	6
2.3 Multi-level coordination: national, regional and local level	9
3.Comparing REGIN sectoral policy results with the EU Action Plan	10
3.1 Integration Policy areas	10
3.2 Education and Training	12
3.3 Employment and Skills	13
3.4 Health	14
3.5 Housing	16
3.6 Data Availability	17
4.Conclusion and Recommendations	18
Bibliography	20



MIGRATION POLICY GROUP

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1. Introduction

In recent years the governance of integration has experienced a 'local turn', in which the importance of sub-national levels of government has become increasingly evident (Scholten and Penninx, 2016). While the wider policy framework for the integration of migrants originates at the national level, regional administrations are now recognised as key actors in the practical realization of integration policies. However, academic studies on the multilevel governance of migrant integration are still devoted to the micro-level of municipalities or the macro-level of national administration, whereas the meso-level of regions is largely neglected. To fill this gap, the REGIN project aims to shed a much-needed light on the regional level of migrant integration governance in Europe, by providing evidence-based comparative research on integration governance and policies in 25 European regions from 7 EU member states. In particular, the Barcelona Centre for International affairs (CIDOB) and the Migration Policy Group (MPG) elaborated the so-called 'MIPEX-R', an index evaluating the regional performance on migrant integration across different dimensions and policy areas.

As an index, REGIN is inspired by established indexes such as the Migration Integration Policy Index - MIPEX, the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism - NIEM, the Intercultural Cities Index - ICC index and the Zaragoza Indicators. REGIN consists of two sets of indicators, the 61 Regional Policy indicators (MIPEX-R) and the 55 Outcome indicators. The former set of indicators (MIPEX-R) focuses on the content of regional policies and on the regional governance processes, while the latter explores the regional outcomes of the migrant integration process. The indexes are developed starting from a questionnaire, filled in by regional experts and then reviewed and checked for consistency by CIDOB and MPG' research staff. Each questionnaire entry is then scored on a 0-100 scale, resulting in scored indicators, which are averaged to produce an overall score.

The REGIN analysis is developed along four different analytical dimensions:

- Governance Elements
- Policy Cycle Stages
- Target Groups
- Policy Areas

The governance elements dimension refers to the complexity of the policy-making process, by highlighting its core analytical elements: i) the actions taken to favour integration; ii) the actors involved in the process and the relations in place to foster their collaboration; iii) the available resources to promote integration.

The REGIN analytical structure also examines the multidimensionality of the policy cycle, by identifying four different stages of policy-making: formulation (decision-making), output (formal issuing of policies), implementation (application of policies in practice) and evaluation (monitoring of policies' efficacy).

REGIN researches and identifies the different policies in place for third-country nationals (TCNs) and beneficiaries of international protection (BIPs). These two categories present different needs and often require a diversified approach in terms of service provision and policies. For instance, beneficiaries of international protection face specific obstacles to lasting integration in their new countries and need access to targeted support and integration measures (Wolffhardt et al, 2019).

Finally, REGIN also presents a specific focus on pivotal policy areas for the successful integration of migrants, including labour, education, health, housing, language, culture, religion and social security and assistance. These policy dimensions are crucial for the long-term integration of migrants and refugees in EU society, as acknowledged in several EU and international legal and policy documents. In particular, the recent adoption of the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 by the EU Commission points out the importance of promoting and advancing sustainable integration practices in EU Member States.

The Action Plan represents a unique opportunity for the EU to strengthen its support to Member States in the policy area of migrant integration. It states the relevance of migrant integration in the EU to “foster social cohesion and build inclusive societies for all” and provides an overview of the state-of-the-art on integration and inclusion in the EU which reflects on the lessons learnt in the implementation of the previous Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2016). In this regard, a relevant improvement concerns the inclusion of naturalised EU citizens of migrant background within the scope of the new Action Plan, while the previous document only considered ‘third-country-nationals’ (TCNs) as a target group. The term ‘migrants’ is broadly used and also includes beneficiaries of international protection (BIPs) and asylum seekers, compatibly with national legislation.

The Action Plan lists a set of key values and principles underlying the EU commitment to integration and inclusion to guide the work of Member States when designing, implementing or reviewing their strategies (EU Action Plan, 2021, p. 5). In addition, it highlights four key sectoral areas for which targeted actions are envisioned: education and training, employment and skills, health and housing. Finally, the document concludes by proposing actions to be taken across all sectoral areas to improve migrant integration policies in the EU.

Against this background, this brief will first examine to what extent regional governance is addressed in the Action Plan and how the main governance elements on multi-stakeholder and multi-level coordination are reflected in the REGIN analysis. Then, the cross-cutting sectoral areas included in the Action Plan, namely education and training, employment and skills, housing, and health, will be examined in light of the corresponding REGIN analytical dimensions and key findings. To conclude, the paper will briefly point out the main data available on migrant integration at the regional level and will put forward some recommendations to enhance regional policies and governance on integration and inclusion.

2. Comparing REGIN governance results with the EU Action Plan

2.1 Governance of migrant integration

REGIN's core focus is the comparative analysis of the governance of migrant integration across European regions. The project analyses regional performance across several analytical dimensions with the purpose of understanding the level of development and efficacy of integration policies and practices. The project results provide an initial snapshot of integration dynamics from the novel perspective of regional administrations. The two main evaluations carried out by REGIN concern the 'governance system' of migrant integration and the 'governance process'. The 'governance system' concerns the degree to which regions adopt sufficient targeted actions on integration, establish relations with relevant actors and find or allocate appropriate resources to migrant integration. The 'governance process', on the other hand, concerns the analysis of measures and practices in the aforementioned four stages of the policy cycle: formulation, output, implementation and evaluation (Pasetti et al., 2022).

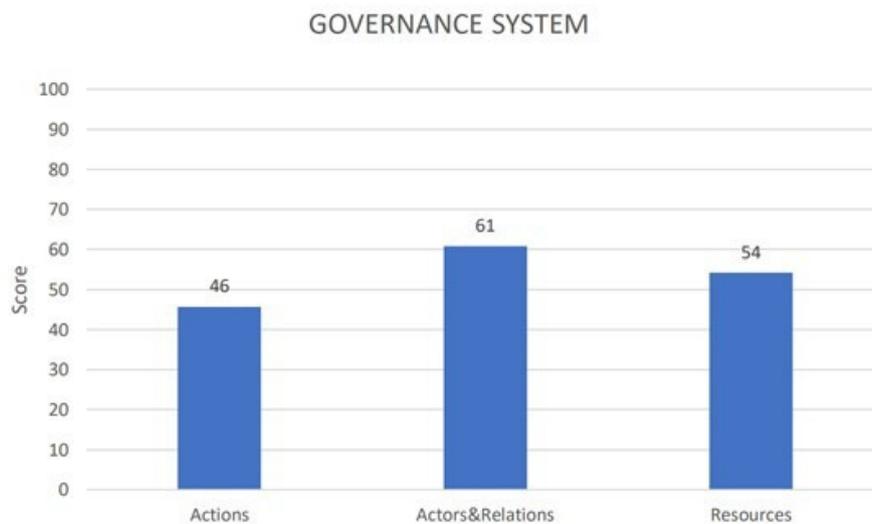
The EU Action Plan, as part of its priorities, goals and actions to foster migrant integration and inclusion, stresses the importance of ensuring "that all levels of governance – European, national, macroregional, crossborder, regional and local – are fully involved in designing and implementing integration strategies, so as to maximise the effectiveness of the actions". The Action Plan not only proposes the adoption of a multi-stakeholder partnerships at various levels of governance, but it also encourages Member states to foster migrant participation in host societies, supports civil society, social and economic partners and employers, recommends consolidating and improving the monitoring of practices for solid evidence-based policies (EU Action Plan, 2021).

2.2 Multi-stakeholders' partnerships: what role for regional actors and stakeholders?

The Action Plan's goals and themes overlap with REGIN indicators and analytical dimensions. In relation to the governance of migrant integration, the Action Plan seeks the adoption of a multi-stakeholder approach to policy-making for a more effective integration process. As therein stated, "integration is a societal process where the responsibility rests not with one particular group but rather with many: migrants, host communities, public authorities and institutions, social and economic partners, civil society organisations, churches, religious and other philosophical communities and the private sector" (EU Action Plan, 2021, p. 15). To this end, the Commission encourages the creation of long-term, multi-stakeholder and multi-level policy processes involving heterogeneous actors, especially migrant groups.

As shown in Table 1, according to REGIN results, the actors & relations (61/100) dimension represents the most developed element of the regional governance system. This means that regional administrations are on average moderately successful in establishing relations with relevant stakeholders (administrative actors on the local/national level, NGOs, private entities, labour organisations, etc.) for the purpose of jointly fostering migrant integration.

Table 1. Governance System



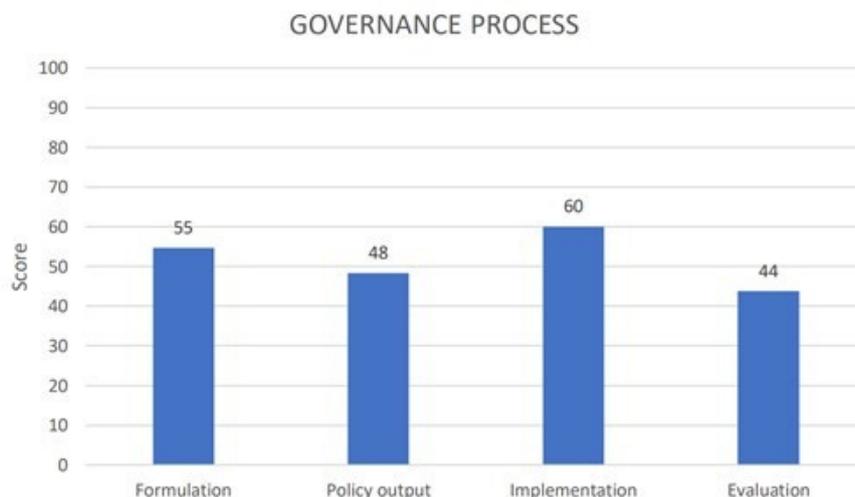
The wide array of actors involved in the regional governance of integration is part of an intricate multi-level framework that includes administrative, private and non-governmental stakeholders. The EU Action Plan aims to support the objective of creating multi-stakeholder partnerships by emphasising the crucial role played by different categories of actors (member states, regional and local administrations, civil society organisations, educational institutions, employers and socio-economic partners, etc.) and by strengthening the European Integration Network.

REGIN results show that regions usually have a dedicated unit with primary responsibility for the integration strategy within the regional institutional framework for the formulation and implementation of policies. Often, the dedicated unit collaborates with other internal units within the regional administration that are active at the stage of policy formulation (13 out of 25). Interestingly, some regions have specific bodies responsible for different aspects of migrant integration. For instance, 22 regions have a unit specifically dedicated to TCN integration, 14 regions have a unit dedicated to BIP integration and 12 have a specific unit addressing inter-religious relations (Pasetti et al., 2022). However, as the analysis moves away from the institutional setting, relations with external stakeholders become more sporadic and less systematic. Regional administrations in fact tend to coordinate less with national governmental offices, migrant-led associations, as well as employer and employee organisations, reducing the effectiveness of integration measures and the scope of governance actions.

REGIN indicators seem to suggest that greater involvement in the governance process by diverse actors, particularly the non-governmental sector, migrant groups and labour organisations, is strongly desirable. The direct participation and input of NGOs in the decision-making process, especially at the formulation stage, can contribute to the development of more well-rounded, inclusive and functional policies for migrants that take into account the expertise and experience of practitioners and migrants themselves.

The multi-stakeholder approach also plays a fundamental role in the different phases of the governance process and in the various steps that regions undertake to put integration policies in place. Table 2 shows how on average regional performances diverge across the policy-cycle. In particular, the multi-stakeholder approach is more present in the formulation (55) and implementation (60) stages of the policy cycle, where the highest level of collaboration is observed. At these stages, regional administrations greatly benefit from involving a wide network of actors, both within and outside the institutional setting.

Table 2. Governance Process



REGIN scores reveal that regional performance in the formulation of policies is only 'halfway developed', because, despite relying systematically on other units or departments of the regional administration (in 13 regions out of 25), regions fail to regularly involve other relevant actors. In fact, regional administrations are found to collaborate sporadically (rather than systematically) with competent local actors, non-migrant NGOs, migrant organisations and associations, as well as employer and employee organisations. On the other hand, regions better collaborate with other actors in the implementation of policies, when regional dedicated units are systematically supported by other relevant regional offices, as well as competent national and local administrative offices. Contributions from non-institutional actors also remain more limited at this stage, as non-migrant NGOs, migrants' organisations and associations, as well as employer and employee organisations are not involved on a regular basis.

2.3 Multi-level coordination: national, regional and local level

Albeit being primarily directed to Member States, the Action Plan also directly addresses the importance of regional and local authorities for the creation of functional multi-level synergies, recognising the scope for coordinated intervention and improvement at regional and local level

REGIN highlights that all analysed regional administrations, despite variation of tasks and competences, are involved in national integration policies for TCNs. The majority of regions systematically take part in matters decided at the national level in terms of the integration of TCNs (16 out of 25) and BIPs (18 out of 25). In particular, vertical cooperation between regional administrations and the national level can take the form of information exchange, development of decisions and policy positions. Moreover, competent actors at a national level are also systematically involved in the implementation of regional policies and practices in 11 of the 25 analysed regions. In terms of collaboration with the local level, the picture is very similar: regional administrations seem to rarely collaborate with cities and municipalities. For instance, in the formulation of policies, collaboration with local offices occurs on an occasional basis in about half of the analysed regions. However, when it comes to putting policies into practice, regional administrations appear to better cooperate with local actors, with regular coordination taking place in 12 of the 25 regions.

Multi-level cooperation is also beneficial to regions to access a number of different funding opportunities. According to REGIN findings, regional performances in acquiring financial resources and allocating them to migrant integration policies are only 'halfway developed' (54/100). Interestingly, most of analysed regions systematically rely on regional funds (18/25 for TCNs, 17/25 for BIPs), while only a few takes advantage of European or national funds. This result suggests that regions and municipalities still face significant challenges in accessing EU and national funds.

To fill this gap, the Action Plan focuses on increasing EU funding opportunities within the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework and improving access to funds through “better information and increased involvement in the preparation, implementation and revision of the relevant national programmes managed under shared management” (pp. 18-19). In line with the Action Plan, REGIN identifies the diversification of financial resources has as a pivotal precondition for the improvement of regional integration policies and practices.

REGIN findings also highlight that the current scope of horizontal cooperation among regions and mutual learning is rather limited (38/100), as cooperation mostly occurs within national borders, significantly reducing the possibilities for transfer and replication of successful practices between regions from different member states. The Action Plan encourages engagement in mutual learning and collaboration between Member States, cities, villages and region, but REGIN results point out that efficient and systematic multi-level coordination is yet to be achieved.

3. Comparing REGIN sectoral policy results with the EU Action Plan

3.1 Integration policy areas

The importance of the regional and local levels in the creation and implementation of successful migrant integration practices is increasingly recognised, especially in the socioeconomic domain (Manatschal et al., 2020; Scholten and Penninx, 2016). As the Commission’s Action Plan on integration and inclusion states: “Integration happens in every village, city and region where migrants live, work and go to school or to a sports club [and] the local level plays a key role in welcoming and guiding newcomers when they first arrive in their new country” (EU Commission, 2020, 7). Despite this recognition, the Action Plan mostly targets the EU and its Member States and encourages them to act across some relevant policy areas without specifically addressing the regional and local level. However, the REGIN project found that even if national governments have formal legal competence on immigration and asylum issues, regions are often responsible in practice for the development and implementation of integration policies for migrants and refugees.

The Action Plan identifies four main areas through which migrant integration can be promoted successfully: health, education, employment and housing. The Action Plan explains the importance of these policy areas, sets policy objectives, lists the actions to be undertaken by the Commission for the objectives’ achievement and, ultimately, provides a list of actions that Member States are encouraged to take.

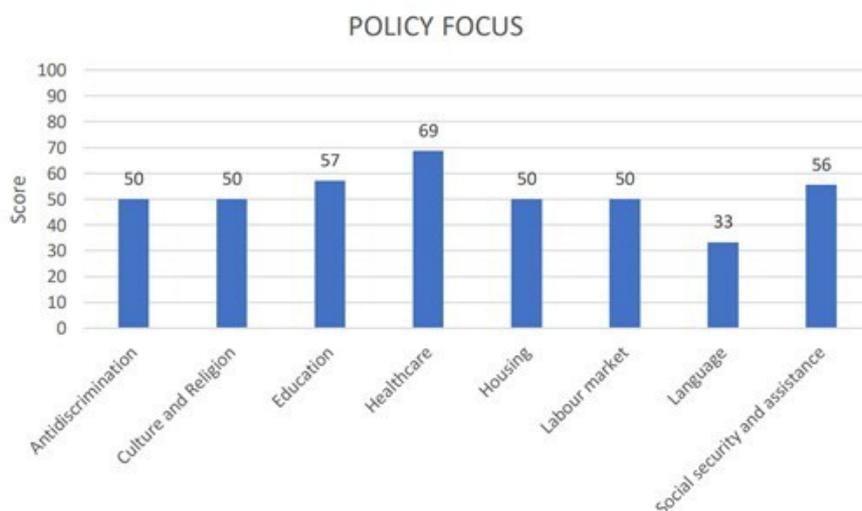
REGIN assessment shows that the 25 regions analysed exercise a variable degree (either shared with national governments or exclusive) of formal competences in a wide number of policy areas, including the four key sectoral areas identified in the Action Plan. As Table 3 illustrates, the majority of regions enjoy formal competences in almost all analysed policy areas, with the exception of religion, for which only seven regions had formal competences.

Table 3. Areas of Regional Competence



Furthermore, the REGIN analysis carried out a policy assessment, zooming in on some policy areas, including, but not limited to, the ones mentioned in the Action Plan. An overview of the policy areas addressed within the REGIN comparative report and the respective scores are shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Policy Focus



3.2 Education and training

Education and targeted training are of pivotal importance to the successful long-term integration of migrants, as they promote the acquisition of skills and competences that are crucial for migrants to build social and professional relations in their new country. Unsurprisingly, this policy area is central in the EU Action Plan 2021-2027 and it is described as ‘the foundation for successful participation in society and one of the most powerful tools for building more inclusive societies’ (p.8). The Action Plan affirms the need for the improvement of measures to promote inclusion, increased participation and equal opportunities for migrants in schools, the provision of targeted support, especially in cultural and linguistic terms, the building of teachers’ multicultural and multilingual capacity, the prevention of migrant pupils’ segregation in schools and the fostering of migrant-native relations among pupils.

The aim of improving the multilingual and multicultural capacity of the teacher workforce is a clear priority in the EU, achievable through the provision of trainings and seminars for teachers, the inclusion of multilingual and multicultural competence as recruitment requirements and the adoption of measures to bring migrants into the teacher workforce. The REGIN results underline the severe inadequacy of regional measures to bring migrants into the teacher workforce as the main weakness in this policy area. Intercultural education is also absent in multiple regions (10 out of 25): only 8 regions provide it as stand-alone school subject or as transversal topic in school curricula.

REGIN findings in this area highlight the presence of three main measures to foster education: the provision of guidance and assistance to address the educational situation of migrant groups (e.g., teaching assistance, homework support) - carried out systematically in 15 regions and occasionally in 8 cases; the provision of targeted-financial support to address the educational situation of migrant groups – implemented systematically in 12 cases and occasionally in 9 cases; and the provision of school places for all children of a compulsory schooling age, including those with irregular status (18 out 25 regions). It is worth noting that the Italian regions of Campania (93/100) and Veneto (86/100) provide the most developed measures in this area.

In sum, despite the presence of several relevant measures in this area, the policy framework on education is only ‘halfway favourable’ to foster migrant pupils’ education and it would strongly benefit from systematic measures for improving the inclusion of migrants in the teacher workforce and the intercultural aspect of school education.

Good Practice from the REGIN Integration Lab:

Language and integration classes in Lower Saxony, Germany

Following the end of a short-term project (SPRINT) to support migrant pupils' language integration, the region of Lower Saxony decided to incorporate the project's modules into a new vocational school's curriculum, making the provision of services systematic. The service includes a full-time Language and Integration Class, where pupils can build on their language, cultural and professional capacities. The programme promotes language competence in young adults with a migration background, yet, in contrast to its predecessor, it also offers part-time classes without age restrictions, broadening the target group by including more diverse groups of newcomers.

More on this practice at: <https://integration-lab.reginproject.eu/practices/15>

3.3 Employment and skills

Employment and access to the labour market are fundamental enablers of integration, as they promote migrants' autonomy and economic empowerment. However, migrants are often faced with numerous structural obstacles to access the labour market, such as the lack of targeted support or burdensome administrative requirements. Improving access to employment and self-employment to migrants is one of the stated overarching objectives of the EU Action Plan, which aims at achieving fundamental targets such as: enhancement of multi-level cooperation between key labour market actors, support for migrant entrepreneurs, increased female employment, better assessment of migrant skills and increased participation in vocational education and training (VET) programmes.

REGIN analysis shows how regional administrations focus on the provision of professional and vocational training courses (systematically offered in 13 regions, occasionally in 5 regions), although measures to increase participation in such courses, such as scholarships, incentives, and mentoring, are scarce (regularly provided only in 6 regions). Regions are also moderately successful in providing financial and logistical support to migrant entrepreneurs (systematically offered in 10 regions, occasionally in 4 regions). However, significant gaps are still observed in this policy area. Only 3 regions systematically implement targeted actions to tackle labour exploitation of migrants, while most regions lack measures encouraging the hiring of migrants, as well as targeted measures for migrant groups with special needs, such as youth, NEETs, or long-term unemployed (regularly provided only in 6 regions). Another crucial weakness concerns the limited degree of collaboration between the regional administrations and other labour market actors: only Lisbon and Tyrol can count on a stable partnership with social enterprises and the private sector to support new labour opportunities for migrants.

Overall, REGIN results in this area confirm the need to put in place those structural measures proposed within the Action Plan. For instance, measures are needed to enhance collaboration between institutionally diverse stakeholders, such as national, regional and local administrative offices, NGOs, private sector entities and labour organisations to provide complementary, inclusive and efficient support. In order to improve the current level of support, the Action Plan encourages Member States to make full use of EU financing opportunities, in particular the European Social Fund Plus and the European Regional Development Fund, to respond to identified needs at national and regional level.

Good Practice from the REGIN Integration Lab:

Recognition of migrant competences in Tuscany, Italy.

In order to support the socioeconomic integration of TCNs, BIPs and asylum seekers, the region of Tuscany launched the COMMIT (Competenze Migranti in Toscana, “Migrant Competences in Tuscany) programme. This project, funded by the Italian Ministry of the Interior under the EU's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), aims to support the labour inclusion of migrants within the regional labour market by structurally improving the opportunities for migrants’ skills recognition and labour market orientation. The project relies on the consolidation of multi-stakeholder partnerships within the territory, involving public, private and business actors, to promote migrants’ empowerment and capacity-building.

More on this practice at: <https://integration-lab.reginproject.eu/practices/9>

3.4 Health

Effective access to healthcare is paramount for the successful integration of migrants in host societies, as it is a key determinant of the physical and mental well-being of the migrant population. In this area, migrants tend to face significant obstacles to access services, caused by several factors, such as the uncertainty of their legal status, lack of information on service provision and linguistic barriers. The EU Action Plan aims to improve the provision of accessible and clear information on healthcare services and to systematically address the challenges faced by migrant women, particularly in terms of pre-natal and post-natal care. In practice, the Action Plan advocates for the use of available EU funds (Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the European Social Fund Plus and the European Regional Development Fund) and programmes, such as the upcoming Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme, and for an increase in collaboration and practice exchanges between different Member States.

The REGIN assessment sets out that regions are, on average, advanced in ensuring formal and substantial equality between foreigners and native citizens. Migrants in regular situations are granted unconditional access to healthcare services on the same conditions as nationals in 16 of the 25 analysed regions, while migrants with irregular status face more challenges. For instance, in Bavaria, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Berlin, migrants with irregular status are not legally entitled to unconditional access to healthcare, rather they have to bear the full cost of medical expenses or need to be privately insured.

In most regions, migrant patients with inadequate proficiency in the official language can access some form of free interpretation services (24 out of 25 regions) and have access to targeted information about their entitlements and use of health services (23 out of 25 regions). However, both the provision of interpretation services and information are not systematic in all regions.

Overall, although the analysed regions undertake several targeted actions to facilitate migrants' access to healthcare, REGIN findings show that efforts are still needed to make measures systematic across all regions, especially in terms of improving the provision of information and the services for vulnerable categories. The Basque Country (100/100) and Emilia Romagna (100/100) present the most advanced governance models in this policy area, in full compliance of international standards on migrant and refugee integration.

Good Practice from the REGIN Integration Lab:

Civic and Health Communication for Newcomers in Skane, Sweden.

Partnership Skåne (PS), a multi-stakeholder support platform for holistic, inter-sectoral cooperation on reception and integration of newly arrived refugees and migrants in the region of Skåne, provides newly arrived migrants with unified, high quality civic and health communication to facilitate their establishment in the region. The service consists of civic orientation and integrated health communication courses covering a total of 100 hours, delivered by trained communicators who speak minority languages or have a migrant background. Upon evaluation of this practice, it emerged that migrants' ability to obtain, assimilate and use information about health improved, with a positive impact on mental health and social capital.

More on this practice at: <https://integration-lab.reginproject.eu/practices/4>

3.5 Housing

The importance of housing is expressed in the EU Action Plan, which describes the availability of adequate and affordable housing as a “key determinant of successful integration” (p. 14) for migrants. Effective access to housing is directly related to migrants’ opportunities in the educational and professional sector, as well as facilitating the creation of a healthy relationship with their host community. On the other hand, the lack of housing solutions can exacerbate inequalities and lead to situations of alienation and segregation. Thus, the EU Action Plan stresses the importance for Member States, and in particular for their regional and local administrations, “to address the challenges and promoting inclusive housing solutions” (p. 14). Several objectives and strategies are included in the Action Plan to achieve this goal. Jointly with the EU Commission, Member States, with the involvement of their regional and local administration, should aim to implement a coordinated strategy for the provision of affordable and adequate housing solutions, including social housing. Ideally, housing opportunities would be available at an early stage and would be integrated with other relevant policy areas, such as employment and education, so as to favour early integration of migrants. Moreover, the Action Plan places great emphasis on mutual learning between different administrative levels and stakeholders, both nationally and internationally, which could facilitate the proliferation and transfer of virtuous practices.

Although regions employ a plethora of measures and tools in this area, REGIN also identified significant gaps in regional housing policies, with services and practices mostly implemented on an ad-hoc basis. The most frequent measure concerns the provision of housing advice and counselling, which 9 regions offer systematically, and 5 regions provide occasionally. However, other forms of support are limited, with only 6 regions offering in-kind targeted support to favour migrants’ access to housing and even less providing systematic in-cash support (3 out of 25).

Vienna (100/100) is the region in which migrants can enjoy better conditions to access housing. Its range of policies is broad, systematic and includes targeted housing advice, financial and in-kind support specifically addressed to migrant groups, as well as specific measures to address the situations of territorial segregation.

Regional housing policies are only halfway developed and significant variation is found among regions. Policies are characterised by a widespread lack of service provision, resulting in limited and unpredictable support for migrants. Regions should better align their policies in this area with the objectives set out by the Action Plan in order to adopt innovative housing solutions that foster inclusion and fight segregation of migrants in the EU.

Good Practice from the REGIN Integration Lab:

Comprehensive care in migrant shelters in Murcia, Spain.

In the region of Murcia, the General Directorate of Family and Social Policies promotes comprehensive care programmes for vulnerable migrants in small-scale accommodation facilities. For the management of this public service, the Region of Murcia contracted 118 places in different shelters, through collaboration with several social NGOs. This practice provides accommodation and subsistence services to migrants, as well as other services to promote their socioeconomic integration, including the creation of a personalised integration plan. The service is a welfare mechanism designed to temporarily shelter socially vulnerable migrants (with a standard duration of six months, conditionally extendable by another six months), while promoting the development of their social skills.

More on this practice at: <https://integration-lab.reginproject.eu/practices/1>

3.6 Data availability

The REGIN project finds that regions face challenges in the monitoring and evaluation of migrant integration policies, practices and outcomes. This issue became evident in the REGIN data collection process on migration and integration trends and outcomes in the regions. In fact, the main finding is an overall lack of data on TCNs and, to a greater extent, on BIPs and asylum seekers. Out of the fifty-five established indicators, only six have available data for all analysed regions. For the vast majority of indicators, data for TCNs and, to a larger extent, for BIPs is unavailable.

This finding sheds light on a structural flaw affecting several European regions, namely, the lack of appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of the efficacy of integration policies. Proper evaluation of measures and outcomes are fundamental to improve the quality of policies and the chances for migrants to integrate successfully. The unavailability of regional data fits into a wider pattern of suboptimal monitoring practices identified by the EU Action Plan across Member States. Reliable, disaggregated, and comparable data on the impact of integration policies is identified within the Action Plan as a *conditio sine qua non* for the creation of functional and evidence-based policies.

The challenge of international, disaggregated data collection requires monitoring efforts at all levels from a variety of diverse actors, and European comparative research projects, such as REGIN, are an important step for the promotion of more structured monitoring.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Overall, this report reveals how, in terms of migrant integration and inclusion policies on a regional level, the most favourable conditions can be found in relation to the areas of health and education, while employment, housing and vocational training emerge as dimensions with the least favourable conditions. In terms of governance, the set of actors involved on integration matters is part of a multi-level framework composed of different stakeholders that operate both inside and outside the regional administrative structure. However, the active participation in governance mechanisms of external stakeholders, such as national administrative units, migrant-led associations, as well as employer and employee organisations is still very sporadic. Cooperation among regional legislative and administrative bodies is also not systematic across the 25 REGIN regions.

The Action Plan represents a crucial opportunity to improve regional policies and governance on integration. The following recommendations, based on REGIN findings, outline how both regions and the European Commission can take advantage of the Action Plan to close the policy gaps that persist in integration policies for migrants across Europe:

Recommendations for regions within the EU:

- Increase the support that regions provide to local authorities for the integration and inclusion of migrants;
- Ensure regular and systematic representation and consultation of migrants and NGOs in the policy decision-making process;
- Adopt comprehensive migrant and refugee integration strategies which include a wide set of elements such as rationales, goals, actions, budgets and coordination structures;
- Develop a clear framework to implement, monitor and evaluate an integrated integration strategy;
- Define precise indicators to measure progress in the achievements of the objectives set by the strategy;
- Provide long-term and sustainable funds and in-kind support for local actors that support the integration of migrants and refugees;
- Promote campaigns and raise awareness of the positive contribution of migration and diversity to society;
- Increase cooperation with other regions and jointly formulate and develop measures.

Recommendations for the EU Commission:

- Devote more attention to sectoral areas not individually addressed in the Action Plan, such as language, social security, culture and religion;
- Develop more specific and targeted recommendations for regional and local administrations;
- Improve the support provided to regional and local administrations for accessing EU funds;
- Define precise indicators to measure progress in the achievement of the objectives set by the Action Plan in all its points.

Recommendations for EU Member States:

- Promote multi-level coordination within national, regional and local offices on migrant integration matters;
- Include regional and local administration in the decision-making process on migrant integration;
- Promote and fund systematic and accurate data-collection practices on a national, regional and local level.

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