5 COUNTRY REPORTS WITH PPT

INDICATOR 1.2.2:
- 3\4 online focus groups per countries
- 30 migrants per country in are involved in qualitative research to express their needs on migrants' participation to democratic process

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SHAPE
SHaring Actions for Participation and Empowerment of migrant communities and Las

Acknowledgement

Disclaimer

Abstract

English

The Institute for Social Research (IRS) defined a methodology for the qualitative survey and organized in-house training in the Consortium in three meetings so that the partners could conduct the research independently. The survey, based on focus group methodology, had to include people with a migrant background (a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 30 people), to identify their needs in areas such as work, housing, education, health and gender equality. JRS in Croatia, Artemisszio in Unghary and RightChallenge in Portugal carried out

independently the survey based on the shared methodology, while IRS conducted the qualitative research in Italy and in Germany (after that WeWorld and LAKA respectively provided the list of participants). All partners conducted at least 3 online (or face-to-face) focus groups, and identified specific needs (for example, access to care services is a major issue in Croatia), and other more cross-sectoral needs (obtaining citizenship is considered as an essential prerequisite for active participation in all countries involved).

People with a migration background involved by country:

- **Portugal: 18**
- **Italy: 30**
- **Hungary: 30**
- **Croatia: 16**
- **Germany: 16**

Five reports (one per country) and five PowerPoint presentations, showing the main evidence, were realized (to be used during the final event).

Hungarian

A Társadalomkutató Intézet (IRS) meghatározta a kvalitatív felmérés módszertanát, és három találkozó keretében házon belüli képzést szervezett, hogy a partnerek önállóan végezhessék a kutatást. A fókuszcsoportok segítségével elvégzendő felmérésbe migráns hátterű embereket kellett bevonni (legalább 15, legfeljebb 30 főt), hogy megállapítsák

igényeiket olyan területeken, mint a munka, a lakhatás, az oktatás, az egészségügy és a nemek közötti egyenlőség. A JRS Horvátországban, az Artemisszio Magyarországon és a RightChallenge Portugáliában egymástól függetlenül végezte a kutatást a közös módszertan alapján, míg az IRS Olaszországban és Németországban végezte a kvalitatív felmérést (miután a WeWorld, illetve a LAKA biztosította a résztvevők listáját).

Valamennyi partner legalább 3 online (vagy személyes) fókuszcsoportot tartott, és azonosította a konkrét igényeket (pl. Horvátországban az ellátáshoz való hozzáférés a legfontosabb kérdés) és az átfogóbb igényeket (az állampolgárság megszerzését minden érintett országban az aktív részvétel alapvető előfeltételének tekintik).

Országonként migráns hátterű személyek bevonása:
- **Portugália: 18**
- **Olaszország: 30**
- **Magyarország: 30**
- **Horvátország: 16**
- **Németország: 16**

Öt jelentés (országonként egy) és öt PowerPoint prezentáció készült, amelyek a főbb bizonyítékokat tartalmazzák (a zárórendezvényen való felhasználásra).

Croatian

Institut za društvena istraživanja (IRS) definirao je metodologiju kvalitativnog istraživanja i organizirao internu obuku Konzorcija na tri sastanka kako bi se osiguralo da partneri mogu samostalno provoditi istraživanje. Istraživanje, koje je trebalo provesti putem fokusnih skupina, moralo je uključivati osobe migrantskog podrijetla (od najmanje 15 do najviše 30 osoba) kako bi se utvrdile njihove potrebe u područjima kao što su rad, stanovanje, obrazovanje, zdravlje i rodna ravnopravnost. JRS u Hrvatskoj, Artemisszio u Mađarskoj i RightChallenge u Portugalu proveli su istraživanje autonomno na temelju zajedničke metodologije, dok je Porezna uprava provela kvalitativno istraživanje u Italiji i Njemačkoj (nakon što su WeWorld odnosno LAKA dostavili popis sudionika).

Svi partneri proveli su najmanje 3 fokusne skupine na internetu (ili licem u lice) i utvrdili specifične potrebe (npr. u Hrvatskoj se itekako osjeća pitanje pristupa skrbi) i druge koje su više transverzalne (dobivanje državljanstva smatra se temeljnim preduvjetom za aktivno sudjelovanje u svim uključenim zemljama.)

Osobe migrantskog podrijetla uključene po zemljama:

- **Portugal: 18**
- **Italija: 30**
- **Mađarska: 30**
- **Hrvatska: 16**
- **Njemačka: 16**

Izrađeno je pet izvješća (jedno po zemlji) i pet prezentacija programa PowerPoint u kojima su navedeni glavni nalazi (koji će se koristiti tijekom završnog događaja).

Italian

L'Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale (IRS) ha definito una metodologia per l'indagine qualitativa e organizzato una formazione interna al Consorzio in tre meeting per far sì che i partner potessero condurre la ricerca in autonomia. L'indagine, da realizzarsi mediante focus group, doveva coinvolgere con persone da background migratorio (da un minimo di 15 a un massimo di 30 persone) al fine di identificarne i bisogni in ambiti quali lavoro, casa, educazione, salute e parità di genere. JRS in Croazia, Artemisszio in Ungheria e RightChallenge in Portogallo hanno svolto autonomamente la ricerca basandosi sulla metodologia condivisa, mentre IRS ha condotto l'indagine qualitativa in Italia e in Germania (dopo che rispettivamente WeWorld e LAKA hanno fornito la lista di partecipanti). Tutti i partner hanno condotto almeno 3 focus group online (o in presenza) e hanno identificato bisogni specifici (ad esempio, in Croazia è molto sentito il tema dell'accesso alle cure) e altri più trasversali (l'ottenimento della cittadinanza è considerato un prerequisito fondamentale alla partecipazione attiva in tutti i paesi coinvolti).

Persone da background migratorio coinvolte per paese:

- **Portogallo: 18**
- **Italia: 30**
- **Ungheria: 30**
- **Croazia: 16**
- **Germania: 16**

Sono stati prodotti cinque report (uno per paese) e cinque presentazioni in PowerPoint che riportavano le principali evidenze (da utilizzare nel corso dell'evento finale).

German

Das Institut für Sozialforschung (IRS) legte eine Methodik für die qualitative Erhebung fest und organisierte in drei Sitzungen eine interne Schulung, damit die Partner die Untersuchung selbständig durchführen konnten. An der Umfrage, die in Form von Fokusgruppen durchgeführt werden sollte, sollten Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund teilnehmen (mindestens 15 und höchstens 30 Personen), um ihre Bedürfnisse in Bereichen wie Arbeit, Wohnen, Bildung, Gesundheit und Gleichstellung zu ermitteln. JRS in Kroatien, Artemisszio in Ungarn und RightChallenge in Portugal führten die Untersuchung unabhängig voneinander auf der Grundlage der gemeinsamen Methodik durch, während IRS die qualitative Umfrage in Italien und Deutschland durchführte (nachdem WeWorld bzw. LAKA die Teilnehmerliste zur Verfügung gestellt hatten).

Alle Partner führten mindestens drei Online- (oder persönliche) Fokusgruppen durch und ermittelten spezifische Bedürfnisse (z. B. ist der Zugang zur Gesundheitsversorgung in Kroatien ein wichtiges Thema) und eher übergreifende Bedürfnisse (die Erlangung der Staatsbürgerschaft wird in allen beteiligten Ländern als Grundvoraussetzung für eine aktive Teilnahme angesehen).

Beteiligte Personen mit Migrationshintergrund pro Land:

- **Portugal: 18**
- **Italien: 30**
- **Ungarn: 30**
- **Kroatien: 16**
- **Deutschland: 16**

Es wurden fünf Berichte (einer pro Land) und fünf PowerPoint-Präsentationen mit den wichtigsten Erkenntnissen erstellt (zur Verwendung bei der Abschlussveranstaltung).

Portuguese

O Instituto de Investigação Social (IRS) definiu uma metodologia para o inquérito qualitativo e organizou uma formação interna em três encontros para que os parceiros pudessem realizar a investigação de forma autónoma. O inquérito, a ser realizado através de grupos de discussão, deveria envolver pessoas oriundas da imigração (um mínimo de 15 e um máximo de 30 pessoas), a fim de identificar as suas necessidades em áreas como o trabalho, a habitação, a educação, a saúde e a igualdade de género. O JRS na Croácia, a Artemisszio na Hungria e a RightChallenge em Portugal realizaram a investigação de forma independente com base na metodologia partilhada, enquanto o IRS realizou o inquérito qualitativo em Itália e na Alemanha (depois de a WeWorld e a LAKA, respetivamente, terem fornecido a lista de participantes).

Todos os parceiros realizaram pelo menos 3 grupos de discussão em linha (ou presenciais) e identificaram necessidades específicas (por exemplo, o acesso aos cuidados de saúde é uma questão importante na Croácia) e necessidades mais transversais (a obtenção da cidadania é considerada um pré-requisito fundamental para a participação ativa em todos os países envolvidos).

Pessoas oriundas da imigração envolvidas por país:

- **Portugal: 18**
- **Itália: 30**
- **Hungria: 30**
- **Croácia: 16**
- **Alemanha: 16**

Foram produzidos cinco relatórios (um por país) e cinco apresentações em PowerPoint contendo as principais provas (a utilizar no evento final).

Migrants' needs assessment

CROATIA

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Executive summary

1. Methods and participants

In three focus groups, where one was live and two online participated 16 people, which includes 9 men and 7 women. There were nine people from Syria, three from Iran, three from Jordan, and one from Afghanistan.

They are in Croatia for one to six years. On average 3-5 years.

In migration status, most of them are refugee migrants, and one of them is a returnee, who went to Germany for a while and got back one year ago. One migrant is a Croatian returnee, she lived most of her life in Jordan; but turned back to Croatia two years ago. Two of the participants are members of the organization, in a way that they are part of a staff of the Civil Society Organization.

2. Migrants active involvement

The main conclusion of focus groups is that on the one hand there is no belief in the state system on the side of migrants and on the other hand, there is no openness or understanding of migrants' needs from the government.

2.1 Migrants' needs and civic participation/active citizenship

DEFINITION OF *participatory process*

Most of the participants pointed out that a participatory process is needed in Croatia, that everybody should have and say their own opinion if they want to. There should be a possibility to meet with decision-makers to say their opinion. One of the migrants said that the participatory process is good, that it is important for us to ask migrants and see on the field which way of doing things is better for them, for them to feel like there is

making joint decisions. Furthermore, migrants mentioned that they see a participatory process, to have a voice, and for them to really be heard, they don't want those decisions made for them, but with them. It is necessary to hear both sides, to make a quality decision, and in this way, there is a feeling of mutual respect.

One participant says that making a decision without the migrants is a complicated procedure - in the end, migrants are not happy and then they need always to ask other people to help them. In this way, migrants would feel more independent, because: "life is not living with the organization"

PARTICIPANTS' INTEREST

Half of the participants express their need to say something. The main reason is to achieve the goal, to make future migrants' lives easier; because at this moment, it is really complicated. As they mentioned, it is important to say their opinion, no matter what. If there would be any possibility to join a meeting with decision-makers, they would gladly do it. One participant pointed out that active migrant involvement should be important also to the government, which helps them too "If they invite us to hear, they need to hear us", and also it should be in the governmental interest to share this valuable information about migrants' needs with the European Union (EU).

Another half is not interested in the participatory process, where the main reason is that there is no trust in any changes to better the way of dealing with the satisfaction of existential needs.

Two participants in the focus group, who are part of organizations, mentioned that both of them want to include migrants in the decision-making process but they don't have enough power to do it.

"Someone higher than we are making decisions, that we all need to follow - we are just giving information, like a bridge between them and us".

MIGRANTS' MAIN NEEDS

The number one main migrants' need is to <u>be accepted in Croatian Society</u>, "not just to participate, to belong. An example that this is not still the case in Croatia is shown in a quote from one of the participants in a focus group: "I'm here for six years, I'm speaking very good Croatian language, but few months I manage to find a job for me, because before every employer was not good to me, or not hire me because I'm Syrian". This also shows that Croatia is still full of discrimination. The second mentioned need is for <u>Croatian language courses to be better structured and organized.</u> Migrants are eager to learn the language, but the courses are expensive, and those organized by the state are held only twice a year and are always at the beginner level, which is not enough for people who have been here for several years. As one person in the focus group said: "If you don't have communication with people, you don't have anything". Another need is <u>to prolong two - years free of charge for apartments from the state.</u> Even though; this benefit is rare in countries of the EU and the state believes it is enough for migrants at this time to integrate into the Croatian Society, according to this research, migrants think: "It is not enough to learn the language, find a job, etc." Participants agreed that it would be enough, if other parts of the integration process, in a parallel time of this two years is also included (language courses, finding a job, etc.). Regarding healthcare, there is <u>a low number of translators in medical institutions</u> (including mental health), and the ones who are there: "Most doctors don't speak even English, so I couldn't explain my condition". Another thing is that; even if they can understand each other on a narrative level, still there is no true understanding of the human approach, so more often, migrants do not have equal attention and opportunities when it comes to their state of health. One of the participants said: "Healthcare part is the worst, everything needs to be changed, if you are not working, you can not go to the doctor and doctor are not

well educated enough. We are getting information for the health part, they are saying that they are informed about it, but not. This is the biggest problem for migrants and foreigners who are living here. "

When it comes to training and employment, more often, pre qualifications are chosen for migrants, regarding the labor market deficit situation. Migrants pointed out that their need is to choose a school or prequalification program. "I think we need to have the possibility to choose a school which we want to attend, to get a certificate, not to be pressured to finish something just because Croatia doesn't have workers in that area". The problem that follows is that there is still no recognition of their diplomas from countries of origin. That is also one of the main needs of migrants that should be solved soon. **"**Government doesn't recognize it, they write you don't know anything", one of the participants said. The consequences are frequent retraining, and most of them have completed elementary school as a requirement for enrollment. Thus, in order to be able to acquire a professional occupation in Croatia, migrants often agree to be told that they only have a primary school education, while at the same time they are highly educated, some even with two university degrees. However, due to the aforementioned reasons, Croatia does not recognize their skills, even though it needs them in the labor market. The last mentioned migrants' needs are related to bureaucracy. One is to make laws and measures more understandable, "...so no one needs to help us with this and we can be independent", and the other is to make administrative processes easier. One said: "every little change, a lot of papers, most of them I don't understand"

2.2 Local best practices

At this moment, the best example of active migrant involvement in the decision-making process is project INCLUDE - *Inter-sectoral cooperation in the empowerment of third-country nationals*. The Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia is implementing the

project to empower the stakeholders in the integration system to design, implement and monitor integration measures for third-country nationals in Croatia. The project aims to strengthen the preconditions for social inclusion of third-country nationals, with a focus on people granted international protection, in three key areas: improving the system of development and monitoring national integration policies, strengthening interdepartmental cooperation of stakeholders in local and regional self-government units, and sensitization of key stakeholders, including the general population, to the integration of persons granted international protection. The target groups are: state administration, regional and local self-government, public institutions, civil society organizations, academics, citizens' initiatives, people seeking or who have received international protection, children and young people, and the general public. The main role in writing recommendations (for all integration areas) are migrants, gathered in one advisory group. Two of the sixteen participants in focus groups and this research are part of project INCLUDE.

Housing

Housing rules are clear and strict, there are two years of subsidized accommodation, which is often not two years, because there is a gap in the time from receiving the decision on asylum to finding accommodation. This is calculated over a period of two years. There is no example of good practice, where migrants are involved in designing the main part of the integration model.

The need for Croatian language courses is tackled by organized informal Croatian language courses by a few NGOs, which is also an opportunity for advocacy. Most NGOs and some local policymakers try to substitute solutions regarding the main need of migrants, which are meant to be on the state level.

Healthcare

Similar to housing, the healthcare system in Croatia is clear and closed and there are not many opportunities for change. The interview participants emphasized two things, to increase the number of translators in health institutions and to maintain structured and continuous education for doctors and other medical workers about working with migrants, their rights and obligations, the system of inclusion in health insurance, and ultimately, a human approach in working with them.

Education

The need for Croatian language courses is tackled by organized informal Croatian language courses by a few NGOs, which is also an opportunity for advocacy. For example, JRS Croatia is having a module of the B1 Croatian course level. An external associate was hired, a professor of the Croatian language who leads a group of 12 migrants who need to have a B1 certificate in order to be able to submit an application for long-term residence in Croatia. This is a required condition by the state, but at the same time, the state is not providing it free of charge. In this way, students get quality preparation for the exam, which is held in an external school of foreign languages, in agreement with JRS. JRS covers their first exam. This is one of the many examples, where NGOs and some local policymakers (mostly individual cases) try to substitute solutions regarding the main need of migrants, which are meant to be on the state level.

Training and employment

After the migrants have completed various language courses, which are provided by civil society organizations, most of the time, they again, through various forms, help in the acquisition of certain professions, where the migrants can be employed the fastest. Through agreements with schools that provide retraining and training, migrants have the opportunity to obtain a "Croatian paper" that enables them to find a job faster. However, their opinion is that it should certainly be possible through the state's

systems, "so that we don't always have to wait for a project from the EU, which some organization has the opportunity to implement."

In this area too, there is not a high degree of cooperation with migrants and persons of migrant origin, but what is currently required on the labor market in Croatia is imposed on them and, as stated earlier, they do not have the opportunity to complete their occupations or do what they are intended for . educated in their country or according to the skills they possess. An example is one focus group participant who tried on several occasions to complete a hairdressing course through a civil society organization, even though she had her own hairdressing and beauty salon in her country, which she had been running for twenty years. The most common reason for this was that at that moment when the free course was supposed to start, there was no more room for her, and when she approached another organization, the hairdresser was not interested in the project at that moment. This person opened her own salon in Croatia today, which is subsidized by incentives from the state apparatus, but it was a long-term process and the work of a network of civil society organizations and volunteers, in cooperation with her.

ACTORS

The Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities and Croatian Law Center, for now, in Croatia are the first organizations that are, through its project INCLUDE, on a structural level including migrants in the active participation process.

Regarding housing, with the Ministry of Interior, there is also a Social Welfare Center, they are also giving financial support if there is an emergency situation. But, again, there is no exchange of opinions, for example, what conditions should be met in the apartment for a quality life.

Other Civil Society Organizations are also doing it, but here is the bigger possibility of direct involvement, in a way that the Office is the first line to the government.

Migrants said that the Ministry of Interior should be involved, as the most powerful office, but regarding all participants in needs assessment, it has no interest in this - "they just offer what they have, they should ask migrants". All participants of the focus groups shared their negative experiences in attempts to cooperate with the Ministry and its employees, whether it is about daily bureaucracy or longer-term action.

GENDER ISSUES

The main conclusion is that there are no gender issues, but still migrant ones. In different forms, all the interviewees said the same thing. There is still a climate of discrimination in Croatia. Below are some of the responses: "more because we are foreign"; "You don't have any gender issues, just a national problem."; "There is discrimination for sure"; "to be a migrant is not still acceptable here"; "the biggest problem is this discrimination, not gender, but nationality".

SYNTHESIS OF THE MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

Almost everyone who participated in the research cited the good people they have around them as the main strength of the inclusion process and how their lives practically depend on the kindness of other people around them. The second strength is that most needs are in the end satisfied, but it takes a lot of effort and time. Some participants said there is a good network of organizations, in their opinion, other EU countries don't have that.

During focus groups, more was discussed about the system's weaknesses in the inclusion of migrants. The main weakness is that Croatia does not have enough experience in integrating migrants.

For example, in the employment part, there are not enough chances for finding jobs, prequalifications, or courses. Again, in this part of the focus group, the shortness of the Croatian language courses was mentioned. One participant pointed out that a lot of

organizations are here, but it is not clear who is doing what – "you cannot find someone who is dealing with this when you find it, the very often answer is to go to some higher institution who is responsible".

Even for project INCLUDE, it was mentioned that the procedure is slow – "we had a few meetings, but nothing is useful for us that is changed". This is one good example, where it is good to hear both sides. While on the one hand, the project presents itself as the best practice in the inclusion of migrants, the participants themselves claim that in reality, they did not have the opportunity to change much. This is the situation at the time of writing this report.

2.3 Added value of migrants' involvement

Migrants struggle with a specific problem or need. The people who helped them or the government will not know how they live, they have more experience with all parts of the integration process. One participant shared: "They never came to check where I live, maybe they called me as if they knew, but that's not enough for them to know how the family lives, they need to hear, they don't need to, they have to." It is necessary for policymakers to know about their needs, at least to think about them. Migrants' involvement is helping policymakers to decide if the decision they want to make is really needed by migrants. Here is an opportunity for them to really improve migrants' lives.

Second participant added that it is best that they are involved in, for example, having a small meeting. But first, as he mentioned, there has to be a change in Croatian citizen's minds, just think "outside of the box".

Another said:" Even if they are not from Croatia they have this right they have to give voice to somebody to hear them and solve problems that they need to solve.

In general, it is important for migrants to have a voice, because they believe that they need to change something.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

All of the focus group participants agreed that there is no general interest and knowledge in local authorities concerning the involvement and active participation of migrants in policy choices that involve them. Most of the migrants involved in this research agreed that nobody cares about them. Even though the government is not with them, Civil Society Organizations are listening (as most of the participants said), but they don't have enough power, on their own, to change the system for the better. One participant shared: "I think that my opinion is meaningless regarding the Law of migrants" and another added: "Croatian government barely listens to their own people, so there is no hope that it will listen to us."

Some of the participants said that maybe they just need to hear their voices and then maybe something will change and some of them pointed out that nobody asks about their opinion, ever. There is also an opinion that maybe through EU channels like this, our policymakers will listen.

MIGRANTS' TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

For some migrants, there was trust in institutions at the beginning of their arrival, but no more. Most of them agreed there are no changes in mentioned needs for years. Some pointed out that there is still trust, but that they lost hope. NGOs are trying to give back this hope, but every time they fail because of the policymakers and they need to follow its rules.

One participant said this approach is new for Croatia, they still need to work on integration processes – "they don't know what they should do. Another said: "If we are going to compare the countries that we are coming from, we trust the state".

A participant who is part of the staff of one NGO shared: "A lot of people came here and went to another city fast. Most of them are not trusting, and they lost hope in the government, I was part of the research and they called me to be a translator and give me a huge list of people and 75 % was not interested, we did this 100 time and nothing

changes, so I don't want to waste my time on this. People are too tired of this kind of research."

OPINION ON EU NETWORKING:

Almost 70% of participants mentioned that EU networking could be useful because it can help Croatian policymakers to implement some best practices - mentioned main issues in other EU countries are, in their opinion better arranged - housing, training, and employment especially.

3. **Recommendations/suggestions**

All of the participants agreed that firstly, it is needed to change the state of mind of the people in Croatia. Right after that, it is necessary to update the integration laws, for every migrant group with their input, for example, the one it says that migrants cannot vote. One participant suggested policymakers first solve big integration problems, which were mentioned during this report, in focus on education and the healthcare system. The next recommendation is to solve administratively long processes, the Ministry of Interior needs better information on the practical implementation of the Laws.

One of the ideas, born during one focus group, is to apply to the EU project, which would collect all the main needs/issues and give them to policymakers. Also, it will be good to have a small group of migrants, which is very well organized (because then they will be better heard), with the task to give recommendations or solutions to policymakers, something on the trail of the project INCLUDE. Furthermore, to arrange this meeting with policymakers once per three months to share information, and to bring joint conclusions. One said that it is better to be represented by NGOs because of their better connections.

Migrants' needs assessment

HUNGARY

SHAPE

SHaring Actions for Participation
and Empowerment of migrant
communities and Las

Index

Executive Summary

Within the framework of the SHAPE Project 3 focus groups with 30 participants from diverse backgrounds were organized by Artemisszió Foundation to assess the needs of migrant participants in connection with their participation in decision making on the local level connected to issues that affect them.

General findings of the focus groups are that migrants in Hungary have some general idea about how a participatory process could look like, as they were more involved in their home countries, or because they have the interest to become more active citizens. However, they have almost never participated in any initiatives aiming to involve them in Hungary, especially not from the public sphere and not regarding the main areas of integration (healthcare, education, employment, housing). Their only experiences come from the private sphere, for instance by providing feedback at universities, or when their employers asked them how the workplace can be made more inclusive for migrant employers as well. In addition, they have great experiences with civil society organizations as well, as they are the ones that provide integration services to them, so they are the ones they trust.

Generally, migrants in Hungary almost never turn to the public sphere because of language barriers and the maize of bureaucracy, only if they really need to. As the state provides no integration services towards newcomers, not even Hungarian language classes, migrants have no connection with the public sphere and rather turn towards the civil society and got involved and build trust with them. This result in that they have almost no trust in public institutions, hence they and their problems get invisible, and are a lot more difficult to involve them in decision-making at the local levels.

Migrants would have a strong need for a participatory process involving local authorities as well, as they are facing difficulties and challenges in their everyday lives, especially in the field of education and healthcare. These challenges come from the lack of Hungarian knowledge (and the lack of English knowledge of Hungarians), the difficulty in access to information, as well as social exclusion due to the anti-immigration rhetoric. In a participatory process, migrants would benefit from telling their experiences to decision-makers so that they understand the situation on the ground and can design solutions together.

As some of the local municipalities are getting more open toward migrants and are having more and more participatory processes, such as participatory budget and civil forums, it is a great time to involve migrants more as well. Civil society organizations

can act as a gatekeeper, as they are the ones that migrants already trust. The SHAPE Project offers a great framework for these gaps and needs and offers a solution on one hand to train migrants and empower them to identify and better express their needs and on the other hand train local authorities how to better involve migrants into the decision-making, and finally to make these two parties talk and collaborate with each other.

1. Methods and participants

Within the framework of the SHAPE Project 3 focus groups were organized by Artemisszió Foundation to assess the needs of migrant participants about their participation in decision-making on the local level. 2 focus groups were held on 2 consecutive Tuesdays (7th and 14th of Tuesday) starting from 18:00 to 20:00 in the evening, and one was organized on a Sunday afternoon (12th of June) from 14:00 to 16:00.

In total 30 people participated, 9 at the first occasion, 12 at the second and 9 at the third. As there were no restrictions in Hungary because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we found it extremely important to organize these discussions in person to make the participants feel safe to express their opinions and to create a more interactive space, that is a inevitable for a successful focus group discussion.

The participants of the focus groups were very diverse. We organized the sessions in Budapest because that is where the majority of the migrants live, therefore we had most of our participants from the capital, however 3 people joined us on Sunday from Pécs, a university town at the Southern part of the country. All of them were third country nationals and we had slightly more female participants (18) than male (12). The participants were generally from younger generations, we had 7 people aged between 18-24, 17 people between 25-34, 5 people from the 35-44 age group and one person aged between 45-65.

Gender distribution of the SHAPE Focus Group Participants

Male
40.0%

Female
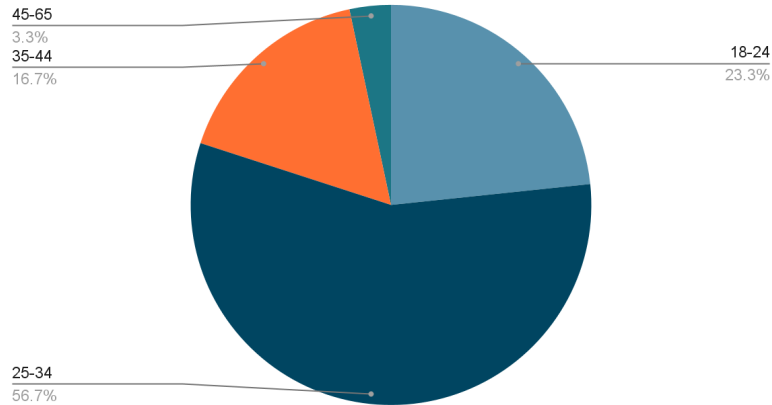60.0%
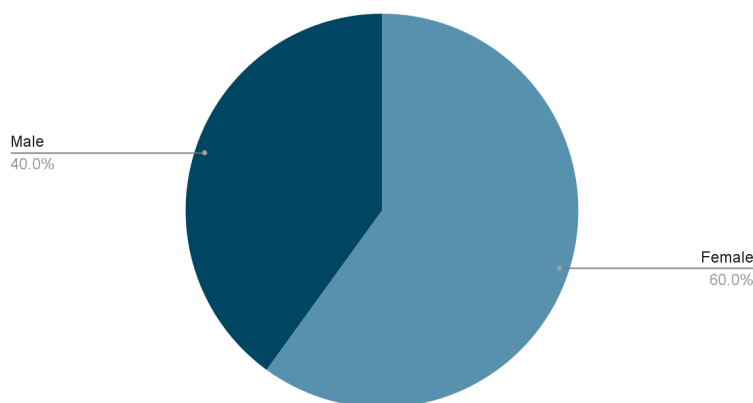
Age of the SHAPE Focus Group Participants

Figure 1: Gender and age of the SHAPE focus group participants

We had participants from 16 different countries, including Jordan, Tunisia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Uganda, Pakistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, India, Indonesia, Rwanda, USA, Ukraine, Yemen, Afganistan and Kyrgzstan.
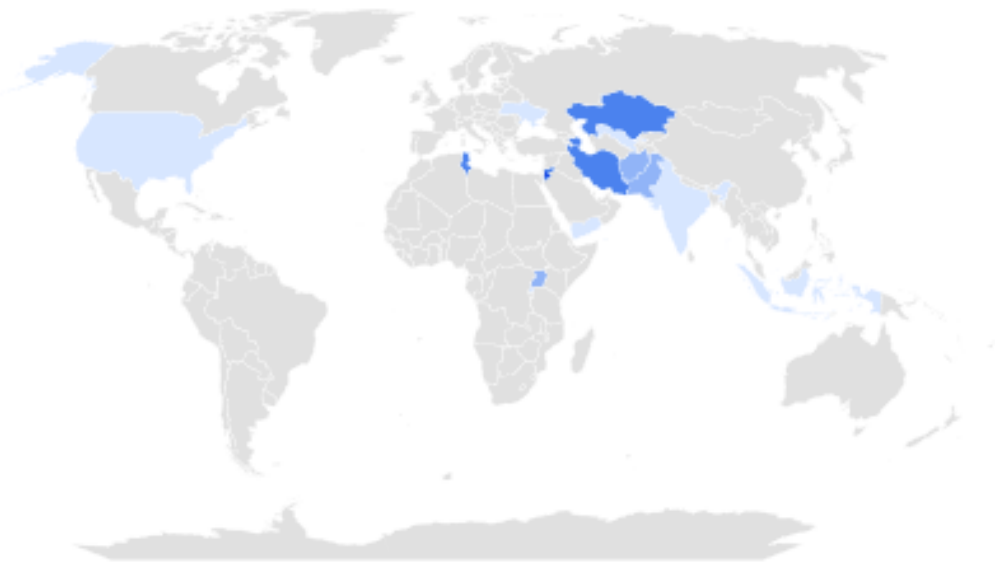
Figure 2: Country of origin of the SHAPE Focus Group participants

Most of the participants (14) have been living in Hungary for 2-5 years. Another 14 participants arrived recently to Hungary, 9 of them less than a year ago and 5 of them have been living in Hungary between 1 – 2 years. Finally, we had 1 participant who have been living in the country for 5-10 years and 1 participant who had been staying for longer than 10 years.
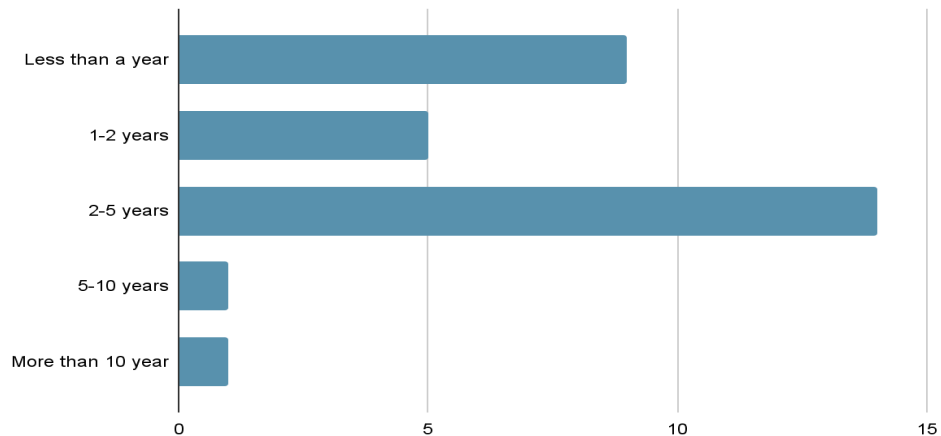
Figure 3: Lenght of residecny of the SHAPE participants in Hungary

11 participants' purpose of stay is to study, 10 participants have a work permit (or is currently looking for a job), 5 of them have international protection status, 1 of them is a beneficiary of temporary protection, 2 of them came for family reunification purposes and 1 person has already gained Hungarian citizenship.
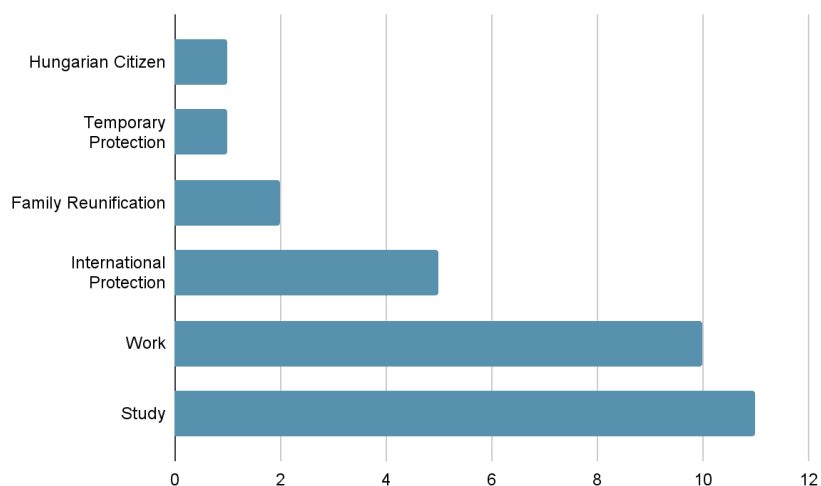
Figure 4: Purpose of stay/legal status of the SHAPE Focus Group participants

It is important to mention some language barriers we faced during the discussions. The language of the focus group was English, as the majority of migrants living in Hungary do not speak Hungarian. There were some people, especially from English-speaking countries like the USA, India, or Uganda for whom English was (one of their) mother tongues, and there were many other participants with fluent English, however, especially from the older generation and from the group who have been living in Hungary for a longer time, there were participants with limited English or better Hungarian knowledge than English. To overcome these challenges, in one of the sessions, we had a Farsi-speaking supporter, who translated to Farsi, for some of the participants we occasionally translated to Hungarian, and participants translated to each other to their mother tongues such as to Farsi and Arabic. Handling these language barriers meant that in some groups we could discuss more questions in detail, however in some groups, we did not have time to extensively go through all the planned questions because of time barriers.

Finally, it is important to note that 83% of the participants are not part of any political or civil groups or do not know about being a member. From the remaining 5 participants one is part of a student association helping Indonesian students to adapt Hungary and to promote Indonesian culture, one is a member of an international sports association, one of them is a member of a charity-based organization, and two of them are members of intercultural organizations, and only one of them is an active volunteer of an organization fighting discrimination and helping the involvement of migrants.

Are you a member of any political or civil groups?

Yes
16.7%

No
83.3%
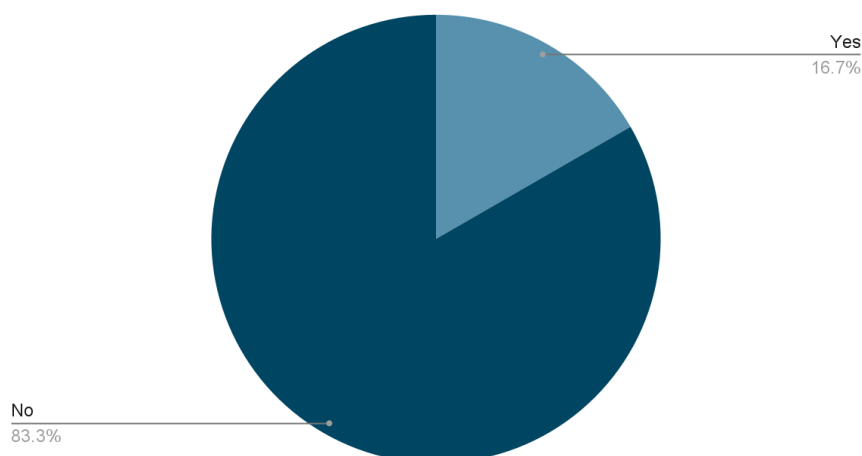
Figure 5: Political/civil group membership of the SHAPE Focus Group participants

It is important to highlight that in Hungary it is not common for migrants to participate in civil and political groups, and that the majority of the migrant-led or established organizations are cultural or diaspora organizations. Furthermore, migration is politicized in the country, there is a negative attitude toward migrants and no integration policies or services provided, hence there have been almost no initiatives to involve them in decision-making. Therefore, active participation is not common within the migrant community that limits the scope of this research, as there are no existing experiences about participation.

These result in that the participants of the focus group could not talk about existing initiatives of participation, but more about their needs that could be tackled through a participatory process, hence the report will detail two main sections, one detailing their needs and the second detailing what they think about participation and the existing initiatives, mainly outside of Hungary they know about. Finally, it is important to highlight that even though they have no lived experiences of participating in decision-making, they were very eager to tell their opinion and to get involved more, hence this report could still include some important findings.

2. Migrants' active involvement

2. 1. Migrants' needs and civic participation

a) DEFINITION OF a participatory process according to the participants

Participants of the focus groups had some limited knowledge about what participatory processes mean. While brainstorming about the word "participation" most of them said that it should be about expressing/sharing their opinions exchanging of perspectives, and experiences, and about being involved. Participation could happen through connecting with locals, volunteering, being active in the society, through providing feedback, through activism in order to make their voices heard, but also in a more organized way of a forum or consultation about issues that matter. Finally, they highlighted that it should be about having an impact in order not just solely speak up and share their opinions but also actions should follow. Someone pointed out that the right mindset is essential for this:

"If your mindset is „I don't care", then they don't really want to participate and take some actions. It is very important to have this mindset: „I do care", I wanna make some impact and wanna take some action towards it. It doesn't matter how big or how small it is, but to take action."

b) PARTICIPANTS' INTEREST in actively participate in decision making

Even though participants of the focus group have almost no knowledge of existing initiatives of a participatory process, they have an interest in participating in decision making and expressing their opinion, especially because they would like to explain to decision-making what happens on the ground, what migrants' main difficulties and needs are. One of the participants explained that he seizes every opportunity like this project to become a more active citizen:

"With the opportunity like now to be part of these discussions if I'm aware of them happening anywhere, I really love to take part"

As a limitation, participants have however some fears and doubts in participating as a foreigner in Hungary, as they feel they would be more exposed thanks to the negative public campaign against immigrants, how the below quote explains it as well. Hence, they would only express their opinions if they feel that there is a safe space for that.

„Like civil debate! [would be a nice way of participation] But scared of exposing yourself, making yourself a target. That would come back how much freedom of expression we as foreigners have – of course I'm feared of getting kicked out of the country. I'm happy to do a social action or something but scared so maybe there is a better way to do it.

c) MIGRANTS' MAIN NEEDS that could be better tackled through a participatory process

The biggest challenge migrants are facing in Hungary is language barriers. Hungarian language is amongst the most difficult languages in the world, while Hungarians themselves, especially the older generation don't speak English. State provided or financed Hungarian language classes to help integration completely ceased in 2018, since then only civil society organizations provide classes with voluntary teachers due to the lack of funding (European Comission, 2022). In every focus group discussion, each participant highlighted language barriers as the main obstacle, especially that right now they see no intention neither from the public sphere nor from the private sphere to tackle this issue. One of the participants provided a sarcastic example about the general attitude in Hungary. Once at Telekom he was complaining that he would like to see documents in English as well, however the service provider told him that when he lived in the US no one gave him Hungarian papers, and he had to do everything in English. The respondent further commented on how these two issues are largely different, as he would like to access information in the most common language in the world, not in his own mother tongue from a small country that is spoken by around 15 million people in the world.

"I'm not being pessimistic, as far as inclusion goes it takes time, we just need to live with what we have for now. For me at the back of my mind I accepted it, for me the real kick of it was when I went to Telekom with my sim card and the guy spoke English, I didn't have the stomach to wait for 5 hours..[1] but he told me that when he went to the US no one gave him papers in Hungarian. Those are two very different things..."

The second and connected challenge is the difficulty to access information. There is no information available in English about the different public services, and foreigners do not know where to find the information and from where to get support. Most of the time foreigners need to use Google translate that is not that reliable, especially if they do not know whether they look at the right information, as they also don't know which one is the official source.

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[1] Referring to another focus group participant who explained an example when he waited for 5 hours in a bank to find someone who is willing to translate his document into English, after he stated that he is not willing to sign something he does not understand.

"Lack of information how to do things, how things work like housing, transportation: mostly the basic stuff. When it comes to housing it is really not enough, lack of help, there are lot scams you can encounter, and due to language difficulties, you don't realize you are scammed"

The third one is bureaucracy that is a general difficulty for Hungarian citizens as well, however, increasingly affects foreigners as their processes to get residence permits and Taj cards are lengthy and they get no support and no information where to go, hence they have to solve everything by themselves in a country they don't even know the language.

"Bureaucracy – it is everywhere, but in Hungary I really feel it because I have to do all the documents and everything for myself and that was really difficult. We have to wait pretty long time to get our residence permit, taj card, tax card and so on"

The fourth one is social issues, including social exclusion, discrimination, racism, xenophobia, and segregation. Many of the participants feel that the locals are not welcoming or friendly towards them, and they are separated and can't communicate with them. It is important to highlight here that even though this is a social issue, the participants noted that these issues are also caused by the government and the public media that transmits anti-immigration messages.

"Discrimination – you can feel it so much, maybe you are going to the market or shopping, or wanna work, there is discrimination, people behave badly, she feels it in her bones, when she asks her friends[2], Hungarians' opinion is that it's a long history that Hungarians hate immigrants. My kids feel it in their bones as well and other foreign friends."

Furthermore, one participant from another focus group highlighted that the lack of social help is very difficult, as from the public sphere there is no social help for languages, healthcare, school for children, and for other problems, only civil societies can help, however not in a well-organized way, often providing services with the help of volunteers.

"Most of these things are connected to discrimination as well, if you're Hungarian, you can't find housing, you can't speak the language, just have less opportunity, people are not willing to help just because of how you look or because you don't speak the language and you're not from here"

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[2] Talking about another focus group member speaking the same language, who needed some support in translation from her.

These 4 issues affect all the main examined areas of integration, housing, healthcare, education, and employment to a varying scale, that are detailed below.

Healthcare

This is the most problematic field that almost everyone mentioned during the focus group discussions that they are facing challenges and some support should be provided.

The issue of language barriers especially concerns this area. In Hungary, there is a GP (general practitioner) system, which in short means that each citizen belongs to a GP, who can refer them to more specialized care, except in case of emergencies, where it is possible to directly turn to the hospitals. The GP to which someone territorially belongs is obliged to accept them as a patient, however, there is freedom of choice, meaning that it is possible to find a new GP if he/she is willing to accept the patient. As the interviews with local governments highlighted as well, there is a huge problem country-wise, that around half of the GPs are above 80 years old, meaning that they speak almost no English. The same problem goes with hospital staff, as the below quote demonstrates as well, that even at hospitals there are no doctors who speak English, hence communication can be a real struggle:

"Usually in governmental office like in Kormányablak[3], hospital and many places, not in Budapest but outside of Budapest in many places, they don't speak English. Sometimes might be a problem because for example one time I went to a hospital and I've been there for half day just to go to a doctor, because no one at that hospital was speaking in English. After half day just one man helped me because he was speaking in Hungarian and English, but no one except him understand the English and could help me. "

This is the area where the biggest need arrived from participants towards a participatory process with decision-makers, as they would like to tell their very negative experiences, how scary it is to go to a doctor or a hospital if you are sick knowing that you don't have a common language with the healthcare staff, so you can't express your problems and can't understand the recommended solution.

"For me, I don't have that experience, but I'm very scared to get sick, because I heard it is very hard here"

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[3] Kormányablak is the Government Window, that is organized ont he local level, but do not belong to the local authorities but to the national government. In these windows official matters can be handled, such as the issuance of IDs and passport, registration for a certain address or tax issues.

One of the participants highlighted that always asking their Hungarian friends to translate can be on one hand overwhelming for their friends and can be also uncomfortable for them, as they do not want to share their personal information, such as their medical records with other people.

"Sometimes translation is not the best, still there is a limit for that because you feel some of the stuff is a bit personal and harms privacy to ask someone to translate for you, like medical exams. You find this as a bit personal, you don't want to ask someone to please translate this to me, you don't want someone out there know about you that you have cancer or something like this. So, there is limits for that for sure."

Furthermore, the difficulty to access reliable information is very important here as well, as many foreigners receive contradicting information about the healthcare system and about their rights and benefits.

"I still don't understand how healthcare system works, healthcare is hard to figure out, there is no information center. Sometimes they give different information at the same places at different times, even at immigration [office]"

To overcome these problems many of the participants said that they have private insurance, as their university or workplace provides this to foreigners to support them. Also, some of the participants without private insurance said that they still go to private clinics, where they pay for the service as translation can be provided there, even though they know that they would be entitled for free public healthcare. This result in that some of the most vulnerable groups, like beneficiaries of international or temporary protection can only use this option if they find a job that can also offer them an insurance, that is more common for well-paying multinational companies. Furthermore, in Hungary, it is not possible to totally rely on private insurance, as some of the participants highlighted that for instance sick leave can only be issued by the GP, which they do not normally visit. Having no GP also means that no one knows their health history and there is no first entry point to the system where a professional can refer them and identify the health problems and specialists they need. Consequently, as foreigners try to avoid public healthcare, their needs are not visible which is a major result of this problem, that can only be solved if migrants tell their experiences.

One important issue that needs to be mentioned is that the family of the (privately or publicly) insured person is not entitled to public healthcare, or only for a price that almost equal to the Hungarian average salary, as it is explained in the below quote as well. It is a problem in the system where migrants could use their voice to raise

attention of decision-makers, how difficult it is for foreigners to get integrated into the Hungarian public healthcare system.

"Problem with medical service in general, until now I cannot understand the medical system here, because I study at the university, I have an insurance. My family, my wife my daughters they don't have any health insurance, if we need any health-related things we go to private hospitals, even in private hospitals and pharmacies TAJ card is often asked, I tried to do the TAJ card for them but I found it very expensive. "

According to the focus group participants, the most important thing in the field of healthcare would be to have access to information provided in English, such as a website where they could look for information connected to healthcare (for example the location of hospitals, doctors with specialties, emergency numbers). Another group suggested that an information office for foreigners/newcomers would be very great where they speak English or even other languages to provide orientation and help especially when it comes to healthcare. Furthermore, it would be very useful to have a system whereby they can find English-speaking GPs, that could be implemented on the local government level. Finally, it would be great if translators could be provided in the public healthcare system as well to avoid the high fees.

"Access to translators in the healthcare system. Most of the healthcare issues come from language. If I don't know the language, I don't know the doctor, the doctor can't explain to me, I don't have a TAJ card, so it is difficult for me to even get this access. If there would be translators in the hospitals, it would be in a public, so I also don't have to pay for English doctors if there is a translator in hospitals for instance, so no need to pay extra for English speakers, or even doctors whose native language is the same. This is in the UK, every all the special hospitals, they do have translators, not just English, they give you some translators who speak English, Arabic"

Education

Education is the other area that migrants face the most difficulties and feel that they would really benefit from a participatory process in order to make their voice heard and to provide experiences from ground to decision-makers how difficult it is for foreign pupils to get integrated into Hungarian education without getting support to learn the Hungarian language, an issue that is demonstrated by the below quote as well:

"Kindergarten and nurseries, it is very difficult, the price is really expensive. My son only knows the English language but not Hungarian language, but price is very high for me, and my husband are students. Privates is expensive, so we go to the public, that is Hungarian, but the language is difficult, we don't understand the language."

One mother highlighted that the lack of communication and interaction with other kids even affects the mental health of the foreign kids.

"Language for me and my daughter – everywhere we go, especially in school, kids cannot communicate with other kids cause of the language barrier, it affects kids' mental health"

Lack of communication as well as the general attitude towards foreigners often result in segregation, some participants especially highlighted this as a big issue. Someone who works as an English teacher explained that Hungarian parents do not want their kids to play with foreign kids and other participants, especially university students pointed out that it can be felt physically as well:

"Social segregation – I felt when I was living in the dorm, internationals and Hungarians live on the same dorm but live on different blocks and different buildings, so you can feel the segregation that does not help us integrating"

"I study social integration[4] and we have segregated classes with Hungarian and foreign students, the reason behind this is they say that Hungarians don't speak English, but if you want to study social integration then you would possible meet with foreigners so there's no point in this"

According to the focus group participants their biggest need would be first that decision-makers listen to their experiences on ground, how difficult it is to get integrated into the Hungarian education system, then can come up with a solution together. It would be ideal to have bilingual schools for kids, where they have to learn Hungarian as well as a chosen foreign language like English or French, or even to use their own language to keep their own roots. As foreign pupils are usually put a grade or two lower than their level because of their lack of language knowledge, it would be essential to have some kind of support before school (or before kindergarten), like an intensive language course so that it is not just left to the kid to learn the language by listening to it for instance on mathematic class, from he/she doesn't understand anything. Additional needs include intercultural education for teachers because if

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[4] Social integration MA previously was called Intercultural Psichology and Education, but has been changed based on a government regulation to Social Integration. One of the participants who studies this explained this with political reasons, that in Hungary the world intercultural „does not fit."

there are children from different backgrounds, certain topics need to be approached differently. Hungarian language courses for parents are needed as well so that they could assist their kids.

Housing

Finding accommodation is essential for newcomers. The main issue regarding housing is discrimination, which unfortunately affects another minority group, the Roma as well in Hungary. Many participants highlighted that "we start finding a home but when they see in person change their minds". The below quotes explain the lived discrimination by the participants:

"No matter how many Facebook groups are there posting that there are apartments, sometimes you find out that landlord only wants Hungarians, or Hungarian speakers, or girls, because there are also immigrant men for who it is more difficult to find housing. If they get it, it is only a small dirty and dark accommodation."

"[Housing] Very rooted problem here- calling house from the Roma community – they have this job, have this money, but in person says no and excuses, they don't want to be neighbors. So even for locals [the Roma]…as for foreigners it is even expected to be worse"

One focus group participant highlighted however that this area is the "Most difficult one because the government's relation in healthcare and education is kind of obvious, but for housing, it is mainly related to the private sector". The biggest need of migrants in this field would be some additional support possibly through social workers to find accommodation, or some legal support so that they would be able to identify if they are being scammed which is often the case, or any kind of measurements that prevents discrimination. Furthermore, the lack of information is an important issue here as well, as they are not aware for instance whether they could also be entitled to social housing like Hungarian citizens.

Employment

In Hungary overall there is a shortage of labor, so in theory migrant labor would be needed as well. More than half of the migrants stay in Hungary for income-generating purposes (KSH, n.a.). Next to housing employment is a field that is more dependent on the private market. Foreigners for instance multinational companies can work in English, hence are facing fewer difficulties in this field. Foreigners whose original purpose of stay has not been employment (like students or beneficiaries of

international protection) are facing bigger challenges when they are trying to get integrated into the Hungarian labor market.

One of the challenges here is also the lack of Hungarian language knowledge, and that it takes a lot of time, as well as money, to arrange classes by themselves without any state support. The other big issues are bureaucracy and that workplaces where it is not common to employ foreigners do not know about the rules and regulations about how to employ a non-Hungarian citizen.

"Bureaucracy - when I was looking for jobs or wanted to work it was very difficult to find a framework for me. When I tried to work at the university, it was a new thing for them recruiting an international, it involved much paperwork"

Important problem is that many times foreign diplomas are not accepted, hence migrants need to do jobs that they are over-skilled for. This could be tackled through a participatory process to better understand and solve this problem of foreigners working in their own fields of diplomas and qualifications, as well as to open up job centers for foreigners as well, so that they could find workplaces in English too, and finally to have some kind of government laws to combat discrimination at workplaces.

2.2. Local best practices

a) EXISTING INITIATIVES in the local area

One of the participants of the focus groups highlighted a very important thing that showcases the Hungarian context that "*[Participation] cannot be directly with the government, but mainly through the third sector, through civil organizations, for instance participating in initiatives like this, however, it is mainly available in Budapest.*" This entails that in Hungary there are almost no existing initiatives in the local areas aiming to involve migrants into decision-making. This subchapter can collect some lived experiences about participation in the private sphere and through the civil sector, as well as from one's home country, however, could not provide an example for any real participatory process where local authorities were involved as well.

First of all, peaceful protests and activism emerged as a theme in all three focus groups as a possible way of civic participation. One of the participants, whose quote can be found below, however, highlighted that in his home country it is more common to protest about issues that he cares about, however in Hungary, he fears

the consequences foreigners would face, hence try to avoid these protests, however, still follows the developments from the news.

> *"Probably I had [the chance to participate] but I held back because sometimes you fear the retaliations, for me there is no amount of assurance I could have because you are just not sure what can you say. I had the chance, but I stepped back...for me there is never that safety line. There was some sort of protests with the yellow mask with the hand on it[5]. If you wear the mask people watch you on the metro station, profiling them, it was a small humble way of protesting, but I had some fear. It is important to care about issues most foreigners probably had no idea what was going one, but I follow things closely I read Telex [6]every morning, so I was aware."*

There are existing initiatives for activism organized by civil society. One of the participants explained the initiative of Artemisszió Foundation where migrants had the chance to organize an event to demonstrate social issues that concerns them and to send a message.

> *"Organizing an event that raises awareness about social issues concerning migrants. We print things in our T-shirt about issues that affect immigrants and even Hungarians like mental health, drug abuse. We are participating as a community coming together to send a message out there"*

Finally, there are advocacy groups they can be members of so that they can be part of a lobby process to put pressure on the government to change something for migrants as well.

> *"Amnesty International does a job about it, many events. I was an active member, not now because I'm kinda far away and most of the things are taking place in Budapest. The activities are mostly human rights related, but at least some advocacy is important. They have these lobby groups putting pressure on the government to change something, and this kind of advocacy is important, so non-government organizations have this kind of role.*

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[5] The Academy of Drama and Film in Budapest (Hungarian: Színház- és Filmművészeti Egyetem, SZFE) university's management resigned in protest after the imposition of a government-appointed board of trustees which they saw as the limitations the university's autonomous status. freeSZFE is a solidarity movement emerged as a response for the happenings. As this happened in the middle of the pandemic when protests were not allowed, people started to wear yellow freeSZFE face masks to show their solidarity.

[6] Online News source

b) NEEDS of migrants that their organization has intended to tackle with actively involving them in the decision-making and strategies they are following in this involvement

Education

Existing initiatives migrants know about in Hungary are coming from higher education, where migrants are asked about their experiences and opinions about the issues affect them through the university surveys, like housing or the amount of scholarship.

> *"Sometimes we submit a survey, a feedback, for universities about some of these problems (accommodation, salary), we give some feedback as well, but there's no knowledge of whether it's impacting anything."*

They however have no knowledge on whether these feedbacks had any impact, or anything was changed. One participant highlighted, that in her high school back in Uzbekistan, they were also able to express their opinions about teachers, and they could actually affect the way they were teaching. She thinks this would be real participation, not just solely filling out surveys.

> *"In high school we were expressing our opinions about teachers, the way they are teaching us, we could affect them – but in Uzbekistan"*

Another focus group's participant highlighted the same thing that her only participatory experience happened at her university where she was asked about her opinion. This focus group emphasized that it would be very great to have these kind of initiatives everywhere else, such as at workplaces.

> *„Our university actually organizing this thing at the end of semesters they are giving students the chance to anonymously rank all the teachers and list anonymously all the advantages, disadvantages, what to improve, what happened during the semester. It would be great if we could have this at other places, like workplaces to provide this chance to anonymously say your opinion.*

It is important to highlight again that one of the biggest needs for participation came up regarding education, as there is a need for migrant parents to let decision-makers know about details on the ground, especially how difficult it is that kids don't understand each other or the teacher. One of the participants who had no experiences in Hungary gave a great example from Uganda that could also be implemented in Hungary:

"There are school organized clinics where we call people in leadership positions for example the ministers of a certain issues, like education or healthcare, just so that people can mention the different problems they have, like in education. This could be a very good form of participation, to tell people who make the decision what is happening on ground, because they might know things, but not the details, like my child cannot actually communicate with another child, because of language barriers, so it is important that they know what is going on ground. "

Healthcare

As already detailed, there would be a big need in this field as well to involve migrants in decision making as they are facing huge difficulties and because of language barriers and difficulty in access to information they rather choose private insurance if they can. Regarding this topic, the only participatory experience came from a participant who has private insurance, as he was asked if the process is okay for him or not.

Relying on experiences from university one of the focus group's participants came up with the idea that providing feedback for instance to GPs could result in that decision-makers would also have an idea what is happening on ground and why people are complaining, so that could have an impact, and something could be changed eventually.

„For instance, healthcare, if there was a way to give reviews about GPs, and if we see that in the past district specific GP doesn't have good review, then people in charge could find out why people are complaining about on this hospital and from there they can get a picture on what is actually happening on ground"

Employment

Regarding employment the only experiences came from the private sector as well. Three participants' only experience of participating came from their job places when their opinion was asked how the workplace can be made better for other foreigners as well, or how they could actually support their employees, like in Hungarian language learning or better involving them into the community.

„At the factory I had a part time job I work at I was asked how can the employer make the environment better for everyone – some employers come only for 1 or 2 months, they maybe wanted to get my opinion why"

"At my workplace my boss asked me many times how can he make the work experience better and easier for me and others, some tasks are difficult for people to understand., so boss is asking about this opinion. They also asked me how I learned Hungarian this well, and asked me to give them advice how can my employers help other foreigners better to learn Hungarian and communicate with people in the company better"

"I'm the only foreigner at the place. They are super nice, of course when they start talking in Hungarian, I don't understand anything, but they are still super nice. Most of the time they ask for another perspective, what do you think about, what are the kind of events we should do about the perspective of foreigners, what are the kind of post we should put, about how to communicate with foreigners. Most of the time if they speak Hungarian, they will give me a summary often, which is really nice. But my experience is only at the university, I only feel it there."

It is important to highlight here, that these experiences are limited only to the participants' workplaces, where their employers realized the added value of their inputs and experiences about their difficulties of being a foreigner in Hungary. They have never felt this however beyond these experiences, especially not connected to the public sector

c)   ACTORS in the participatory process

To summarize, participants were involved mainly through the private sphere, either through their universities, their workplace, or their private insurance. Some participants also mentioned opportunities by civil society organizations and local community-based groups, such as the quote explains below:

"Participating through local or community-based groups, there are some places that offer really cool activities (like a garden space) and they also involve foreigners, that is my main source of participation"

Local authorities or any public service providers should be also included in these processes, they are the missing element. One participant noted that the only example she knows about collaborations with local governments is at the Indonesian Independence Day, where the local government provided the space for the event. She added that this is more of an example of a government-to-government collaboration not an individual participation, however this is the only example the participants know about anything where local authorities were involved in anything connected to migrants.

"I have one which is not me participating but the Indonesian embassy there was a collaboration with the local government. It was Indonesian Independence Day, we had many cool activities, and they provided us with the Hunyadi tér, they gave the place, we could have exhibition and performance. The government-to-government approach is easier than individuals."

d) SYNTHESIS OF THE MAIN STRENGHTS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

Examples of participatory processes come mainly from the private sphere. Examples include the feedback system at the end of the semesters at universities, and when employers ask their migrant employee's opinion how the workplace can be made better for other migrant citizens. Other forms of participation are through activism, protests, and advocacy mainly through civil society organizations. No participant had mentioned the public sphere as an actor in these processes, however they would be happy to participate in some initiatives coming from there as well.

2.3 Added value of migrants' involvement

a) ADDED VALUES of migrants' active participation

As already emphasized in other parts of the report as well, the main added value of migrant's participation would be that decision-makers would understand the situation on ground hence they could make more inclusive policies. One of the participants highlighted that it is very important not to only talk about the target group and make decisions about them, however, to actively involve them already in the planning process. It is important that it would not only be beneficial for the target group, but they could contribute as well as they have the knowledge by experience.

"I don't know how Hungarian government would involve foreigners, but I think in case of integration projects, it is very important to include the people who you want to integrate into the planning. As for instance I'm doing an internship at one of the organizations as we are doing integration for foreigners, this is our main field, but personally we only "speak about" the target group. If only Hungarians are thinking what we need, that is not enough, they might miss important points. The planning process is the most important phase to be included in"

Based on their experiences in their home countries, participants could identify some great examples of a participatory process, such as in India a place where you can write anonymously with your complaints that will be investigated, the institution of civil

courts and the right to information, meaning that questions can be asked freely about the public even about the prime minister that are compulsory to be answered. One participant from Jordan explained that in his country there is a special program every morning at the local or national radio (he doesn't remember exactly but it belongs to the public sphere for sure), where anyone can call in and express their opinions in a specific topic. Finally, the quote below shows a participatory process example after the Arab Spring in Tunisia.

"In 2011 during the Arab spring in Tunisia, after it we had to start from scratch, write new constitution, start with a new government, etc. Civil society played kind of a mediator between the public and the local gov, basically we had lot of initiatives, we kind of had a community in the system, where anyone from anywhere could go and they could talk with the government and they could express their opinions, give feedbacks, give proposal for laws and for bills, and this is like the kind of initiative we had. After this transition period it's not like that anymore though. We also wanted other kind of initiatives for instance we wanted to make laws about gender equality and including women in politics etc. we had people coming from the gov to local communities and spreading the words and saying we have to do this, and we have to do this laws to protect women and we can protect your right to vote in the parliament and etc. we had these kind of initiatives and it was all mediated by civil society organizations"

It is very important to mention here that there are more and more participatory processes implemented on the local municipality levels, like participatory budget, civil forums, consultations etc., however none that targets migrants and none that our focus group participants had known about. One of the participants noted that townhall meetings would be a great way of participation, he would be very happy to participate in one of those if he feels that he could safely express his opinion. In several districts of Budapest, they are actually happening, such as just the day before the focus group at the park nearby where local representatives had open hours where citizens could ask any questions. Migrants however do not know about these meetings and are not involved to actively participate.

"What would be ideal is civil debate or something. As far as townhalls go I'm very happy to participate if it is safe for us (I'm not paranoid but looking over my shoulder about the consequences)"

Finally, one participant highlighted that they are being optimistic about the future. Even though at the moment there are no initiatives towards migrants, but if they form groups and stand up for their causes, the next generation will have a better life, so their participation will create value for them.

"We can try what we can, if more groups like this come up, let's say now we are 15, if there other 10 group of 15 then there would be 150 people of course it's not going to happen tomorrow or the day after but maybe 20 years down the road, immigrants that come after us will reap the benefits thanks to us."

b) NATIONAL CONTEXT: interest and knowledge in local authorities concerning the involvement and active participation of migrants

Participants could list examples of participatory initiatives from the private sector and from their home countries or other EU countries, however they could not identify anything on the local authority level in Hungary. One reason behind this is that they do not know anything what is happening on the local level, what tasks, services local municipalities have. Only one person who is doing her PHD in regional development had an idea about the Hungarian public administration system, that " the role of municipality is that they have a budget for their territory and they just allocate that budget to make that territory better",, however even she didn't know anything what kind of services are provided by the local municipalities.

Other participants confused local authorities with the territorial immigration offices and the government agency's "government windows" that are also organized by a territorial level, but they are centralized and provide government services such as issues connected to the tax authority, issuance of IDs and other documents or registry for an address.[7]

"It is a grey area: it is related to the problem of language. If we are talking about students, the most reliable source of info is university and the coordinators. I have really positive experiences, really helpful. But for local governments, we have never been there, we never had experience what they can do for us, how they can help us, no meeting point, no contact at all, no information. Our only connection was with the immigration office and that's it"

Participants could only guess from other experiences from their home countries how local authorities could involve them into decision-making. They however found it

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[7] It is important to highlight here that the lack of knowledge is not necessarily means the ignorance of the migrant citizens. Based on an interview with one of the deputy mayors of an inner district of Budapest, migrant citizens do not find them, do not know about them and do not have any contact with them, but this is true for Hungarian citizens as well, that generally people have no idea about what local governments do, what services they provide. This is also caused by the fact that most of the public services are centralized, such as primary and secondary education is centralized and in the hand of the "School District Centers", only kindergartens and nurseries belong to the local level regarding education. Regarding healthcare, GPs are handled on the local level. Finally, one of the main areas is social services, including for instance social housing as well.

important the local authorities should be more transparent, that is the first step of successful participation.

"It should start from the open access to what they've been doing because we cannot really criticize something if we don't know what they have down and what they didn't do. So it would be like open government, how they spend the money, how they do this, meaning transparency, so we know what we can do to improve that."

Finally, if talking about the national context, it is important to highlight the political context of Hungary. Hungary has a nationalist, conservative extreme right-wing government, and recently another even more extremist far-right party, called Mi Hazánk (Our Homeland Movement) got into the parliament as well. The government follows and anti-immigration politics and transmits an anti-immigration rhetoric through the public media influencing the public attitude. Connected to this, the participants often highlighted the political context throughout the discussions. In the below quote, one of the participants explains that they find it difficult to imagine that in the current political context of Hungary, local government representatives will sit down with them openly, because that would transmit controversial messages towards their voters.

„Of course, you're not gonna speak with someone who is part of Mi Hazánk, sort of these really hardcore right wing parties, because you realize that it is politically catastrophic for them to associate themselves with. For me this is the concern, I understand that politics is politics, so if they wanna meet behind closed doors without their photographers seeing it that's totally okay, because they probably have a strong nationalistic image to defend or something like this so for me the concern is how to put this together with the local politics, what they belive in.„

Politics also came up in a different way during the focus groups. In Hungary only refugees (but not beneficiaries of subsidiary protection) and migrants with permanent residence permits (could be applied after 3 or 5 years if can be proved some things like that their subsistence is ensured) can vote at the local elections (National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing, 2022). Participants noted that local politicians are less likely to involve migrants in decision-making as the number of foreigners who are eligible to vote on local elections are not significantly enough to target them specifically because of political reasons.

c) MIGRANTS' TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS at national and local levels

Migrants have very little trust in national and local institutions. There general attitude is that they have to solve their own problems and fight their own battles while relaying on their own networks as they have no idea where to turn. On one hand they

fight their own little battles. An example for that includes an example from the private sphere, when someone achieved to get English papers in a bank, so that he can sign something that he understands.

"Sometimes I have to go there and spend there 5 hours cause I told them I'm not signing anything unless I understands. Because I had enough, they got me English versions of paperwork and I signed them. Sometimes you really have to stand your ground and you know what not leave it. I also asked them to send notifications in English, which they say it's impossible, I was like I'm not leaving here if I'm having money in your bank then I'm getting notifications in a language I can understand. They made some effort, some emails come in English, some emails come in Hungarian and English. But that's for someone who really takes the time and go and stand there for that long and fight for that. "

Migrants who have friends who speak Hungarian, or themselves speak Hungarian can get along better. Learning the Hungarian language helps a lot to get oriented in the Hungarian institutional system. Foreigners who do not speak good English have bigger necessity to learn Hungarian, hence can be more easily integrated.

"I had a problem about 5-6 years ago, now I'm fine I learnt Hungarian and finished school and now it is easy, because the language is important to be able to attend appointments, you need to know Hungarian to get by, but it is too difficult. There is an eSchool, and also talk to people at work to learn more, I don't understand very well, but I talk, my Hungarian is better than English."

In addition, they rely on their diaspora networks, mainly informal groups on social media where members can help each other, as well as general groups of foreigners where people help each other based on solidarity. Moreover, some of the respondents rely on their own embassies to help them with their problems.

"We have Facebook groups (like Azeri people in Hungary about 3,000 people) which helps a lot, because if we encounter any challenges we post there"

"Also Expats in Hungary FB group, people are very nice there, they help out. Asking friends who have been leaving in Hungary for a long time, and who speaks English, Hungarian and Arabic also the local language but they're from the same country and speak my language. Sometimes they come and help me and go to the government office, to the immigration office, to the doctors, so they can help me to connect to the doctor and other people. "

Some participants mentioned that they turned to civil society organizations or church-based organizations for help, like finding a job, learning the Hungarian language or for translation.

"Diakonia, they helped me lot of things, like job, about translator to doctor, and a lot of time I come to Artemisszió to help, like translate, how to find a job, how to find an apartment"

Only some participants with a refugee background mentioned that they had a social worker, however these social workers weren't appointed by the local municipalities, however, were from civil-society or church-based organizations. Asking the focus group participants whether they know that they are entitled of state-provided social workers as well at the local municipalities, they have never heard about it, as they have never had any connections with the local municipalities, only with local civil society and church-based organizations. They think it would be nice if they could turn to the public sphere as well.

To summarize it is important to note that migrants almost never turn to the public sphere, only if they really need to, like going to the Immigration Office or Government Windows, however, they have difficulties at these offices and generally do not trust these institutions. This results in that normally they can't go alone because of language barriers and the maize of bureaucracy, but are accompanied with someone who has more experience or better language knowledge. As the state provides no integration services towards newcomers, not even Hungarian language classes, migrants rather turn towards the civil society, and got involved and build trust with them. This result in that they have almost no trust in public institutions, hence they are a lot more difficult to involve from the local levels, and they and their problems get invisible as well.

> d) GENDER ISSUES that influence the active involvement of migrants in integration policies

Participants did not highlight many issues regarding gender differences that hinder the active involvement of migrants. Two issues are needed to be emphasized though, that is rather based on the persons' origin rather than their gender. One is connected to Muslim women and their clothing. It is very unusual to see women in hijab, so they are often stared at, many times in a bad way, as they can only connect this clothing to what they have seen in the media. One of the participants has told her everyday experiences as a woman with a hijab.

"Xenophobia, especially for hijabs, the kind of gazes that you can see at people's faces are kind of different, so sometimes they are seeing something weird, so they are looking at you. So this is kind of a look that I except so I'm being friendly with it, but sometimes it is just disgusted, I don't like it and this is not like really comfy honestly"

The other one is what has already been mentioned before, that it is more difficult for men to find housing for instance. The reason behind this could be similar to the story of the lady in a hijab, that based on their Middle Eastern or African look man are associated with something negative, like being violent or a terrorist, based on the media and the negative public campaign against refugees. Examples for this is a national consultation about migration and terrorism, that suggested a link between these two and a billboard campaign from 2018, before the national elections, that only featured a stop sign and an image of an influx of male refugees from 2015.

It is important to highlight that this view only represents the view of the focus group participants, amongst which there were more female than male. It was though a very limited opportunity to find out more about gender issues, as participants were more concentrated on talking about their experiences and difficulties generally as a migrant.

1. Recommendations/suggestions

In the Hungarian context there are almost no examples of participatory processes when migrants were involved in decision-making. This has many different reasons, including the negative public attitude towards migrants, the social exclusion and that they are scared to be involved more as they fear the consequences of telling their opinion. However more commonly the reason behind the lack of participation is the hindered access to information. Migrants are facing huge challenges, especially in the field of healthcare and education where local governments should have a more active role to better integrate them into the public system, and to listen to their needs and opinions.

Their challenges rise partly because they do not speak the language, hence do not know about opportunities how they could get involved, as well as that they do not know about where to look for information. Finally, there are almost no initiatives to better integrate migrant citizens or to involve them into decision-making, so they need to put a lot of effort to explore opportunities to become a more active citizen.

It is very important to emphasize that around one-third of the participants were university students, still almost all of the examples for participation came from them. It does not mean that they were the most active during the focus group discussions, other participants extensively expressed their opinions for instance about initiatives they heard in other countries, and about what are the difficulties and needs that should be tackled through a participatory process. All the other examples came from the private sphere as well, meaning that public sphere have not successfully involved migrants.

Two phenomena need to be highlighted in Hungary before making recommendations. One is that generally Hungarian people have not too much idea about what local governments do, what services they provide, and are generally not involved, it is not only an issue with migrants. This is also caused by the fact that most of the public services are centralized, and not so many issues are handled on the local level. The other is that the context of participation is very new in Budapest, however, is rapidly increasing. With the opposition-led new local district governments many initiatives were created, such as participatory budgets, citizen forums and consultation.

As a recommendation towards local government, even though these participatory initiatives are still very new, they should also reach out to migrant citizens, listen to their experiences and opinions about how public services, like education, healthcare, employment, and housing be made better for them and more actively involve them into decision-making. They are an invisible group, but not because they do not exist, but because they try to avoid the different institutions and solve everything by themselves or through the private or civil sectors.

A recommendation towards civil society is to be a gatekeeper and build bridges more actively, as right now that is the only way migrants can imagine their participation. As well as more important would be to train migrants how they could participate, and to empower them to stand for their own causes, and at the same time sensitize local government why it would be important to involve migrants into decision-making as well.

The SHAPE Project offers a great framework to achieve these goals and to make these two parties talk and collaborate with each other.

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Executive summary

A possible strategy to access immigrants' representations, experiences and needs in host countries may be precisely the creation of an open space for reflection on these issues in a participatory qualitative methodology. Hence, and following the qualitative recommendations of IRS - Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale, Rightchallenge prepared three focus groups to approach the immigrant needs in the Portuguese context, transversally addressing gender issues and focusing in three specific areas: *1) Housing*; *2) Health care*; *3) Education, training and employment*.

The selection of the participants in these focus groups was influenced by the initial contact made to a Portuguese governmental institution that is responsible for migration issues and has a widespread of connections with support offices and migrant associations, i.e., the Alto Comissariado para as Migrações (ACM, High Commission for Migration). Still, to have a wider and unbiased range of participants other relevant support institutions and associations were contacted. The aim was to gather heterogeneous groups in terms of demographics, gender, immigrant background, legal status in the country, etc., even though the composition and diversity of the focus groups were inevitably affected by participants' and institutions' convenience and location. In fact, due to the concentration of migrant associations and migrant population in the capital´s territory it became clear in terms of logistics these events had to be held online.

As a result, most participants in the focus groups were representatives of migrant associations and exhibited an in-depth understanding of migrants' needs, representations, intervention processes and strategies, existing initiatives and their strengths and weaknesses, which will be further clarified in the following topics of this document.

Although the immigration phenomenon is somehow recent in the country, research main results establish that Portugal has been promoting a progressive legislation regarding immigration and citizenship and developing integration policies that aim to increase migrants' access to all social rights (such as housing, health care, education, training and employment). However, participants identify that there is still a clear gap between policies and practices.

We propose to examine these discrepancies and similarities between what is stated and practised in the country, through the point of view of the participants, mainly regarding to: migrants' needs, civic participation/active citizenship; the added value of migrants' involvement; local best practices identified in these areas; and recommendations/suggestion for immigrants' integration that the participants advocate analysing their personal experiences.

1. Methods and participants

The IRS - Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale prepared the guidelines for the qualitative research to assess migrants' population's attitudes on migrants' involvement in democratic processes, defining the methodology for the organisation and implementation of the focus groups, including its organisation, aims, structure and outline, the methodology for data analysis, and the template for this report.

Therefore, Rightchallenge organised three focus groups, each focused on a specific topic: 1) Housing; 2) Health care; 3) Education, training and employment. Moreover, all focus groups also addressed gender issues. The process of organisation sought to gather heterogeneous groups of 6 to 10 people, considering age, gender, country of origin, migration history, juridical status, etc. For that, Rightchallenge contacted the Alto Comissariado para as Migrações (ACM, High Commission for Migration), a

Portuguese governmental institution that is responsible for migration issues and has extensive contacts with support offices for migrants and migrant associations. Thus, all the 151 migrant associations that are recognised by ACM, along with other relevant support institutions and associations, were contacted. However, the composition and diversity of the focus groups was necessarily influenced by participants' and institutions' availability. Therefore, since most of these institutions are located in Lisbon (which has more migrant associations and migrant population than the area of Porto, where Rightchallenge is located), the focus groups were organised to take place online.

At the beginning of the focus group, the facilitator presented the project, the aims of the focus group and the rules of the focus group, emphasising the importance of maintaining confidentiality regarding the discussion. Moreover, the facilitator asked for participants' agreement (which is recorded) regarding the issues present in the informed consent and all provided their consent to participate and to be recorded.

Some participants attended more than one focus group, so in total we had 18 different participants. The focus group on Housing was composed of 11 participants, of which: 7 were female, and 4 were male; 1 was from Brazil, 1 from Cape Verde, 2 from Nepal, 4 from São Tomé e Príncipe, and 1 from Ukraine; all were members of migrant associations, and most were in the country for years (between 1 and 32 years) and so only a couple had temporary residency permits. The focus group that addressed Health care was composed of 6 participants, of which: 5 were female and 1 male; 1 was from Brazil, 3 from São Tomé e Príncipe, 1 from Mozambique, and 1 from Bangladesh; all were members of migrant associations, and most were in the country for years (between 2 and 40 years) and so only a couple had temporary residency permits. The focus group that focused on Education, Training and Employment was composed of 6 participants, of which: 2 were female and 4 male; 1 was from Brazil, 1 from São Tomé e

Príncipe, 2 from Cape Verde, 1 from Angola and 1 from Iraq; 5 of them were members of migrant associations and most were in the country for years (between 1 and 32 years) and so only a couple had temporary residency permits. To protect participants' anonymity, their names were replaced with assigned pseudonyms[1]. Two facilitators were present so that one could focus on the verbal dimensions of the focus group and the other facilitator could support in the process, taking notes, focusing on non-verbal issues or logistical aspects.

2. Migrants active involvement

The main findings demonstrate that even though Portugal has progressive legislation regarding immigration and citizenship and progressive policies that aim to promote migrants' integration, equality and access to all social rights, as housing, health care, education, training and employment, there is a clear gap between policies and practices as research in the area indicates (Ribeiro et al., 2012; Ribeiro et al., 2016). Indeed, participants mention a set of needs regarding all these issues, many of which originate in these gaps between policy and practice and are evident in three main dimensions: 1) delays from SEF in analysing residence permits' applications (taking up to two years in some cases to reach a decision), which leave people's lives on hold, hindering their potential to integrate in society (e.g., have access to a job) and compromising their basic rights; 2) inconsistencies in policies and regulations that only become clear when applied in the field (e.g., to have access to the SNS number it

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[1] Housing Focus Group: Eliane; Laura; Leonel; António; Binsa; Aruna; Vanessa; Paulo; Olga; Domingos; Alzira; Health Focus Group: Laura; Roberto; Aline; Elvira; Aja; Alzira; Education, training and employment Focus Group: Paulo; Domingos; Roberto; Omar; Luana; Edna. Some of these participants were part of the following migrant associations: Associação de Promotores de Saúde Ambiente e Desenvolvimento Sócio Cultural (PROSAUDESC); Associação Unida e Cultural do Bairro Municipal Terraços Da Ponte em Sacavém; AUCQM - Associação Unida e Cultural da Quinta do Mocho Santomense; Associação Assomada; CulturFace; Associação Amizade; Queer Tropical - Coletivo de Apoio à Comunidade LGBTQI+; Renovar a Mouraria; Agha Khan Foundation; Associação de Estudantes Angolanos em Portugal.

is necessary to have a residence permit and a fiscal ID number; to have access to health care without the SNS number, which means not being in a legal situation yet, it is necessary to have a document that attests your residence and two witnesses in the residential area and you may be charged for some medical procedures or exams[2]; to have access to a residence permit one must have ensured accommodation and means of subsistence); 3) Lack of information of service providers regarding legislation on migrants' access to basic rights. These limitations that negatively impact immigrants access to health care, housing, education, training and employment, are then enhanced by structural issues of the country such as speculation in the housing market (increasing rent prices and leading migrants to substandard living conditions), precarity and deregulation in the labour market (generating exploitative situations), and engrained discrimination, racism and xenophobia.

2.1 Migrants' needs and civic participation/active citizenship

a) Definition of participatory process according to the participants

Most participants in the focus groups were members of migrant associations and so they demonstrated an in-depth knowledge of migrants' needs, interests, intervention processes and strategies, existing initiatives and their strengths and weaknesses. However, the concept of participatory processes seemed to be difficult to define and express for most participants. Nonetheless, interesting proposals were offered. Paulo analysed the two-fold dimension of participatory processes stating: *"There are two aspects to the participatory process: local or national, and a macro vision of the participatory process. The local participatory process is a challenge (...) people and organisations complement each other in what they are doing on the ground. And it is*

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[2] However, during the pandemic all people were allowed to access SNS with no restrictions, an exception that has been suggested to become enshrined in legislation.

not easy. (…) And when it's a participatory process at a national level, the structures or organisations, (…) like the ACM, is the only institute, the only structure that has played this role of mediation with the organisations, especially immigrants. It tries to bring together the organisations in a perspective of knowledge of each one of them so that everything can work."

Laura presented the development of their association as an example of a participatory process since when she founded her association, she did it as a result of a process in which she was involved in a Governmentally funded project that took place for two years. But she and others involved could see that much still had to be done in that community, and so applied for funding and created their association. She also added an important aspect regarding the participation of migrant associations in the development of ACM's National Plan for migrants, thus contributing to policy-making and legislative changes: *"…the national plan for the integration of immigrants, which was created by ACM (…) updated every two or three years. As the plan is updated, they contact the associations to contribute to the development of the plan in the various areas. (…) This is how we have contributed. This plan includes several government entities, including the Ministry of Health, and it is with these contributions that the ACM then sends to the entities according to each theme…"*

Indeed, Laura sums up the importance of participatory processes: *"…we must work together with governmental entities, municipalities (…) so that immigrants have a voice and when they are creating their councils they must also integrate immigrants (…) in the past people developed projects based on what they heard and they didn't (…) make a diagnosis (…) They created the projects in the office and then when they get to the field they fail. Because they don't know the reality of the people. And in this political barrier (…) nothing is better than having an immigrant there too (…) who knows the realities to take to the field."*

Moreover, when focusing on specific projects, Elvira mentioned important strategies they adopt within participatory approaches, namely advocacy, training for migrants

on their rights, and training for services' professionals on migrants' rights: *"...we can be these advocacy agents as well, in supporting immigrant people (...) the professionals themselves are not trained in this issue, they don't know. It's not that they deliberately want to make it difficult (...) providing immigrants with training on the right to health, and (...) provide basic training to health professionals. (...) I think [we could] promote involvement (...) [by] give[ing] people the tools, to train them, to inform them and to empower people so that they can somehow claim what is their right."*

It is also relevant to mention what was discussed in terms of the relationship between migrants and more formal forms of political intervention. Indeed, Roberto addressed these issues, identifying the difficulties that migrants face regarding formal political participation: *"Migrants have so few mechanisms for participation in general, including political participation. (...) I personally don't know of any initiatives that involve migrant people in access to health policymaking. (...) People do not even access services, let alone have the possibility of participating in defining the guidelines of policies, in this case, health policies. This is the reality I know (...)"*

He then moves to share an experience he had in which his association sought to involve not only other civil society institutions and associations, but also political parties to find solutions for a specific issue of the migrant LGBTQIA+, which significantly depends on migrants' social, cultural and political capital: *"The process of contact with political parties, according to my Portuguese-Brazilian experience (...) was a mixture of formalism with informal contacts. There is a protocol level, it is not a bar conversation, (...) contacting other organisations, collectives, and political parties in an informal way. (...) One specific party was very open to listening, to trying to understand what was happening. (...) And there was a lot of sensitivity about the issue: a person who has started hormone treatment cannot suddenly stop when they get here, can they? (...) But the problem hasn't really been resolved."*

Therefore, he emphasises the role of migrant associations *"it's also important that this work of migrant associations is permanent, in terms of dialogue, articulation and report (…) to put some kind of pressure, to form an interest group, a pressure group (…) so that things can effectively move forward…"*

On the other hand, he addresses the process of migrants' participation in elections as candidates, which has been increasing in the past few years: *"But what I also see happening, (…) in the local elections (…) the integration of migrant people in political parties (…) had a Brazilian candidate in the parliamentary elections who is a person I know and who also does some work related to migrants. And as a candidate for the CDU list, she brought up many issues related to migrants, to the political situation in Brazil, (…) not in an eligible position, but the simple fact of being on the list has made it possible for this party to bring to the public arena (…) a debate that's a little more focused (…)on the situation of migrants, not only in the area of health, but also in the area of exploitation and work. So, I think that this representation is also important in this sense. If we have more representation of people in these institutions, in this case in the parties, it ends up incorporating these issues in the party activity."*

b) Participants' interest in actively participating in decision making

Participants mention a tendency for a reduced interest in participation and difficulties when attempting to promote migrants' participation. Laura addresses this lack of interest as one of the challenges and aims for future development of migrant associations: *"…we also have to start working on the mentality of our immigrants. To make them understand that as citizens they have rights and duties. And one of the duties is to exercise citizenship (…) voting. Now it seems that they're starting to, but there was a time when hardly any immigrants went to vote. Even those who were*

aware that policies change when we exercise our right to vote. And for them, they are resigned, they have a little job and don't care about the rest (...) we have to work on this with our communities, to make them understand (...) they have rights and duties, they have to see that exercising the right of citizenship is also a duty...".

On the other hand, Laura mentions a form of passiveness and conformism that may reflect an adaptation of migrants to Portugal as a more individualised society than their countries of origin to ensure their survival (Bauman, 2001): *"...they conform. It's enough to have our job, our work. Sometimes we are not even interested in caring about our neighbours' problems, there are people who are not even concerned about their neighbours who have a problem. While in Africa people are so united, here everyone is fighting for their own navel."*

However, reduced conventional political participation of migrants in elections seems to be related, on the one hand, with lack of information on these rights and so migrant associations may indeed play a significant role in this. Actually, ACM has started a project with migrant associations to disseminate information on immigrant voters' rights, mainly translation of informative documents to foster an increase in participation. On the other hand, research has identified a set of issues that seem to negatively affect migrants' political participation (Oliveira & Carvalhais, 2016): the objective and subjective political opportunity structure (POS) in the host country (legislative and formal limitations and distrust in political structures); migrants' social networks and political resources (social capital, political capital, political experiences in the country of origin); and individual circumstances (language, economic vulnerability and labour/survival daily priorities). Moreover, these authors also consider the influence of Portugal's colonial and authoritarian history and legacy as constraining the Portuguese POS and thus undermining immigrants' opportunities and political mobilisation.

So, Laura developed this idea and added how the reduced representativeness of immigrants in political structures and bodies influences their participation: *"Many of*

the people who struggle to obtain that nationality (...) a large number of immigrants won't vote. And not only because of what has already been mentioned - they don't see the representativeness in the structures...".

Following this debate, Elvira offers an analysis of migrants' reduced conventional participation, mentioning four factors – negative previous political experiences in countries of origin; survival needs which create lack of time, energy and agency; political education; and a reduced trust in politics: *"It's an inheritance (...) I, as an immigrant, see that we bring from our [countries of origin] government structures also because there's a lot of oppression in some countries in terms of the exercise of citizenship, for example, the right to demonstrate. (...) That's the first point. The second point is that what I see is that the immigrant when (s)he gets here, his/her concern is to get a job and (s)he works 12 hours and anything that has to do with active participation, exercise of citizenship, and for them, that's up to him/her [the others]. (...) Because the biggest concern (...) is survival and then we get into a third point which is the point of education for the exercise of citizenship. In my case, I spent four years at university studying for my degree, and at no point was there any reference to voting. What are political parties of the left, right, top, bottom, centre left? What is politics?* **This education that simply tells me I have to vote because it's my civic duty and that's enough, it's pretty empty.** *I think that the structures (...) I don't know if it's the universities, if it's the political bodies, should also do this work of trying to give citizens this perspective. What is political participation? Because nowadays there is a lot of scepticism about politics. The very word 'politics' is demonised. Are you going to be a politician? Liar! (...) politicians are thieves and liars, but politics are ways of life, they are ways of conducting, governing a country, they are ideologies. (...) scepticism around politics and a lot of people not wanting to participate. I think that these are the three points that I really identify: on our part, as immigrants, there is a passivity towards the exercise of citizenship that is perhaps the legacy of our governments, of our countries. And then, when we arrive here? The first*

question that matters is survival. And then there's this issue of lack of education for active participation. People want to make themselves heard."

c) Migrants' main needs that could be better tackled through a participatory process

Regarding **Housing**, participants drew a historical perspective on these issues in the migrant community. Laura mentions the first flow of migration in the 80s and 90s from countries as Angola and Guinea as a result of war or political unrest, which led migrants to build houses that formed slums - densely packed housing units of weak build quality or occupy unfinished houses. This led to an inter-ministerial intervention consisting of various government entities (at the time it was Social Security, education, ACM, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Employment and Education). She describes the process and how participatory processes contributed to offer solutions for these people even though these solutions proved to be inefficient, since they created ghettos and often housing units with structural problems: *"But still, even with these interventions, the type of housing that was built for people was not adequate, and the proof of this today is that some houses have had many problems…"*

Thus, Laura reflects on this history to summarise the current situation of social housing in the country: *"…the issues of infrastructure and architecture were not adequate and people had many problems. But this situation continues, because immigrants continue to arrive (…) That's why today we still have (…) unfinished buildings. The municipalities have tried to do their best, but it's such a recurring situation (…) and they don't get an answer, they have to resort to shacks. And more, in these last few years since 2010, when the economic crisis began (…) many people lost their homes, even homes already bought (…) but lost them to the Bank and had to find precarious housing. And lately, we have had other situations too, that with the pandemic, people have had no answer in terms of housing."*

Paulo was also involved in a similar process in the 1990s and identifies some of the challenges faced in the relocation of migrants: *"The survey that was carried out on the identification of the slums (...) we went to the field, drew what we found on the ground (the shacks) (...) and we delivered (...) to the Centre for Territorial Studies so that they could then do their work. (...) When we talk about housing we see people in the most diverse circumstances, first because they were not prepared to be conveniently rehoused; others because of cultural issues, others because they didn't want to know, others still, because circumstances didn't allow them to have knowledge. What is certain is that they should have had some training, they should have been trained to leave the shacks they were in and move to a vertical construction. A vertical structure implies a series of precautions (...) people were convinced that raising an animal in a backyard is the same thing as raising an animal inside a building (...) This is an example of how people were prepared, or not, for certain circumstances, to live in that environment (...) creating a situation of conflict. I'm not used to raising animals inside the house, but I have to deal with my neighbour who raises an ox, a pig (...) And I, who also came from a difficult situation, I want to be well (...) We were not prepared to pay rent, we were not prepared to have a more dignified behaviour, a respect, so it creates here an unpleasant situation that is (...) common space is not taken into account by respecting the neighbour (...) then I end up not paying the rent because they don't paint my wall, or because they don't fix my window..."*

His description allows us to identify the difficulties that some may have had in the transition from a rural to an urban environment, not being used to living in vertical buildings and being used to having their animals and outdoor living. Though Paulo's comments seem to inadvertently blame migrants for these difficulties (Ryan, 1976), it is necessary to consider that many of these processes of relocation were hastily performed, with no consideration for people's experiences and needs, and with no prior preparation for the changes these relocations entailed in terms of habits, thus

generating these social judgements. Therefore, he addresses a need for training in these processes of integration of migrants and other vulnerable populations in social housing units: *"People (...) weren't properly informed"*.

Therefore, these deficient processes of relocation have led to the ghettoization, segregation and perpetuation of stereotypes towards migrants and minorities as he emphasises: *"Social housing neighbourhoods have been characterised in a judgemental way (...) when we finish painting the buildings in a certain colour, that attracts attention, that all it takes is for us to look at the horizon from miles away and realise that that yellow colour or that burnt blue colour means that it's a neighbourhood of social housing, where the most disadvantaged or underprivileged people live. (...) we leave a ghetto of slums and go to a vertical ghetto, because people are already characterised in an automatic way (...) those people are poor..."*

However, it seems that Paulo is himself influenced by this process of stigmatisation and victim's responsabilisation by claiming that *"...there are people who get comfortable and don't want to leave. And they stay there because they don't pay rent, or they pay 50 euros, (...) [and in another] neighbourhood (...) I'll have to pay 200, 500 or 700 euros, and people are not prepared for that, and they continue to be in [social housing] limited and circumscribed by a [low] rent (...) and they don't leave because they don't want to change their lives, (...) to have a happy life and to have children with another vision. And these children grow up looking at their parents who are in these neighbourhoods and they also want to be like those parents, (...) it's not very good because the child is limited (...) to that environment. Of course, there are other parents, with other perspectives, who manage to help their children grow up."*

So, here it is important to consider how these prejudices can be internalised by all, even by the ones who have also experiences of migration and who are developing projects to support migrants, thus reinforcing and legitimating those social discourses by reproducing judgemental attitudes towards the ones who may not be able to

transform their lives and pay more for housing and so, who continue to live in social housing neighbourhoods (Ryan, 1976).

Finally, participants addressed a very significant issue that currently affects access to housing in Portugal: real estate speculation. Laura states: *"These price increases are issues that are beyond us, this is real estate policy...it has to be the Government to do this management and see what the best strategy is, because the real estate managers are even taking advantage, abusing to a certain extent of this policy, so (....) it's a governmental issue..."*

Indeed, housing prices in Portugal have been increasing at unsustainable rates all around the country and even more so in urban areas, mostly in Lisbon and Porto. The study that was released in May 2022 "The Cost of Living Crisis: How big is the gap between outgoings and incomings around the world?' ranked Lisbon as the third least viable city to live in, in the world (from a pool of 56 large cities in the world). Considering that the average salary per month after tax is €1036 and that the average rent cost of a 3-bedroom apartment in the city centre is €1,625 and the average cost of living per month calculated as €560, the remaining salary after rent and cost of living would be €-1149.

Thus, migrants and vulnerable populations have been led to leave the cities and/or to live with no habitability conditions in very precarious circumstances. Aruna states: *"...workers are living in an inhabitable condition, right? But at the end immigrants have to do (...) anything possible to survive in a foreign land. (...) you don't know where to complain, lack of (...) housing, lack of knowledge on housing laws (...) They do not know the rules for contracts, the language especially is a problem here. (...) Just a few months ago I visited three Nepalese's households, they gave birth to a newly born just recently, the housing was so vulnerable (...) I was shocked that they were living in such conditions (...) no windows, and they were living in a dark and wet room, and it was just bad. And the housing conditions, lack of housing and residential problem of*

immigrants in Portugal (…) it's eventually undermining the productivity of immigrants and, also, integration of immigrants (…) that raises the question: is Portugal really welcoming to immigrants? (…) The concerned authorities could back them up, and also share (…) build a knowledge of housing laws and where to complain."

This testimony summarises the precarious conditions that migrants still face today in Portugal regarding the access to dignified housing. This is further intensified by discrimination towards migrants, which leads landlords to ask for higher rents to migrants and for more rents as guarantee to prevent migrants from renting. As an example of racism and discrimination in the housing context, Aruna explained: "…*a few months ago, even this happened to me, the ceiling of our house just fell down and when we complained with the owner, for two months he would do anything and the 3 of us would have to cramp in a single room and it was bad."*

Binsa added something that demonstrates on the one hand difficulties understanding contracts due to the language and lack of information on housing contracts, but also the impact of racism and xenophobia on these issues: *"And for people who don't understand the language… it is more difficult, and nobody will help. Usually, they don't understand the contract paper. It happened to me also 1 year ago [when] I was living in a house in Algés. My deposit money was not returned because they said it smelt of spices".* So, she concludes with the fact that, not only is there a lack of information on these issues but also of support regarding the abuses that migrants experience in these contexts: *"…there is still, the lack of information, because of that people don't know where to go and where to complain."*

Therefore, a set of issues were identified by participants as major needs regarding access to decent **housing**: a) the complex history of social housing in Portugal since the 1980s; b) deficient processes of relocation that have led to the ghettoization, segregation and perpetuation of stereotypes towards migrants and minorities; c) real

estate speculation: housing prices in Portugal have been increasing at unsustainable rates all around the country and even more so in urban areas, mostly in Lisbon and Porto; d) migrants and vulnerable populations have been led to leave the cities and/or to live with no habitability conditions in very precarious circumstances; e) discrimination towards migrants; f) difficulties understanding contracts due to the language and lack of information on housing contracts, but also the impact of racism and xenophobia on these issues.

In what concerns access to **health**, participants describe the main problems as being related to the access to the Sistema Nacional de Saúde (SNS – National Health Service) number. Only with this number can they be assisted at the hospital without payment and have a family doctor assigned in Health Community Centres. Indeed, Elvira states: *"...when you arrive it's not easy to access health care. There are students who take more than 6 months to access health care (...) there's a lack of responses from SNS in the area of mental health."*

She analyses these gaps further, mostly regarding migrants who are still not in a legalised situation in the country: *"...several gaps that need to be filled as a matter of urgency, there is the CNAIM service that has responses for immigrants (...) who still do not have access to the SNS so that they are able to have some speciality consultations (...) Because that migrant who does not yet have the proper authorisations to reside ends up having immense difficulties (...) the [integration] plan itself says that for an immigrant without legal documents to stay in the country, it is enough to have a document from the parish council that proves that s/he has lived in Portugal for more than 90 days. And then s/he arrives at the parish council, and they ask for a set of papers so that they can pass that certificate, including bringing 2 people who can testify. Now, considering the pandemic situation in which we don't meet anyone, we don't talk to anyone, how can I get two neighbours who probably don't know me because I'm renting a room? Of course, there are instruments that are*

good in theoretical terms, but then when we go into practice, they end up stumbling on that barrier…"

Hence, Elvira's comments demonstrate the difference that exists between legislation and practice regarding migrants' access to health. These migrants are then forced to assume the costs for their health care, which is unsustainable, as Elvira exemplifies: *"…then there is also the issue of the costs, which are very high when the person goes to the public hospital without documents. I knew of the case of an Angolan student who still didn't have an SNS number and needed to be hospitalised for a serious situation, and the bill reached 2000 euros (…) the system is not flexible."*

Laura offers an historical analysis of this process since t*he current legislation on this is from 2001 but in practice some issues still do not work: "We are already in 2022 and we can see how long the issue of the health of immigrants has been dragging on. The 25/370 of 2001 was created at the time. It is an order from the Directorate-General of Health which is very well regulated in theory, in terms of regulation, and which could effectively answer these questions that we have been pointing out over the years, but the question that arises is how it will be put into practice (…) At the time when this decree was created, things worked. I remember that the General Health Department, associated with the ACM and the Regional Health Department were giving training in health centres, including in schools, in order to fill this gap. (…) It seems that one moment things flow, and then a few years later, I don't know why they don't continue. That's why we are in 2022 still debating the issue of access to health services for immigrants. (…) Then, unfortunately, we also have the language issues that are also a barrier…"*

Thus, the alternative (private hospitals) is inviable for most migrants, as Aja tells us: *"…if you don't have an SNS number [the only alternative] is to go to private health facilities (…) this is really expensive… (…) And many sick people need immediate assistance for emergencies."*. Moreover, she also mentioned a couple of specific issues that hinder access to health care: migrants' knowledge on their own rights (and so, her

association has been working on that), and linguistic knowledge: "In hospitals language is also the greatest barrier, people cannot communicate with the doctors so… there are these problems.".

Consequently, Elvira critiques the very existence of a provisional user number since it does not provide access to all the services migrants need: "… *the provisional user number, this is a double-edged sword that I really don't understand. (…) It's really the residence permit that you have to take there so that they can give you the definitive user number. So, from the time the process is submitted to SEF until the permit is obtained, there is effectively a period of time in which the person cannot use the SNS. This issue should be rethought. (…) Why a provisional user number? (…) As long as the person doesn't have the user number, he can't get discounts on medication. However, this is a person who is working, who is paying social security, so I don't understand why the person must discount on their income, contribute, and then, when they somehow benefit from this, they don't have access. (…) Because the person is already a worker…"*

Roberto highlighted how these issues became evident during the pandemic, showing the number of migrants in Portugal with difficulties accessing the SNS user number, and so, accessing healthcare. Furthermore, he focuses on specific difficulties he has experienced and that the LGBTQIA+ community of migrants' face when they arrive: *"When we saw the number of people who were in Portugal without the SNS user number (…) People are excluded from access to basic health care. I've been living in Portugal for three and a half years and I've never had a family doctor assigned. I changed my place of residence, I went to the nearest health centre trying to transfer my health centre to Porto, I never managed to do that (…) it's difficult to envisage alternatives because the basics have not been guaranteed in many cases."*

In summary the major needs migrants still face in Portugal regarding the **access to health** are related to: a) the difficulty and time that takes to access the SNS user

number which is the only way to have access to public healthcare in hospitals and health centres, as well as access to discounts in exams and medicine. This process is related to the legalisation process which is a bureaucratic process and takes longer than it is supposed to; b) the fact that people are given a provisional SNS user number, which is in fact useless since it does not guarantee access to free health care. Thus, this process should be revised and simplified; c) the gaps that exist between the legislation and practice, including the lack of training of health care workers so that know migrants' rights; d) the need to promote migrants' knowledge on their rights regarding access to health, so that they can be empowered and demand their rights; e) the need for an increased social and political awareness on these issues to advocate for migrants' needs; f) problems with the Portuguese SNS (lack of doctors in some areas, namely family doctors) which affect mostly the ones who are already vulnerable, specifically migrants.

Regarding **education, training and work**, participants mentioned concerns mostly related to work conditions. Most seem to consider that the problem is not as much the access to education, training or work but the support necessary to successfully complete an education or training, and the fact that the labour market exploits migrants and so they face an even more precarious labour market. In what relates to education, Luana mentions how her siblings experienced trouble adapting to school in Lisbon but that they are very happy and well-integrated in Porto, in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycles of school (from 6 to 14 years old): *"…they adapted well, they were well received and there are no complaints. There is very good monitoring. Because of the disparity of academic programmes (…) they had to go to an ATL, my brothers who are already in the second/third cycle, it is a private ATL; and the one who is in the first cycle is a public ATL, from the public school and it has been very good for their integration, and they have managed to fit in with the academic programmes. They have improved, they are already really well integrated, and the cost is not so high"*.

According to her, there are more difficulties when people come to study at the university: *"… there are difficulties in adapting, especially in higher education. Most teachers are not flexible and there are no policies or guidelines for international students. We [the National Association of Angolan Students] take students who have been here longer to tutor and support the new students, to help them in the adaptation and integration process. (…) And many of these difficulties are related to different educational programmes which create new challenges for foreign students."*

Roberto also addresses university education as a problem, namely tuitions (which are higher for international students), social services for international students (which do not exist, except for some cases covered by the Equality Status, assuming these students have no social needs), and situations of discrimination, racism, and harassment (which have been increasing): *"We have different tuition fees for international students, which are often up to seven times higher than the national ones, right? Courses that cost 7000 EUR [for an international student] that for a national cost around 1000 EUR, so I think this is one of the first issues that should be worked on, right? (…) the issue of social policy, the fact that international students are not covered by the direct social services, namely scholarships (…) issues that have been worked on to some extent, even at a legislative level (…) We have been seeing this more recently with some notoriety in the media, the issue of xenophobia, of discrimination in universities, not only in universities, but also in basic schools (…) in Lisbon last year, graffiti in schools and then also in some universities. More recently, cases of harassment, including sexual harassment involving teachers and foreign students."*

The participant mentioned something that Paulo also stated from another perspective: the recognition of diplomas *from other countries are extremely costly and take longer than supposed to obtain: "…the rule determines that there is a 90-day period for the conversion of diplomas, but in practice, this is not what*

happens. (...) Besides being an expensive process (...) makes it impossible for a person who [can't] pay 400, 500 or 600 EUR for the revalidation of their degree obtained abroad and be able to exercise their profession..."

Thus, people are often led to jobs that are not in their area of training, with lower wages. Luana summarises the jobs migrant people are led to as circumscribed to the areas of construction work and tourism/catering, so that they can get the necessary documentation and an income that allows them to survive: *"...it's easier to (...) get a contract in these areas [catering and construction] (...) In the others, it is very difficult. I think that these are areas that need more labour. And the work is also heavier. The salary isn't as good, and the person just wants to have a contract so that they can get the documentation and maybe in the future have a job in the area they want (...) The other institutions don't accept them because of the lack of documentation, no matter how qualified they are and how good their CV is."*

Therefore, migrants have more trouble accessing work in their areas of training and competences and, as Roberto states, are led to accept exploitative jobs so that they can have access to residence permits: *"...the need to regularise situations that involve precarity, labour exploitation and the like. (...) the most problematic, in truth, are the working conditions to which these people are subjected, with little regularisation (...) green receipts and other precarious jobs (...) in many cases, the work is not adequate to the competencies of the person, (...) the Brazilian community is this: people come to Portugal, migrate with higher education degrees and in many cases they don't actually get work in their areas of training and professional experience. (...) the very condition of being an immigrant, because we often depend on this [work] to make an expression of interest with the SEF. So, people are subjected to this (...) having a work contract is, in fact, an essential document for the person to be able to reside in Portugal (...) I recently met a Brazilian lady who is in a situation of practically slave labour (...) she is a resident domestic worker (...) she works basically 24 hours a day,*

from Monday to Friday (...) but you need that, because without that you can't get a residence permit and make an expression of interest."

Indeed, there have been reported cases in Portugal of slave work by migrants (which is still supervised by SEF) besides cases of companies that do not abide by labour legislation specifically with migrants, which is often caused by this need for work in order to become a legal immigrant. Hence, the fact that legalisation often depends on having an employment contract acts as a perverse measure, leading migrants to accept indecent work conditions (as defined by the International Labour Organisation – ILO). According to Roberto, the other problem people face is the lack of social support networks to help them secure a job: *"Some come here and already have more or less a structure, a network of close contacts formed here, but there are other people who come totally alone, like that. (...) lack of having a contact, of having an indication, someone who can take your CV to a certain company. To make a referral, I think that immigrant [social media] groups (...) somehow fill this gap in the sense that people are there all the time looking for and offering work and answering questions, clarifying..."*

Finally, Roberto addresses cultural issues that often become barriers to migrants, namely language issues (even for Brazilians for who the language is the same but "with its own particularities"), but also *"a barrier at a level, maybe symbolic (...) related to cultural differences"* that influence issues as simple as the websites where you can search for jobs, the kind of CV you should use (e.g., Europass in the EU), etc. As an example, Omar has been living in Portugal for one year, he is an electrician, he is now unemployed and states it is difficult to find work, which is very difficult for him since he has children and a family. However, in the work he already had in Portugal for three months, he did not have a contract, which will then make it harder to have access to permanent residence.

Luana summarises the relationship between education, work and housing and the difficulties migrants face in the Portuguese Labour market, which has become in the

last decade one of the most precarious in Europe (Oliveira & Carvalho, 2009): *"...when we talk about work, we are talking about an income and the salary or what we earn in Portugal is inferior to our expenses (...) I've met Portuguese people who pay much lower rents than we do. (...) And it ends up being a little frustrating because we practically work to pay the bills, and no one expects to leave their homeland and immigrate to work to pay the bills (...) more complicated for a working-student. (...) That also ends up generating low academic achievement. (...) this has a negative influence in the future in terms of inclusion in the labour market..."*

Therefore, participants identify a set of needs in this area of **education, training and work**: a) simplification and cost reduction of processes of diplomas' recognition; b) social support for migrant students at university and tuition fees' reduction; c) educational and pedagogical support in the adaption to the university; d) increased challenges that force migrant students to juggle work and studies, undermining their academic success and agency to dedicate to other fulfilling activities, namely socio-political involvement and participation; e) cultural and linguistic barriers; f) the dependence of processes of legalisation from work; g) increased supervision and regulation of the labour market to identify cases of migrant workers' exploitation; h) tackling the precarity of the labour market which disproportionately affects migrant workers; i) promote migrants' knowledge on the labour marker legislation in the country, strategies for job searching, so that migrants are aware of their rights and are empowered to defend them in the labour market; j) promote the development of social support networks for migrants; k) address the increased cases of discrimination, racism and xenophobia in various social contexts in the country (education, employment, health, and housing).

2.2 Local best practises

a) Existing initiatives in their local area

Regarding **housing**, participants mentioned some initiatives in which they are involved in. After explaining the process of requalification and the intervention their association did to prepare the population of Quinta do Mocho Laura offers a reflection on this process: *"In terms of care [for the buildings and neighbourhood], they continue to maintain [it] (...) they created a garden and some very beautiful green spaces, the neighbourhood could even be a model neighbourhood in the Lisbon district, because in terms of external architecture it seems to be something quite..."* Therefore, their intervention had a positive impact, helping people value their new space, work to maintain and develop it, while also seeing there is an investment from authorities on its maintenance, which means they also value it.

Olga described the conditions people were living in and what their association implemented for the Ukrainian Community and Eastern European Countries in Gondomar: *"Like all immigrants we live in old houses, houses almost in ruins, almost without conditions. What did we decide? Two or three years ago we decided that each person who has done some form of construction work and has leftovers of construction material, we collect it and do the work for a family. We will improve the living conditions of people for 1, 2, 3 families. Is it easy? It's not easy, but on the other hand it's easy to get together and help and be together."* As a result, developing a participatory project to informally improve people's housing conditions.

Paulo refers to the case of the municipality of Oeiras as an example that should be studied to understand what makes those residents more satisfied than in other areas: *"...we do not hear as many complaints as residents of other places. What they say is that some (...) are successful. Now the question is, what is done there, what was done, how was it done? What makes people there more satisfied than in other territories?*

What can be taken from there, the positive side (...) as a reference for other territories..."

In the focus group on **health care**, Laura described how an inter-ministerial intervention in the Loures council in 1998 based on participatory processes originated the creation of her association in 2000, initially focused on housing issues and public health due to the relationship between these two issues: precarious conditions of habitability and basic sanitation negatively affect health.

"...I was lucky enough to be part of this group (...) it was called "health promoters". During and after the training, we were building bridges between entities, signalling and reporting situations (...) This is how we created [our association] (...) with a health component. (...) it's quite a bureaucratic process and it's not easy to have this status of health association. (...) Since then, we have been developing projects in the health and social areas, but mainly in the health area, which is the one we focus on the most."

Since then, Prosaudesc has developed services of general practice [family medicine] consultations to support recently arrived immigrants, having also an equipped mobile unit for health services, health screenings, awareness raising, campaigns, counselling, and occasionally appointments for people with mobility difficulties. More recently, Prosaudesc added a psychology service. Concurrently, they support newcomers regarding social issues, offering training as a strategy for integration, as well as workshops, and health education actions (namely in the areas of healthy eating; mental health; environmental issues - waste, recycling, energy consumption). Eliane and Alzira described a couple of these projects, mention on two focus groups (housing and health), that underline the interconnection of this themes:

Project Acting in Community: *"aims to find innovative social responses in the area of health in order to respond to challenges posed by the pandemic (...) contribute to reducing the social bill (...) and provide primary health care. We have many activities*

(...) itinerant health, social insertion cabinet (...) thematic meetings and proximity services." (Eliane)

Project Caring with affection: "aims to combat poverty and social exclusion on a community basis and promote healthy lifestyles, targeting frail elderly people with reduced mobility and other socially vulnerable individuals" (Alzira).

Besides the projects and activities this association has and some other projects that her organisation develops, Aja considered some projects funded by the municipality of Lisbon to be positive initiatives: "... *positive things, that the city has some projects that give some support to migrants, for example for pregnancy, the Healthy Neighbourhood Project, (...) and I think they're doing good work in the communities."*

Concerning **education, training and employment**, most migrant associations develop activities in educational support, leisure and occupational activities, training, and some have developed specific support regarding job searching and professional integration. As an example, Luana identified the activities her association has been developing: *"[we have] business partners who need and are looking for workers in the industrial and engineering areas. The Vila Nova de Gaia City Council offers curricular and professional internships and has support, the youth card, and (...) counselling and guidance of young people, there are some Portuguese associations that also support studies and immigrants - the ACM..."*

Indeed, the ACM which organised the CNAIM and CLAIM included an office focused on supporting migrants in education, training and employment, and the articulation with relevant stakeholders such as the employment services.

b) Main needs of migrants that their organisation has intended to tackle by actively involving them in the decision making and through which strategies

Housing

The Ukrainian Association abovementioned was created in 2004 and it has been working in social support, legal support, education, cultural and leisure activities, promoting the knowledge of the Ukrainian language, culture and traditions. In the last 3 months they have been working more on the support for refugees and are also collecting humanitarian aid to send to Ukraine. So, their project to improve housing for Ukrainian migrants in Gondomar is an example of a project in which a migrant association directly tackled their community' needs by involving them, at a small scale, local level.

One of the other associations that was represented in the focus group is dedicated to the promotion of Public Health and Socio-Cultural Development and was founded in 2000, developing their activities in the municipality of Loures and Lisbon, working with all vulnerable communities in that context. Laura describes that housing issues are one of their many focus activities: *"Housing issues (...) we have many problems with our immigrants in housing issues, this is a key area."*

Another Association that was created in 2009, in the municipality of Odivelas has been working on the area of housing alongside sociocultural dimensions, interculturality and integration, to promote migrants' integration and deconstruct discrimination in that neighbourhood through participatory strategies and cultural activities that honour creole culture and heritage, as Paulo described: *"...we have a project in the scope of (...) Sociable and Healthy Neighbourhoods. (...) mitigate the concept of discrimination in relation to citizens, involving a strategy of good neighbourhood policy. (...) the programme is supported by ACM (...) that aims to honour migrant citizens at a national level (...) in various areas, be it health, be it education, and various others that (...) give a voice to citizens and protagonists both in the peripheral neighbourhoods and at national level (...) contribute to the integration of citizens or in*

the relationship with citizens from other countries (…) Creoles (…) with musical composers (…) intergenerational process (…) communication is a barrier (…) at the linguistic level (…) trying to mitigate some linguistic aspects…".

Health care

Elvira clarified how the association she belongs seeks to involve migrants in the development of their activities and projects: "[our *association is continually] collecting contributions, listening to immigrants and their problems and bringing them to participate in the access to health and to the SNS (…) we are listening to people in the project territory to understand their needs regarding mental health issues, the project is really focused on mental health and healthy eating. (…) This is one of the means of participation and collection of contributions from people so that something can then be improved with regard to access to these health services."*

Aja described some projects she is involved in that seek to respond to migrants' needs regarding access to information on how to seek health care and the SNS number, providing alternatives to the ones who still do not have it, and translating relevant information: "…*these kinds of projects are really doing well. Like the multicultural academy (…) they are doing medical workshops to promote awareness (…) and two days a week they're open for the community, they have a community doctor from the hospital (…) and they appoint doctors from migrant countries, qualified doctors. Here they can't practise, they don't have the certification or training here, but they are qualified, they have a long experience. (…) And they have nurses. (…) I've been translating some medical services (…) so that migrant people can read what the service is there [in the hospital]."*

Moreover, Aja mentioned the fact that one of the projects she is working on is trying to address the fact that in Portugal there is a lack of mediators for migrants in hospitals and health centres *"because hospitals are not serving in other languages. It*

is very important that hospitals have their own mediator, or they should contact associations to reach the community."

Education, training and employment

Luana mentioned partnerships with academic institutions, social institutions, NGOs, businesses, student associations, and the embassy to support Angolan students in Portugal: *"We work in partnership with academic institutions to intervene a little on the issue of students who are unable to pay their fees on time. So that the institutions can mitigate these debts and exempt them from fines (…) We have partnerships with some Portuguese institutions, of residences, of students, students who are evicted. We manage to get them to at least pay a very low rent or to be housed until they can organise themselves. We have partnerships with some business institutions that inform us of job vacancies, and we also send them CVs. We also have an informal link with our representative, which is the embassy (…) In the future we intend to have (…) support from European Union funds. We always try to get support and things that can benefit the students and reduce our expenses, but so far, we have received more support from companies."*

c) Key actors in the participatory processes

During the focus group on **housing**, a set of key actors were identified, such as:

- **Council / municipalities' representatives:** *"…housing is the main theme in the concerns of the populations of these neighbourhoods and from what the president [of the association] informed me we have been trying for a long time to help people with the presidents of the parish councils and also the Town Halls." (António).*
- **Representatives of Migrant Associations**

- **The impact of EU policies for migrant associations to join forces to lobby municipalities and governments:** *"Lately, there has been some dynamic in terms of government and also in terms of municipalities (...) the issue of housing is at the centre of the European community as one of the priorities. So, I think that it is also time for the immigrant associations to get involved. (...) because we must unite our voices so that (...) we can effectively work on these issues. (...) Because many mistakes have been made (...) So it's time for us to get together and also to be integrated in government policies, so that, through our knowledge, we can try to make things healthier, in terms of construction and even for future sustainability"* (Laura).

- **Involving immigrants in policy making:** *"...with the support of the ACM, demand that associations in a certain municipality are part of the municipal housing council. Immigrants (...) must be represented in the policy making bodies to which they belong geographically. One thing is to give our opinion (...) sometimes people take our reflections and think they are very nice, but then (...) when they are working, they don't consider them. But if the person is there (...) participating in the municipal assemblies? We have to do it! The voice of immigrants has to be heard"* (Laura)

- **Lobbying Political parties:** *"First, this is very much about the will of [political] programmes (...) it has (...) a lot to do with partisan wills. If there's no movement, no party that has these concerns in its programme, no matter how much motivation there is (...) it won't go anywhere. Why is this so? There's a thing called political strategy, and no matter how much will you have (...) If you don't have this issue at the centre of your strategic policy, forget the rest! (...) we can make a beautiful programme (...) it has everything to do with the political strategy that the parties have (...) as a way of maintaining power, full stop! (...) [pressuring political parties] is possible (...) if they have at their core the will to*

discuss or talk to people interested in making this change, then yes, it can."
(Paulo).

- **NGO's**: *"…to try to talk to people who live in those neighbourhoods (…) with those municipalities to find some aspects that can be transposed and discussed as a proposal (…) to join the executive, try to listen, propose a meeting, a forum (…) These issues should be discussed in an open forum [develop a] plan, our goal over the next three or four (…) then let's discuss this strategic plan (…) through a thematic housing forum." (Paulo)*

The identification of relevant actors to involve in participatory processes on **health care** was remarkably similar to the ones identified in the focus group on housing. However, some other institutions were also identified.

- **Establishing partnerships with private entities:** *"Private entities, for example, foundations, partnerships with other institutions. A few years ago, we managed to solve this problem of clinical analyses, for example, because we formed a partnership with a laboratory to which we then referred the user…"* *(Laura)*

- **Universities:** *"…universities have a basic response to health, including for the international community of students. Bringing in a little of what is the experience in Brazil, we have a series of extension projects, which is what they are called. There are some students and teachers who work with the community in some way. Mainly in situations of greater vulnerability, these extension projects usually work with the public who are in a more vulnerable situation" (Roberto)*

- **Synergies with other associations or institutions (e.g., CIG - Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality):** *"…we have had a very positive dialogue with the CIG - Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality, which has accepted some of our demands. (…) It is this synergy with other associations (…) this*

awareness raising and trying to build links with other associations, other synergies (…) articulation so that we can have partnerships." (Roberto)

- **Local councils:** *"…when I think about health issues, it refers a lot to the level of central power, doesn't it? And in fact, it's the one with most of the responsibility in this matter (…) but it's increasingly necessary an articulation with the local authorities, with the parish councils, with the town councils… yes, so that there may be a policy of greater proximity, (…) my parish (…) dental health (…) articulate this with social welfare councils, and with the whole structure behind it, not only in terms of administration but also of deliberation in all this…" (Roberto)*

Participants identified as primordial actors in participatory processes in **education, training and employment,** the following stakeholders:

- **Migrant associations and informal networks developed in association contacts**: *"…a support network was created within the scope of the LGBT pride march in Lisbon (…) for people in situations of vulnerability to help (…) with shopping, supermarkets, and things like that. (…) my association (…) belonged to this support network. (…) the feedback I had (…) was that most of the support to LGBT people that was requested and was given during the pandemic in that network was to migrant people. Because they were the first to lose their jobs (…) in precarious contract situations (…) so most of the people who were assisted and benefited [from this] support (…) were migrant LGBTQI+ people '' (Roberto).*
- Involvement of **trade unions**; **universities**; **Higher Education Institutions, public** and **semi-public organisations**, and the **private sector**: *"…there needs to be a dialogue between many sectors of society (…) public organisations, but also companies, trade unions too. (…) in this labour issue the trade unions also have a fundamental role in promoting participation and in denouncing cases*

of discrimination at work. So, in terms of what would be the organisations to get involved in a participative process, I think they are all of them and (...) university (...) institutions of higher education, public and semi-public organisations (...) and clearly, the private sector (Roberto).

However, overall, the involvement and collaboration of these entities is not always an easy process. Participants describe resistance and detachment from different organisations that can hinder their involvement in the promotion of participation and wellbeing in the immigrant population, as Robert exemplifies: *"(...) an experience we had at the University (...) during the pandemic (...) [some] students who were foreigners (...) with delayed payment of accommodation (...) food shortages (...). And we tried, through a more or less informal group of foreign students (...) an articulation with the university, which was not very receptive. So, I think that there is also some resistance here. (...) very difficult dialogue and a very restricted attitude towards what the law stipulated, without any kind of negotiation or compromise (...) I think there are barriers at many levels for this participation to be promoted".*

d) Strengths and Weaknesses of these processes

In the **housing** field, participants identified weaknesses in the promotion of participatory approaches. For example, Laura described a specific challenge the immigrant association she represents has been facing. They collaborate with migrants that come to Portugal from PALOP countries (Portuguese-speaking African countries) to seek medical health care through cooperation agreements that Portugal has established with some of these countries: *"...these agreements were established in 1977, and (...) they have not been updated, and the realities are no longer the same. The countries, due to their economic difficulties, do not have the means (...) and the embassies cannot respond, people are arriving, and housing has been a big problem.*

(…) we find houses that are quite degraded, full of humidity, elderly people, with chronic diseases that need intervention so as not to aggravate even more their problems…"

As a result, Laura believes they have not been able to address the specific needs of this group, specifically in terms of housing. Olga believes that migrant associations have lost some of their importance and level of influence: *"In the last few years, all the associations have lost the value they had in the beginning. It's not because we are working badly, it's not because we are weak…"*

She also detected some difficulties regarding the articulation and relationship with other NGOs: *"…institutions like [institution x] in Porto are working very badly, and for two years I have been asking people for food products and they ask me for a folder full of documents and speak to me very rudely (…) Because they don't know what poverty is, they don't know what people suffer because they are all people from good families with good conditions. [It's important to] understand what that is, getting up in the morning on the floor, on the mattress, not on a comfortable bed, so nobody understands the life of immigrants and they don't want to understand. They ask for documents, proof of rent, people don't have these documents. And then talk in a way (…) We are all equal (…) [when the] association asks for something [in the name of] the immigrants that it represents, people have (…) to believe, or, say straight away that no, we're not going to help. "Come on, come on, prepare me papers, prepare me a list of names" and now with personal data protection, how can we work? Every time the person comes for food, do I have to ask for a declaration to be signed? No, I will not ask…"*

So, she condemns a level of bureaucracy (which may be disguise forms of prejudice and discrimination) that hinders the possibility of support reaching the ones who need it. Moreover, Olga critiques the fact that migrants are not more supported, and their living conditions assessed to guarantee that they have access to their basic human rights, and considers associations need to be recognised to better support

their communities: "*...everything is broken: work, social support is broken, (...) housing support. (...) immigrants from Eastern countries (...) living in bad conditions, even without beds, mattresses. You have to see them! No one visits, no one wants to listen, because everyone thinks that everything is fine. The association tries to work (...) we have to improve the recognition of the immigrants' associations.*"

Certainly, one of the constraints that affects the work of migrant associations is the lack of financial resources that allows them to fulfil their goals and support their communities in a timely and sustainable manner and so, many struggle to keep afloat. This precarious position is further aggravated if they do not find support and partners in NGOs and the civic society.

Indeed, concerning **health care** issues, Laura mentioned a relevant weakness that hinders migrant associations' capacity to develop participatory projects: funding. She described the current situation and offered practical solutions: "*In the public sector we have the funding that we already know that, well... (...) the ACM has a programme of support for associations. Unfortunately, this programme does not meet the needs (...) of associations. (...) to create a [relevant] project (...) cannot do it with 9000 EUR. Not by a long shot... (...) just to buy something specific (...) But in our case, it falls far short. What was needed was for the Government itself to recognise the role of associations in its state budget. They should be aware that many of the answers that associations give in the field are governmental responsibilities, and unfortunately, they cannot, and we are there to solve them. (...) We can do the lobbying that our colleague mentioned a little while ago. (...) I know that the Government has recently created and given powers to the municipalities, to the chambers, including in health, (...) creating the Municipal Health Council. And so, we are expecting (...) the municipalities will resort to the institutions to work together. At least we have that expectation*".

Nonetheless, Laura acknowledged as a strength the fact that the municipalities that they work with are open to articulate and collaborate: "*...we have a great articulation with the two municipalities. (...) Firstly, the Lisbon City Council has had this policy (...) programmes that support organisations in their projects. Incidentally, the Lisbon Chamber (...) has had a good policy of integrating organisations (...) working closely with the Community. In Loures, although they don't have so many programmes (...) we have had good cooperation with the Town Council (...) which is excellent. And some of our projects have also had their support. In this phase of the pandemic, between 2020 and... in fact, until the middle of this year, we had support from both the Lisbon City Council and the Loures City Council (...) food support, for example, to families*" *(Laura)*.

Another strength is the existent legislative background, despite its shortcomings, namely in terms of practical application: "*...incredible as it may seem (...) regardless of all these constraints (...) when we started working on [health], Portugal happened to be the only [country in a EU network] which (...) had a decree-law (...) It's true that, in practical terms it didn't work, it doesn't work so well, but at least (...) Those countries, most of them didn't have it (...) So much so that between 2007 and 2008 Portugal won the prize promoted internationally with this Decree 25/360 of 2001, because it was the reference that the other countries saw to serve as an example*" *(Laura)*.

During the focus group on **education, training and employment**, Paulo recognised the necessity of physical headquarters for associations to be able to implement projects in these areas, increment relationships and foment articulation between different entities: "*...if I have a physical space to develop activities, I don't have to depend on someone else (...) not having physical space, it complicates connections, it complicates networking (...) the big problem is that the lack of physical space to develop these actions that are necessary.*"

The participant emphasises the importance of disseminating information between different associations, fostering a collaboration methodology: "*...knowing how many associations have physical space, and how many do not, and what physical space they have. (...) There are entities that don't have a space to develop a workshop (...) and they could contact entity Y or Z that has that space in a certain area to... there you go, we are already touching again on this participative process, this collaboration.*"

Combined with these structural organisational limitations, participatory models were identified as suffering inherent difficulties related to the modest mobilisation of the immigrant population, that can be attributed to constraints developed by a work centred society and its economic system based on wage-labour for survival (Gorz, 1980/1994). Roberto points out this position when he acknowledges: "*...lack of mobilisation. (...) people have (...) occupations, lack of time is a problem, and it often prevents people from participating at all levels (...) **The system is created precisely so that people become as alienated as possible from their rights and live that routine, work their 8 hours and go home and catch a bus. (...) I think that this is perhaps a great weak point because there is often a will, a desire for improvement** (...) There is a dissatisfaction, an indignation that is a feeling that I think is particularly good in the mobilising sense but that is not then materialised in real actions (...) a series of constraints, which go beyond the individual, thinking in more macro terms, prevent this participation from taking place, in any form, whether through associationism, (...) street mobilisation, in a more horizontal and informal model*".

Moreover, despite the visible political and legislative changes, participatory processes are also affected by lack of migrant representation in Portugal, which seems to be related to the country's colonial history and the presence of discriminative, racist and xenophobic discourses (Casquilho-Martins et al., 2022). Luana states "*As for discrimination, I have actually felt that over the years it has decreased a lot, but yes, there has been quite a lot. (...) In Lisbon there is not so much discrimination but here*

in Porto there still is. (...) there are areas in Portugal where (...) we are not yet comfortable".

2.3 Added value of migrants' involvement

a) Added value of migrants' active participation to local policies

Recent studies advocate that to promote an optimised integration in host countries, immigrants should be involved in conventional political participation processes (active and passive) and non-conventional participation processes, consequently contributing for local policies directly impact their daily lives (Oliveira & Carvalhais, 2016). However, there are limitations regarding immigrants' conventional political participation rights in terms of access to electoral rights (active and passive). In Portugal, for example, most immigrants are limited to the municipal local authorities' elections, a constraint that obviously contributes to a low conventional political participation. Nonetheless, other channels of non-conventional participation have a more common affiliation that promotes social exchange and integration (Jardim & Silva, 2022; Ribeiro et al., 2016).

With this context in mind and reviewing the three focus groups held in this study, it can be understood that the participants acknowledge the importance of community consultation for more integrated policies. In fact, they support that using participatory practices could help prevent social conflicts and create more adequate and articulated strategies to satisfy immigrants' real needs. To demonstrate the importance of local immigrant auscultation, Laura recalls the specific case of a Lisbon area community: *"At the time there were many conflicts, but it was a mistake that they recognised (...) if they had really listened to the people and taken into consideration some of the reflections that were proposed at the time, these issues would not have had so many consequences (...) in the municipality of Loures, (...)*

re-housing units were built (…). Two, three, four people were put in the same house, with different cultures, people who have nothing to do with each other in terms of their countries (…) in terms of social coexistence within the house, there were very complicated situations. There are still very complicated situations, people who even died through violence (…) because of disagreements in coexistence, there were deaths."

As mentioned before, there is a clear recognition of the importance of finding the immigrant "voice" through active participation processes. Despite the restrictions in conventional political participation, some participants see slight changes in this field, as Roberto, and others as Elvira propose new forms of participation:

"Although in the last local elections, I felt that there was a greater movement of debate on these issues, including the representation of migrant people in party lists, mainly on the left (…) we saw this movement happening, especially in big cities (…) the integration of migrant people in the party lists that ran for city councils" *(Roberto).*

"(…) as long as [immigrants] can't vote and their political decision making and participation can't be heard it's a bit difficult to consider that they can care much about that, especially since the very access to the vote that legitimises power, whether it's local or national power, access to the immigrant vote is still (…) an issue. There are people who have lived here for 10 years who contribute to the country, want to participate, but because they are not legal, they cannot vote. (…) Are there any forums where those people can be heard? (…)" *(Elvira).*

Thus, when asked about the value of immigrant's participation, Roberto underlines the importance of *"empowering the community"* promoting genuine articulation in all areas of expertise and social life. The participant suggests that if the ultimate aim is immigrant integration and wellbeing, there should not exist self-contained dimensions and limited rights for specific citizens: *"…it's no use having a system, a*

service that works well only for national people (...) thinking about health as something collective and a right (...) it's not a good, it's not a service, it's a right. And secondly, it is also a collective construction, which encompasses all people, regardless of any characteristic (...).

"For the integration of migrants, I think that empowerment is also fundamental. People participating in policymaking."

"...the first advantage is, in fact, to have a space to listen in first person. People can present what is in fact their experience, which is not exactly the reality that is often painted. (...) it seems that everything is fine (...) people want to come here and in fact they do (...) but this also hides a series of relationships that [lay] behind. (...) Secondly, when we think of labour, employment, and education policies, (...) they need to be integrated with other policies, right? Namely health and social assistance, (...) they don't go separate ways, do they? (...) if people can share these accounts and can participate, you can then also build policies that are more transversal (...)".

To sum up this reflection, and sharing Roberto's thoughts, Laura simplified saying that the added value of migrant's active participation to local policies is the act of participation itself.

b) The general interest and knowledge of local authorities concerning the involvement and active participation of migrants in policy choices that involve them.

As we observed before, despite the progress of Portuguese legislation and policies regarding immigration and migrant integration, certain forms of discrimination, racism and xenophobic attitudes remain noticeable in immigrants' everyday lives:

"(...) Because one thing is indicators and everything is very beautiful in theory, right? So, we see beautiful data there, that immigrants contribute (...) to social security. (...) in practice, many times this data hides the fact that these realities are extremely perverse and harmful for migrant people" (Roberto).

So, in this context, do local authorities actually know their communities and have an interest in active participation of immigrants in local policy? This seems to be a quite delicate subject to debate, perhaps because most focus groups' participants were part of immigrant associations that in some sense work closely with local authorities, possibly influencing their comments due to social desirability concerns. Considering this, in a more conservative position, some believed that local entities do have an interest in this integration even though they do not promote systematic and integrated responses to the emerging immigrant contexts:

 "We cannot generalise. (…) In our experience, we have seen that there are some local authorities, some entities, which involve immigrants (…) in some situations. But, as I said, we have more and more immigrants, the situations are more and more fluid and (…) they must be integrated concerns. What I mean is that integration as a whole (…) it's one thing to do it just to make people see (…) and another thing is to do it from the heart. It's completely different. (…) sometimes they want some indicators, they do some things to make people understand that they did something, but it is another thing to really go to the bottom of the matter and see that it is a problem (…)" (Laura).

Other participants adopt a more critical position, considering that local authorities' main interest is in fact instrumental, depending on electoral interests. These differences in opinion may also reflect different experiences regarding the collaboration with local authorities. Furthermore, more critical participants acknowledged that governmental institutions do not really represent the cultural diversity inherent in communities and might even neglect immigrants' needs in less central areas of the country:

"In my reading (…) the local power, [local authorities] will always care to the extent that (…) immigrants have the power to vote (…). Will they be interested after that? (…) As an example, (…) in local government, when we go to the forums of assemblies, I don't see the multiculturalism that mirrors that municipality, that region. You don't

see yourself there in that decision-making space. So, (…) starting from that basis, does the local or national power really care about the political choices of immigrants? Is that political choice meaningful for them? I don't know, it's a very good question that we can reflect on, but I really don't know" (Elvira).

"…this [is] a little related with the dynamics that are inherent to the electoral political market (…) If it's not a group that participates electorally, not only politically, but specifically in elections, there isn't exactly any level of priority for this cause" (Roberto).

"I don't feel that there is necessarily a great concern in terms of what the local authorities are doing with integration, I mean, there are some initiatives. This varies a lot from municipality to municipality. We know that there are totally different capacities, even at the level of budgets. (…) Lisbon, with its own funding lines for projects related to the issue of migrants. (…) I am particularly worried about the condition of the people in the interior of the country, because in Lisbon there is still an articulated set of things happening and a greater representation of the associations themselves that (…) [attempt to] give an answer for these people, but in the interior and on the islands, there is no such thing" (Roberto).

Therefore, participants consider that migrants' needs cannot be acknowledged and considered in policy making if they do not have a more significant role in conventional political participation (Oliveira & Carvalhais, 2016; Vilas Boas, 2019). Roberto points out a generalised neglect in immigrant issues in society and refers to a common reactive action mainly activated when crises or delicate situations emerge in communities. In his perspective, due to the non-existence of effective dialogue mechanisms, this reaction unfortunately holds no real response to immigrants needs:

"(…) there is a great deal of neglect regarding the situation of migrant people, in general, not only in relation to health, but to work, to all social issues (…). Nobody was very worried about Odemira until the moment when there was that outbreak of COVID (…) people living in those cramped dwellings, on top of each other (…) then

[the] whole society mobilised, the parties mobilised and wrote texts (…) and then the Government also, somehow, got involved. And then (…) the case is hushed up [and] the situations continue as they were (…) (Roberto).

"I think the big issue is often the lack of channels, more systematic instruments of communication and dialogue that are often not as available (…) or if they do exist, they exist in theory, don't they? In practice, they don't…" (Roberto).

c) Migrants' Trust in Institutions at national and local levels.

The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) 2019 score for Portugal is 81 (out of 100), and the country's access to nationality scored 86 which has contributed to migrants' sense of belonging and trust. Even though the score for political participation is 80, Portugal has limited voting rights for migrants (mainly to local elections and European elections for EU citizens), which undermines migrants' conventional participation. So, participants in the focus groups demonstrate diverse views on trust in institutions, which seems to reflect varying levels of difficulties in access to rights such as health, and the abovementioned limited voting rights.

On the one hand, Laura considers there is some confidence in institutions: *"Again, I won't be unfair. It depends on situations; it depends on cases and there are cases that are very specific. But in general, at least, I think there is some balance".*

This may also be related to migrants' political experiences in their countries of origin, as we have mentioned elsewhere (Oliveira & Carvalhais, 2016; Ribeiro et al., 2016). Aruna seems to agree Nepalese communities trust but also seems to focus her statement on trust in migrant associations: *"Yes, they do. According to my experience, even though I've been here only a few months, Nepalese (…) in this community (…) they try to participate in a lot of programs and projects (…) that empower them (…) even if it is just an information (…) they do trust the associations."*

Also, Binsa considered: *"...nowadays they trust and then the thing like you guys are doing, it's really great (...) if you will be a mediator for the government and then the migrant community that would be great, and then whenever they don't have a voice you can raise the voice on behalf of them...".*

In contrast, others feel there is some distrust in institutions. In the focus group on housing, António stated there was distrust regarding the allocation of social housing:

"In one of the consultation meetings with the residents of these neighbourhoods we heard many complaints about the criteria in the allocation of social housing and they often blame the officials who discriminate and do business at the same time within the councils".

During the focus group on health care, Elvira mentioned a feeling of frustration as a result of the fact that legislation is in place in this areas for long but problems persist in its practical application, which undermines levels of trust: *"...with all that has already been said and promised and all the movements and advances that have already been made, we are discussing the basic access to a right that was ratified a long time ago (...) universal health, a universal right. And today we are talking about this and with the pandemic, the problem is even worse! (...) It's really sad, I'm appalled by this because I know people who don't have access to the health system and who need it. So, it's... even for us who (...) are interested (...) I have that feeling that trust is low.".*

Therefore, concerning active citizenship and social and political participation in more general terms, participants identified a set of issues that undermine trust in institutions, specifically, political institutions. These factors reflect research's results that show that political underrepresentation of immigrants in host societies, which is influenced by the objective and subjective political opportunity structure (POS) in the host country – the legislative and formal limitations regarding political rights in the host country and distrust in political structures (Oliveira & Carvalhais, 2016).

On the one hand, the fact that migrants cannot even vote for participatory budget citizens' initiatives, as Roberto mentioned, constraining potential forms of participation: *"I think it's low, very low, hitting the ground running. We've talked a lot about voting here, but, for example, these citizens' initiatives, that's another thing that we can't do either".*

On the other hand, participants addressed the abovementioned issues regarding voting rights' limitations and the bureaucracy that surround electoral enrolment:

"And the bureaucracy is very big too. (...) an immigrant living in Odemira who wants to vote, even with the right to vote. The system itself is also a bit too obsolete, too square, which needs to be reviewed. Because if I'm in Lisbon and I've only registered in the Algarve, I can't vote if I'm in Lisbon. I have to go to the Algarve, so it's a bit like that..." (Elvira).

According to the literature, political experiences, the democratic culture, and trust in institutions in the country of origin also influence trust in institutions in the host country (Ribeiro et al., 2016), as Roberto mentions: *"I think confidence is low. Especially among Brazilians, since confidence in Brazil's political institutions is already low. We're not exactly a country where people trust political institutions, on the contrary. Opinion polls in Brazil show that people trust the Globo network, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, much more than the House of Representatives. (...) there's a distrust of political institutions that comes with us. We already have this baggage of distrust in political institutions. Whether rightly or wrongly, I won't judge (...) to change this culture would also be a very difficult job, right? (...) the Brazilian community already has very little trust in political institutions, especially in the more classic forms, the parties, the unions (...) the institutions themselves should actually involve people (...) I think that it is also a little bit the role of the institutions to create mechanisms (...) so that people can then participate."*

Therefore, he suggests that changes in trust in institutions entail an effort from political institutions to involve people, to create strategies to promote this

involvement, which would then promote trust in institutions. Moreover, he and Elvira address another issue: how this distrust affects voting numbers but also how this lack of conventional participation may reflect the colonial history and democratic culture of the host country. Indeed, this colonial history and ingrained discrimination seem to lead to an underrepresentation of migrants in society in general, mostly in positions of power, in the political sphere and local and national governmental institutions, which thus promotes distrust in institutions (Oliveira & Carvalhais, 2016; Ribeiro et al., 2016).

Roberto: *"...I think that if there are not enough mechanisms and forms of participation, trust is low, because interest is also low, right? There isn't really any interest, at least what I see and what I feel. (...) in the [last] local elections, there was a mobilisation of several Brazilian associations, so that people could register in the parish councils to vote (...) But the percentage of foreigners who actually voted was very low...".*

Elvira: *"Yes, I agree with Roberto. I think that the level of trust is low in the political institutions for these reasons that he listed and, above all, because people don't see themselves represented in these structures, and many times these structures bring a programme that dresses the pro-immigrant cloak. And that, deep down, when we go to check the implementation of policies and everything else, falls short of what they had proposed to do and to improve for immigrants."*

Therefore, migrants' trust in institutions seems to be experienced as low in Portugal, which besides being influenced by the democratic culture and trust in institutions in countries of origin, seems to be mostly due to the bureaucratic process regarding electoral enrolment (which often people are unaware of), the fact that their forms of participation and voting rights are limited, the country's colonial history which contributes to discrimination, racism and xenophobia that ultimately hinder migrants' possibilities of participation and representation in political institutions.

d) Gender issues that influence the active involvement of migrants in integration policies

Although citizens' rights are safeguarded by Portuguese laws[3] that underline the non-discrimination principle on any ground (such as gender, race, colour, language, political opinion, national or social origin, national minority membership, fortune, birth, or other status), studies demonstrate that in practice this type of discrimination continues to exist and in specific contexts to become aggravated (e.g., Casquilho-Martins et al., 2022; Rosário et al., 2011).

In what concerns gender issues the focus groups participants report the existence of symbolic barriers that persist in communities to maintain and perpetuate historical and cultural differences: *"In terms of participation, if we look at the issue of gender, there's a clear historical and cultural difference (…) there are still several symbolic barriers to female participation in all aspects of society, political and social, including the distribution of domestic work time, which is still an overload for women (…) women dedicate more time to domestic service in the house, taking care of the children, the children's home, all of this (…) I think these barriers to participation continue to exist, and there are also specificities in relation to gender that are often not taken into account (…) There is a double discrimination, to which the person is often subjected [regarding LGBTQIA+ migrants) " (Roberto).*

If we narrow down the topics of analysis, we can find persistent reports of gender inequalities in housing, health, education, training, and employment work, which are clear in the following excerpts:

 "Yes definitely, the housing and agricultural sector most of us are very vulnerable, especially in Odemira, Santarém" (Aruna).

"(…) in the case of health, receiving health services, Asians ladies especially (…) they prefer to go to lady health officers, lady doctors and they don't feel comfortable in

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[3] For more detailed analysis please consult the documents: Portuguese Constitution (1976) and Resolution of Assembly of the Republic of Portugal (No. 232/2016).

some medical tests or examinations. (...) But in hospitals (...) you cannot choose your doctor, if it's male or female (...) but it's very important for some Muslim ladies for example, some conservative families also. So, this is a problem and that is... difficult to manage, they don't share. They don't go to the hospital or take help due to these kinds of issues" (Aja).

"(...) a person who has a degree in social service (...) a Master's here in Portugal, but never managed to work in her professional area of training which is social service. Nowadays, she does sex work and is doing well with it, in the sense that it's a source of income for her. (...) But she has never effectively managed to exercise her profession here in Portugal. And this, of course, has a lot to do with the fact that she is a trans person" (Roberto).

Analysing Roberto statement, we can recognise that gender issues gain new dimensions when the diversity of gender conceptualisations develops in contemporary societies, creating simultaneously different forms of discrimination and generating the need for new social responses for integration:

(...) besides the fact of being a Brazilian migrant, the fact of being an LGBT person also puts the person in this double situation of discrimination and stigma (...) in the case of transgender people, who are perhaps the most exposed, I don't want to generalise, but based on what we know (...) for example, a large part of the Brazilian transwomen living in Portugal are doing sex work (...) I consider it a form of work as fair and legitimate as any other, which should be the subject of greater regulation and protection (...) these women and men who do this type of work, but who are totally subject to stigma" (Roberto).

"(...) There was a double prejudice, a double stigma (...) they are not well accepted in the migrant community because they are gay, they are lesbian, they are transgender, so they are not accepted, they are not respected and, on the other hand, many cases also suffer prejudice in the groups, in the LGBTQI communities for being immigrants, not speaking the same language (...)" (Roberto).

Thus, there is an understanding that despite the recent bridging of the gender gap visible in the increased sphere of influence of women in management positions in the third sector, effective participation processes depend on territorial, personal experiences and cultural differences:

"The third sector is very feminine. This is my vision of the associations that I visit. (...) I see the social sector as a very feminine sector, very much managed by women and that's where I see them in the majority. In management positions..." (Elvira).

"I was saying that this is very relative, because it depends on the territories, on the municipality, it depends on... there are organisations where we can find a great balance in terms of gender equality (...) our association is an example of this (...)" (Laura).

 "Personally, I didn't experience any discrimination (...)" (Aja).

"(...) especially for the south Asian woman it's more difficult because there is a different kind of culture than European people, so in my opinion it could be more difficult to participate in all the association" (Binsa).

Nonetheless, there is a belief that gender equality must be recognised as a social phenomenon and taken in consideration for policy making and immigrant integration: *"(...) we have (...) to take into account gender equality (...) equality must prevail (...) because it is also one of the policies that makes perfect sense" (Laura).*

3. Recommendations/suggestions

Participants offered some suggestions and recommendations focused on the three areas under analysis. Regarding housing, considering this is a critical area for migrants' integration in which they suffer from high rent prices and from poor living conditions due to speculation in the housing market, they stated that measures would have to include **policies for the regulation of the market**, **as well as the**

government offering not only social housing but also housing with controlled prices. Laura proposed: *"...the Government in power could use it to (...) create programmes, call in (...) other institutions (...) the old cooperatives, which we don't talk much about anymore. (...) the Government itself should (...) build houses, not social houses, but houses with controlled prices. But in a way where there can be real inclusion, so that (...) the real estate policies maybe decrease [rent prices], because what's happening (...) they're taking advantage (...) there's this little supply and there is a lot of demand (...) if there are answers (...) naturally the houses will no longer be so exorbitantly priced because people will have other alternatives".*

António proposed a reinforcement of the inspection of social housing and its allocation to combat cases of corruption: *"... a good organisation through an Annual Census (...) Coordination between the Census and the attributions of the houses, this would expose many of the situations of closed houses and abuses in the attributions because many are authentic businesses within the councils..."*

Concerning health care, Roberto highlighted the influence of the pandemic on a perception of health care that reinforced its public health dimension, thus facilitating access to all. Indeed, the government issued **policies during the pandemic that facilitated the access to health care for migrants, which MIPEX suggested should be enshrined in legislation:**

"I think that when we think about health issues, and once again I evoke here this figure of the pandemic (...) of course, it has an individual component (...) but when we talk about health, we are talking about public health (...) And I think that the pandemic in that sense, was very pedagogical (...) There is not exactly a distinction here between the resident, the person who is in a regular situation, who is irregular in the transmission of a virus" (Roberto).

Moreover, he reinforced the importance of **migrants' participation in public policies concerning health**: *"If health is public, it's a public good (...) a public right (...) needs to*

be built collectively too. Because it's not a question of the individual (...) there must be a generalised care of people (...) the universality of the National Health Service in Portugal (...) has to exist, based on this basic principle that care is collective. It has to be collective care".

So, alerting to the fact that most migrant people do not have a family doctor assigned, Roberto proposed the elimination of the provisional SNS number, providing the SNS number from the start, when people arrive: *"...I also don't know why from the moment the person arrives in Portugal the number is somehow not assigned".*

Considering migrants' needs in education, training and employment, we have analysed participants' identification of issues of precarity and labour exploitation, which are heightened by the fact that people need a work contract to become legalised, demonstrating the perversity of the regularisation of migrants depending on employment contracts. Thus, it is possible to conclude that one of the areas of concern is the **regulation of the labour market to protect migrants from precarity and the supervision of employers to protect them from exploitation.** Indeed, after describing situations of abuse in this area, Roberto states: *"...I think it's more a problem of supervision and regulation of this work. (...) So, I don't know if the problem is so much about access, but then it's about the supervision and regulation of this work..."*

This would entail a new review of labour legislation in Portugal, which has become more liberalised and deregulated in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2007/2009 and the austerity measures the country experienced afterwards (Oliveira & Carvalho, 2009). It would also entail further funding and empowering of the Autoridade das Condições do Trabalho (ACT – Authority of the Conditions of Work) to supervise cases of precarity and exploitation, as well as SEF to supervise cases of modern enslavement.

Moreover, considering the role of social support networks to help migrants secure a job, it would be crucial to reinforce the offices for migrants' employment so that these can compensate for the lack of these social networks. These institutions could also fulfil an important need which is to **promote migrants' knowledge on the labour market in Portugal, on labour legislation**, besides strategies for job searching. Indeed, Roberto proposed the development of initiatives to promote migrants' knowledge on labour market legislation in the country to foster their awareness of their rights and thus their involvement and participation, while also protecting them from potential exploitation:

"…[involving] people in anything is difficult (…) but I think the first step is information. It's that awareness in relation to what the rights of the migrant person are. (…) what a working day is, what a certain contract regime is (…) If the person is in a state of alienation where they don't even know what their rights are, it's impossible for them to get involved in participation. (…) I particularly believe that street mobilisation is crucial (…) I'm happy (…) to see movements like the precarious inflexible [an activist group] (…) Uber couriers… (…) I think that this is also a way to bring some visibility to the issues of exploitation and precarious work…"

Therefore, Roberto's reflection allows us, on the one hand, to consider the roots of the difficulty in promoting migrants' participation, which were already mentioned and are related to day-to-day survival which alienates people from their social and political context. On the other hand, it provides clues on how to **promote participation through conscientisation** (which entails the development of migrants' knowledge and reflection on the legislation of the host country and on the impact the social, economic and political context has in individual and collective experiences) to empower and reinforce collective agency that may emancipate people to participate and demand for their rights (Freire, 1970/1972).

Another issue that was mentioned was the importance of providing more **social and pedagogical support for migrants that are attending Higher Education**, as Luana proposed:

"As far as suggestions are concerned, I think they are mainly for higher education…(…) Mozambicans, Santomeans and for us [Angolans], who have a very different academic programme (…) There are teachers who have some timetables available only on the eve of assessments when students have doubts, but there is no support like in secondary school. (…) having tutoring for students who have more difficulties, especially in the first year, which is a year of adaptation (…) There isn't this kind of support, there are some institutions that have this kind of support, but it's not directed towards international students…"

On the other hand, it is relevant to mention a comment by Luana in which she felt the police discriminated against her mother and did not support her:

"…my mother was robbed, we managed to locate her mobile phone, trace it, and the police said she should go there and, if necessary, call them. I've never seen that happen in Angola, which is more precarious (…) I had a friend who was swindled. The process was so slow that to this day there is no response, no return, nothing".

This seems to reflect the existence of discrimination, racism and xenophobia in Portugal, which recently had cases of police brutality against African descendants, Roma communities and foreign citizens (Casquilho-Martins et al., 2022). On the other hand, it may reflect the results of the Report "State of Hate: Far Right Extremism in Europe 2021 that mentions far-right infiltration in the Portuguese police and military. So, besides the importance of intercultural education and training in inclusivity, it is crucial to develop a **systematic assessment and intervention in the Portuguese police and military**.

Participants in the focus groups proposed a set of recommendations that would allow a **reinforcement of participatory strategies through migrant associations**. Some of these recommendations are also related with the promotion of synergies between migrant associations. So, it would be useful to develop an analysis of the existing associations to summarise the services across the country as well as survey migrants' qualifications and skills to develop synergies between migrant associations and other institutions of the civil society so that migrants can participate more actively in policies' development. In this subject, Laura proposed: *"Another strategy is to survey people with qualifications (…) create mechanisms so that immigrants with qualifications can also compete and be integrated into the development policies of their own society, their own country, their own municipality."*

On the other hand, Paulo mentioned the need to validate knowledge and skills of the ones who work with migrants, which would further offer recognition to their work and to migrants' associations' work, as well as improving the training offered for recently arrived migrants: *"…there needs to be a model of recognition of these training for (…) the area of citizenship, these issues related to migration, there should be a validation model. Because we are talking about competences for people to arrive and do well. (…) there are people who (…) in the area of education, do not understand citizenship issues, interculturality (…) There should be a structure for information, training and validation of these issues, because the organisations and citizens who already work in this field need to be recognised (…) so that when they are on the field working with a newcomer, they can have their competence recognised and validated (…) work better with this immigrant (…) so that people can feel more integrated."*

Participants also considered it to be vital for migrant associations to **develop partnerships and networks to influence policymaking either nationally or internationally**. Laura stated: *"We (…) are founding partners in an organisation with headquarters in Belgium, which is a platform of undocumented immigrants where we annually hold an Assembly. And within the Assembly (…) we also have (…) working*

groups on various themes (…) education, adaptation, legal matters, health, social areas, minors and the family."

Roberto mentioned the partnership his association developed from the start with migrant and LGBTQIA+ associations and movements, stating: *"Networking is fundamental. (…) because there are competences that you often don't have and another entity can provide you with the same openness that we have. So, I think networking is actually quite beneficial when it actually happens."*

Paulo refer to the partnerships in which they are involved: *"At the international level, we are integrated in the European projects in co-partnership with 14 countries of Europe, of the European Union, one of them has just finished too (…) we are in the final report phase (…)"*

To achieve this, participants considered crucial to reinforce migrant associations funding, a basic recommendation that has already been mentioned throughout this report. Indeed, they propose that the government and municipalities provide more sustainable funding for migrant associations, and further support them. As an example, Luana stated: *"I believe that each association has its fundamental role in society and I also think that … the work of associations should be valued a little more and there should be incentives from public bodies, both the foreign representations (…) embassies, and also Portuguese institutions, to fill these needs."*

On another note, Elvira proposed **interculturality training to become transversal to promote participation**: *"I think the basic issue, which has to be transversal, is an education for interculturality. I think it makes all the difference if we work on this theme in schools with teachers. Because we know that teachers are also the ones who receive students who come from abroad (secondary and higher education students) and this education for interculturality is very important in a first phase (…) To also support those who arrive, how they can do to participate more, to integrate*

better in their areas of interest. (…) but also at the side of those who receive, to know better this issue of Interculturality (…) To work on interculturality in institutions in general, in public health institutions, and so on."

So, Elvira develops this idea to propose the creation of forums for migrants to be called upon to participate, both in politics and in the creation of pro-immigrant policies: *"…forums should be created in which it is possible, through associations and so on, for the immigrant to be called upon to participate, both in politics and in the creation of pro-immigrant policies. I think that we have to listen more to the people instead of working for them without them. (…) at the municipal level, this plan for the integration of immigrants, which is revised every two years…"*

Indeed, she demonstrates how promoting immigrants' participation cannot be done without involving them from the start, critiquing initiatives previously implemented that were developed without migrants' involvement: *"…call on the immigrants to integrate them, create lots of activities to integrate them and then complain that they don't participate! (…) Who works for the immigrant who thinks for the immigrant? It is always the nationals who work for the immigrants. [Instead we should] Take the immigrant who arrived here a year or two ago, come work with us, we will work on the reception of immigrants (…) What can we do here that makes sense for the people that arrive…"*

On the other hand, even though it was not explicitly proposed in this part of the discussion, considering the abovementioned quotes from participants regarding the limitations that migrants experience in **active and passive conventional political participation**, participants seemed to hint to possible changes on the access to voting rights, and to an increased representation in political parties, local and national authorities. As an example, Luana stated:

"We are foreigners, but there are basic things regarding these points that are important to housing, health, and training. There should not be so much difference between nationals and internationals, and when we have to pay social security and IRS there is no such distinction. I don't understand why these policies are still like this. I think that this should still be very much observed by the State."

Thus, this reinforcement of migrant associations and participatory approaches, which as Elvira mentioned could entail citizenship and political education, would allow the promotion of migrants' knowledge and reflection on the legislation of the country and on the social, economic and political context, thus empowering them, reinforcing their collective agency and sociopolitical participation (Freire, 1970/1972).

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Migrants' needs assessment

ITALY

Carla Dessi, Fulvia D'Incerti, Eliana Gabellini

SHAPE

SHaring Actions for Participation
and Empowerment of migrant communities and
Las

Index

Executive summary

This document aims to report the results of research activities carried out by the Institute for Social Research as part of the SHAPE (SHaring Actions for Participation and Empowerment of migrant communities and Las) project.

As further better explained, purpose of the research and Work Package 2 was to build an adequately in-depth overview of the situation around participation and active citizenship of people with migrant backgrounds in each of the project partners' countries. This report follows a previous document ("Background Analysis") which aimed to provide an initial look at the context of each state through work on the existing literature. The fieldwork, which will be outlined in the next few pages, has been nourished by the valuable contribution of the first analysis and intends to follow up by giving voice to a number of people with migratory backgrounds from different local contexts in the field of participation and active citizenship.

1. Methods and participants

This area of activity involved the implementation of online focus groups with people with migratory backgrounds in order to explore their attitudes with respect to the topics of civic participation and active citizenship, trust in institutions and perceptions and needs regarding participation in the definition and implementation of policies for the integration of the migrant population.

In particular, the design methodology established the organization of 3 online focus groups involving participants identified by project partners.

Focus groups were planned by theme (housing, work, health, education) with a cross-cutting attention to gender issues.

Each focus group was conducted by a moderator and assisted by an observer who took field notes.

In particular, the structure of the in-depth interview included a brief presentation of the research (main goals, activities, and outputs) and of the participant (professional role in his/her organization) and it was organized in four sections:

PART 1 - EXPERIENCES OF MIGRANTS' ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT
This first part of the focus group aims to gather information about your direct or indirect experience in how migrants or migrants' organizations are actively involved in your country in the decision making of policies related to the main topics of our research (e.g. housing, health care, education, training and employment).
In your experience:

    1.1 What do you mean if you think about a «participatory process»?
    1.2 Are there such initiatives directly involving migrants in the decision making about the main topic of our focus in your local area?
    1.3 Which are migrants' main needs that could be better tackled through a participatory process and that migrants' organizations can promote in a participatory decision making process?
    1.4 Are you interested/is your organization interested in actively participation in decision making? If no, why? If yes, why do you think is necessary to be part of this process? In your opinion are there any differences on how women and men can be involved?
    1.5 Which is the strategy your organization is following/will follow in promoting this involvement? How can your organization be part of this process?
    1.6 Which are the main strengths and main weaknesses in your context?
    1.7 Could you describe main areas of improvement in brief/medium and long period?

PART 2 – STAKEHOLDERS/OTHER ORGANIZATIONS/ACTORS
This second part of the focus group aims to gather information about stakeholders/other organizations/actors that are involved in the "participatory process" we are talking about.

shape

In your experience:

    2.1 Which are the key actors in this participatory process?

    2.2 Are there any stakeholders/other organizations/actors that could be particularly useful and relevant in this process and that has been difficult to involve? If so, why? Which are main problems/obstacles in the participation of some key actors? Are there any actors that are interested in participation but do not have the chance to do it for any reason (e.g. discrimination…)? In your opinion are there any differences in the involvement of women in these organizations that need to be highlighted?

    2.3 How these aspects could be improved in brief/medium and long period?

PART 3 - ADDED VALUE OF MIGRANTS' INVOLVEMENT

This third part of the focus group aims to gather information about what you think is (or could be) the added value of migrants' involvement in the decision making (refer to the policy discussed in this focus e.g. housing, health care, education, training and employment).

In your opinion:

    3.1 Which is (or could be) the main added value of migrants' active participation to local policies?

    3.2 In your country, how much interest and knowledge do you see in local authorities concerning the migrants' involvement and active participation in policy choices that involve them? Why?

    3.3 Which is in your opinion migrants' trust in institutions at national and local levels?

    3.4 Which are the lessons learnt from past experiences or other best practices/concrete examples we shared?

    3.5 In your experience do you think that women will face more difficulties in this participatory process? Are there specific issues where women are more involved than in others? Are there any specific issues that you would highlight?

PART 4 – SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

We are now approaching the end of this focus group and we would like to invite you to give us some suggestions for the future:

    4.1 Which are in your opinion main areas of improvement in the brief/medium and long term?

    4.2 Are you involved in national and EU networks promoting this approach? Do you think that this networking could be useful? And finally…

    4.3 Do you have any other issues to share/to discuss before closing this focus group?

As regards the participants' selection, it was defined that each group had to be composed by 6 to 10 people and that each group had to be characterized, where possible, by heterogeneity concerning age, gender, place of residence, countries of origin, migration history (recent migration, naturalized citizen, second generation migrants) and juridical status (kind of permit: international protection, for work…).

The participants' selection was realized thanks to the Italian partner of the project, CoNNGI. 30 people with migratory background were invited and about half of the people on the invited list responded to the call.

Most of the participants were young women (between 20 and 30 years old odd) born in Italy or arrived as a child, with different migratory backgrounds. People with migratory backgrounds were with different origins, stories, and from 3 regions in particular: Lombardia, Emilia-Romagna, and Toscana.

The participants' country of origin most frequent was Morocco. The other participants were people with migratory backgrounds from China, the Philippines, Pakistan, Senegal, Cameroon, Angola, Iraq, and Brazil.

The majority of them joined different associations or networks in the national and local contexts. Most of the participants were experiencing or had experienced active participation within *Next Generation Italy* and *CoNNGI*. The other participants are or were active in the political and associationism sphere in other distinctly local channels and experiences such as *Futuro è Ora*, *Moded*, and *CambieRai*.

Graphic 1 – Participants (%) by thematic focus group
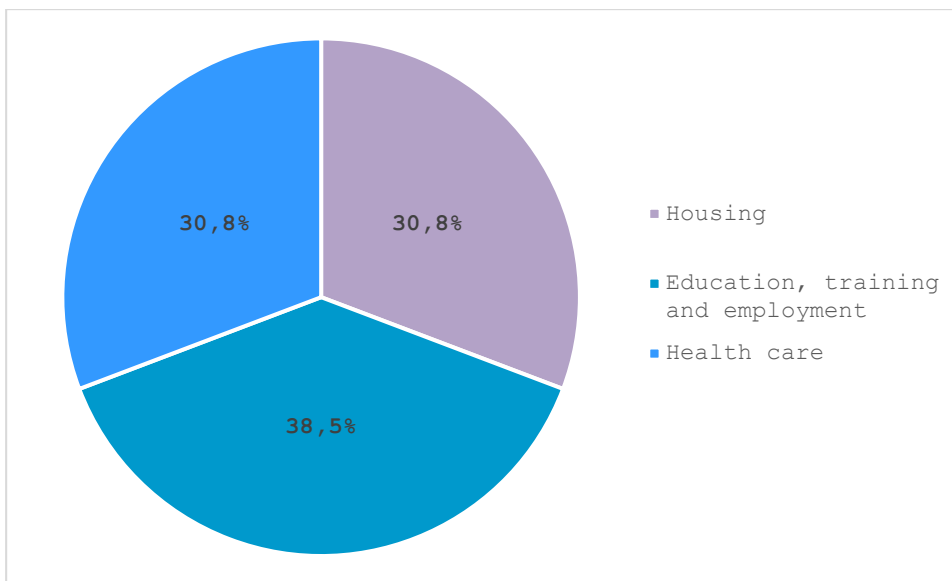
2. Migrants' active involvement

First, it is worth taking into account that what was collected in the focus groups shows a circumscribed view, mainly of people living in Northern Italian backgrounds (in particular from Emilia-Romagna). Also, as anticipated in the description of the participants, they are primarily people born and/or raised in Italy.

The narratives and discussions within the focus groups went on to cover a relevant number of issues and criticalities concerning the Italian context.

The most heartfelt and addressed issue concerned particularly the forms of discrimination and impediments to the process of integration and inclusion in Italian society given to institutional racism determined by current legislation, discriminatory practices, and a lack of widespread sensitivity to the issue of diversity on the part of all the main actors and subjects of public life, from the political sphere to the education, public health, and housing.

Recalling also what was found in the direct interviews with local public authorities, the topic of the conditions that allow the feeling of being part of the community and thus the willingness to actively participate in the definition of local policies appears crucial. Ensuring an equitable citizenship law, giving proper information and orientation on the services and facilities, preventing discrimination in the contexts of education, health, and housing, and recognizing equal rights and opportunities for all people, are considered decisive elements to incentivize the active participation of people with migrant backgrounds.

The experiences of active participation mentioned related purely to the forms of associationism experienced within the various subjects and networks dealing with issues related to interculturalism, exchange, and discrimination against people of foreign origin. No particular local experiences of active citizenship born from the initiative of the institutions were brought up.

Such elements, combined with the limitations given by the Italian context in the area of rights protection and inclusion described by the participants, paint a quite unfavorable situation with respect to the issue of active participation of people with migrant backgrounds.

2.1 Migrants' needs and civic participation/active citizenship

a) DEFINITION OF *participatory process* according to the participants and PARTICIPANTS' INTEREST in actively participate in decision making and opinions

To best represent a concept central to the active citizenship of people with migrant backgrounds, it is helpful to begin with a meaningful quote from a participant:

> When we ask ourselves about the topic, we sometimes interact with the issues exclusively according to our knowledge, without knowing the characteristics and particularities of targets. If today we ask ourselves about the participatory processes of migrants, we must realize that we are not talking only to migrants, but also to people who were also born and raised in Italy. (A.)

The idea expressed is to question the meanings attributed to the theme of active participation by each different community and targets at the local level, keeping in mind that lives, experiences, and conceptions can vary greatly and that it is necessary to avoid generalizations and thus approach the issue by highlighting the diversity that characterizes the local landscape of communities with migrant backgrounds.
It follows therefore that the definition of active citizenship/participation does not have to fit into the canons, the western definitions.; In this sense, it is crucial to understand how to engage people according to their cultural insight and view of participation.

> We need to question the meanings attributed to the theme of participation. How do I understand it? If it is understood from a Western point of view, it is one thing. But it can also be a religious group, a moment of national holiday, and something else. They have their moments of participation. We must ask ourselves what is according to our perception their moment when they have this need to create a process of community, of mutual help among themselves. (C.)

It is considered essential by all to approach the topic of migrants' active citizenship with the different experiences and characteristics of people of foreign origin in mind. The immigration issue, as some participants reported, cannot be considered a "big monolith where we put in everything: asylum seekers, reunited families, boys and girls born in Italy..." (K.) and for this very reason, the forms of associationism mentioned and that are part of the experiences of the interviewees are based on the fight against stereotypes and discrimination and to change what is the current vision of 'Italian-ness'.

The participatory process is mostly conceived by participants as a:

> context where one's voice and decision-making power matters and contributes to the improvement of society. Participation in my opinion means taking and redeeming one's personal position from micro dimensions (family, school, and friends) to macro decision-making spaces…from the bottom (circles, associations, social centers) and to the top (institutions), where minorities are underrepresented and discriminated. (J.)

A number of keywords and concepts that have occurred in the discussion can be traced:

Figure 1 – Keywords

Network	Exchange of best practices	Investment of institutions	Training

Willingness to make a difference	Openness to the community	Dialogue and confrontation

In the discussion related to the meaning of participation, a common recurring thought concerned precisely the concept of networking, of working together, of pooling energies:

> The concept of networking, the importance of being in a network, comes to mind. The sense of networking. Like the fishing net, unraveling, remaking, sewing it back together, something that is continually being fed, unraveled, and remade: the important thing is to keep it alive. However, who can keep this net alive is up to entities and institutions that invest in it from above. [...] The value of the network as a time to exchange best practices, to inspire (B.)

An interesting reflection was also made related to the issue of marginality/exclusion. It is believed that the same concept (and context) of marginalization can be reversed and may not be solely conceived negatively, but rather as a space of resistance from which something can be built.

The theme of the right to vote connected to citizenship necessarily emerged forcefully:

> Today we talk about themes of (active) citizenship: I don't have citizenship, but I always try to participate in what citizenship is, through practices and help. I see a lot of passive citizenship in general, among Italians. I wonder if theory or practice is more important. I say it with bitterness in my mouth: I see a lot of active participation not taken into consideration because it is not certified. Often at the electoral level there is little participation and paradoxically there are those who would still like to make a difference. (H.)

In fact, as anticipated in the background analysis, one of the most significant limitations of the Italian context brought up are the restrictions of the citizenship law and the related administrative/bureaucratic procedures that severely undermine acquisition and actually place major limits on the possibility of exercising civic and political rights.

According to the participants, a crucial point that could make participation concrete is political representation. The fact of having in the institutions representatives with migratory backgrounds is important to make policies work because there is someone who acts knowing the experience of migrant communities, who can act as a bridge between realities.

Besides the exploration of the meaning of active participation, thoughts and discussions concerning the current context of participation were brought forward. Often the perception is that there is a widespread passivity in the Italian context, that less and less importance and relevance is given to civic and political rights, and that spontaneously arising experiences of active citizenship are not adequately valued, with the risk that there is an exclusion from the political terrain by certain communities.

In addition to these testimonies, it was shared the need to combine the enhancement of people with migratory background's associationism and multiplication of the opportunities of participation, with the work on public exchanges, discussion, and participatory processes extended to the whole community, to people with different ages, origins, socio-economic conditions... As some of the participants argued, participatory processes must be inclusive and open to all.

> In Bologna, I became aware of different realities and young people who shared my experience as a person with migratory background. I was able to discuss with them and it was very nice, it is important to talk to each other and this I mean as participation. But participation should not be limited to these contexts, where we will find for the most part people who will share our thoughts, it is important to do it even in the more 'difficult' places, such as small provincial towns.
>
> Going back in thought regarding my experience in a small village near Bergamo, I also used to participate with my experience as a young person with a migration background, I used to provide my point of view in certain situations, even in uncomfortable situations. [...] I think that many people, even outside of organized settings, are willing to have a confrontation, to understand things that are not part of their reality and direct experience, but we also have to be willing to confront these people, who maybe have never had to deal with realities other than their own. It is important for us young people with migratory backgrounds to confront, engage them and offer an alternative point of view. In my experience in the province, I saw that they are not always all racist and ignorant. There were some to keep away from, others who even to my surprise were open to dialogue. On my part, however, the work is to question and not arrive with the assumption that I know better and am not as ignorant as they are. You have to not only stay here but also go there, talk to others, reach out to older people as well. (D.)

The strategic role that young people can play, regardless of their origins, was also endorsed by several participants:

> In my opinion, the work of participation has to be done not only with people with migrant background, but also with 'native' kids; there is a disinterest in politics, it is a work that has to be done on all levels. If we have to involve young people, it is right and fundamental to involve new generations, because they are going to constitute new social fabric, the next Italy. Participating is important for all young people, not just people with migrant backgrounds. (T.)

b) MIGRANTS' MAIN NEEDS that could be better tackled through a participatory process and the main criticalities they are facing

As anticipated in the introduction, special attention was paid to the issue of people with migrant backgrounds' needs and the resulting critical issues that characterize the Italian context.

The discussion in the focus groups, in accordance with the designed methodology, was distinguished by the following thematic areas: health, housing, and education, training and employment. In each of the topics, multiple issues emerged that, if properly addressed by institutions, could in turn encourage the active participation of people in the life of the community, and the country. In fact, the situation is shown to be quite problematic, as the general distrust of people and communities with migration backgrounds toward Italian institutions is quite high.

Concerning the topic of Health there are multiple issues to be considered:

- Care pathways and discrimination;
- Limited/narrow approaches;
- Lack of trust;
- Lack of data;

The main focus discussed during the Health focus group was mental health.

The main critical issues relate to the difficulty of accessing care pathways and interacting with the national health care system. In the field of mental health, particularly shows little investment in mental health to make even services more affordable and consequently, access becomes/is extremely prohibitive for many subjectivities.

Care approaches often appear to be Eurocentric and not focused on cultural differences, making it difficult to establish trusting relationships and implement effective interventions.

> The issue of mental health in some countries is totally nonexistent: it has a totally different approach and is not recognized as a health problem. For example, in Pakistan, it is considered a spiritual problem and therefore should be treated in a spiritual and esoteric way. There is a refusal to requests to access treatment pathways because 'I am not crazy.' There is a kaleidoscope of issues to consider when dealing with this issue from an intercultural perspective. (A.)

In addition to a lack of intercultural approaches, it was pointed out that attention is often given to this issue only with respect to certain categories, namely asylum seekers, which denotes little foresight on the part of state institutions.
In addition, another critical issue regarding approaches in mental health pathways relates to discrimination suffered by the individuals and family members involved.

There is also a lack of accurate data on the topic of mental health. As one participant underlined, there is not very precise data regarding the pathways in the mental health sector of people with migrant backgrounds, for example, in Lombardy it is not clear how many people of foreign origin are undergoing Trattamento Sanitario Obbligatorio (Compulsory Health Treatment).[1]

As regards the themes of Education, Training, and Employment there are several issues:

- Lack of orientation and support;
- Lack of linguistic-cultural mediators and teachers' diversity training;
- Educational segregation;
- Occupational segregation.

Varied criticalities were cited, and they are related to the lack of support toward newcomers and orientation in the local community, the lack of use of cultural language mediators, and the non-existence of diversity training for teachers that also inevitably leads to assimilation approaches toward the students and their families:

> Teachers' accusations often come to the families. There is an expectation that foreign parents speak Italian at home, with the risk even of losing learning the language of origin. The child is categorized from an early age, a sense of inadequacy is created...There is a tendency to opt for assimilation in school settings, to a devaluation that leads to isolation. (S.)

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[1] Trattamento Sanitario Obbligatorio (TSO) is a medical treatment, applied in Italy, in which a person is subjected to medical treatment regardless of his or her will; It is a composite medical and legal act that allows certain investigations and treatments to be carried out. It frequently turns out to be implemented in psychiatric settings, when a person with mental illness who, although in the presence of psychic alterations such as requiring urgent therapeutic interventions, refuses treatment (usually due to lack of awareness of illness). Compulsory health treatment involves complex legal implications in its implementation, and when applied in psychiatry also possible psychological and physical consequences. (Negroni)

Added to this the issues of educational segregation or the prejudice that leads to people with migratory backgrounds often and willingly being directed to vocational colleges[2], and occupational segregation, or the difficulty for those with a migrant background to establish themselves in work contexts and professions different from those perhaps of their parents were discussed.

> It is to work on educational segregation. [...] They make all the kids with migrant backgrounds go to vocational colleges. So it sets off a social bomb. There is prejudice and you bring together a number of dimensions and variables. There is educational segregation at the level of orientation and chances: everybody has a chance to do and improve. Why continue to simply address in vocational colleges? (B.)

Regarding the Housing theme, different questions were addressed.
Certainly, the main criticalities concern discrimination in access to housing supply and housing deprivation, particularly in large cities. The issue of conflicting neighborhood relations was also mentioned to which it is considered useful to respond through the presence of linguistic-cultural mediators.

2.2 Local best practices

a)   EXISTING INITIATIVES, NEEDS and STRATEGIES

Regarding participants' experiences of active participation, it is necessary to point out, as anticipated, that they took place, particularly in the area of **associationism** and **activism**. These lives do not concern personal experiences in established participatory mechanisms led by local or national institutions. It is also worth noting that due to the type of experiences they had, it was not possible in most cases to distinguish them according to the thematic areas defined above. In fact, the forms of associationism described address multiple issues and have mainly as their focus on interculturalism and the promotion of initiatives for the social inclusion of the so-called 'new generations', a term that "includes not only young people born and raised in Italy (second generations, but now also third generations) by foreign (or in turn second-generation) parents but also young migrants who arrived in our country at an early age." (CoNNGI)

As the Manifesto of the National Coordination of New Italian Generations shows, associationism proves to be the privileged form of active participation and can be an important resource for the territory:

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[2] This evidence has also been confirmed by various pieces of research on the subject, where it shows a higher percentage of people of foreign origin in these types of schools, such as the study "Second Generations between the World of Education and the World of Work" promoted by Rete G2 Seconde Generazioni in collaboration with ASGI, Save The Children with the contribution of UNAR, as part of the R.E.T.E. (Rows Emergencies and Teen Empowerment) project.

shape THE SOCIETY WE WANT

> We young people manifest a great ability to network, to create and join associations in which we can compare ourselves with those who share similar experiences and backgrounds. Precisely associative realities can be an effective means of active participation in Italian civic life. Forms of associationism, operating also from a perspective of subsidiarity, can strengthen the sense of belonging to the country in which one lives, represent a bridge with the country of origin and, at the same time, foster the positive impact of individuals and groups on the entire community. Many associations of young people with migrant backgrounds also have among their goals to impact processes of societal transformation, particularly to break down barriers and prejudices, and are also creators of awareness-raising initiatives aimed at all. Knowing one's duties and rights and being an aware citizen is another added value of the experience of associationism. (CoNNGI)

The needs that such forms of associationism address in their activities, initiatives and claims are many and varied, as cited in the discussion of the criticalities above. First and foremost, such realities want to represent a place of sharing, exchange, and dialogue for people with migrant backgrounds, particularly the new generations.

There are several local and national forms of associationism, and networks mentioned and in which the protagonists participate or have participated.
CoNNGI is an entity known to all participants and to which some people adhere. It is the Coordinamento Nazionale Nuove Generazioni Italiane (National Coordination of New Italian Generations), which gathers a set of associations rooted on the territory and is there expression of a further step towards an awareness, which places in the foreground the protagonism of young Italians with migratory backgrounds, who resolutely claim their belonging to Italy. CoNNGI wants to be a representative subject of Italian plurality in the different institutional and Inter-institutional, national and international tables. (CoNNGI)

One of the local realities most participated in by the people involved is *Next Generation Italy* Association.
Next Generation Italy is a nonprofit association based in Bologna that works to promote initiatives for the social inclusion of new generations, with particular attention to the issues of interculture and the right of access to digital knowledge of children and adolescents.
"We hope for the construction of a society of Italian citizens composed of a multiplicity of peoples, genders and generations, opposing any kind of discrimination" (Next Generation Italy)
Next on Bologna collaborates with institutions, the private sector, business, and academia. It implements several diversity management projects, works with schools, and provides for intercultural and religious dialogue activities. As visible from its curriculum, the association has been a protagonist over the years of multiple participatory paths in various fields and has carried out many and various projects with the aim, for example, of raising awareness, informing and building together collaborations, social cohesion, and cultural products. In its various activities, it aims to deconstruct prejudices and stereotypes through meeting and promoting dialogue between young people and citizens from different backgrounds, showing the richness coming from cultural diversity.

Futuro è Ora, on the other hand, is a movement born in the Tuscan context, specifically in Pontedera, and it too represents the new Italian generations: its goals are first and foremost equal rights, particularly that of citizenship and integration. "We are thinking of doing trainings at the school level. It is a network that is growing now. One of the first themes was on gender-based violence. We plan to take the theme to schools and do events." (M.)

One participant also referred to *Moded*, a form of associationism present in Milan that dealt with training and education. The primary activity involved the bureaucratic part i.e. accompanying parents to school for documents, particularly in front of language issues. The other main activity was after-school activities inside a park or oratory for homework help so that children with migrant backgrounds could keep up in school. Finally, the movement was also doing small events, such as pizza parties, snacks, and picnics to give kids and parents a chance to get to know each other and do some networking. First, they worked mainly with Senegalese people because of language issues, then they expanded the group, and then they got to help people from North Africa.

Lastly the *CambieRai* network was cited, an initiative of the new generations with a migrant background that came together to organize a mobilization campaign and ask Rai[3] to respect the code of ethics and be more open to diversity.

If we look at other experiences regarding a specific thematic area, an interesting work experience was mentioned in the field of housing:

> We did a project to house Minori Stranieri Non Accompagnati (MSNA)[4] in apartments within an apartment building. When the kids had arrived, the condos wanted to sue the landlord for bringing in foreigners. So we had decided to have a party where the boys had cooked, putting note saying 'come and meet us.' The condos arrived and saw that they were kids, like their children. After meeting they gave up the lawsuit and started defending them: sometimes it's not knowing that's scary. Maybe we need to open up to everyone, create opportunities to get to know each other, because really, where we can create moments of encounter, fear of the other falls. (S.)

As A. reported, what unites all the associations/network illustrated is the fact that they are going "against stereotypes where migration represents a big monolith where we put everything inside: asylum seekers, reunited family, kids born in Italy." and their reference point is the cross-cultural model. (S.)

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[3] Rai - Radiotelevisione italiana S.p.A., known as Rai, is the exclusive concessionary company of the public radio and television service in Italy. It is the leading television hub in Italy and one of the largest communications companies in Europe, the fifth largest television group on the continent.

[4] MSNA is defined as a minor not having Italian or European Union citizenship who is for any reason in the territory of the State or who is otherwise subject to Italian jurisdiction, lacking the assistance and representation of his parents or other adults legally responsible for him under the laws in force in the Italian legal system (Ministero degli Interni)

c) ACTORS.

During the discussion, the key actors present or to be involved within the referred participatory mechanisms were not specifically discussed. As reported in the previous reflections on the meaning attributed to the theme of participation, the widespread idea of the participants is to build opportunities for exchange and dialogue that can open up to the community. Moreover, well-established associations in the area such as Next Generation Italy, in their work of awareness raising, and diversity training relate with various decisive actors in the area, such as the for-profit world and various public institutions in the field of education, training, culture…

d) STRENGHTS, WEAKNESSES, and AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

With respect to the discussion regarding strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement, several reflections and proposals were made by the participants, specifically on the possible ways to go.

Different keywords and issues were recalled by participants:

- **Investment**; the need for institutions to invest concretely in the issue of participation;
- **Raising awareness**; working together on the concepts of participation, belonging, active citizenship;
- **Training**; to raise awareness and inform;
- **Equity** and **Opportunities**; to decrease disparities and inequalities in social, economic, and cultural terms.

The limitations and weaknesses regarding the civil and political rights of people with a migration background have been extensively addressed in the previous paragraphs: first and foremost, according to the testimonies, Italy needs to work effectively so that the social, labor and educational inclusion of people with migration backgrounds can be guaranteed. In this regard, as a person highlighted, looking at other countries' experiences could be useful.

> The word participation can be included in so many areas. Definitely the daily participation of us with migrant background. Italy remains a country too young for immigration, ignorant in the sense that it ignores. It does not have the same migration history as France. Surely, we have to be the ones to help it so as not to repeat mistakes made in the past by other countries, we are fortunate to be a country that has so many examples in front of it, can look at different examples, take a leaf. (M.)

The problematic related to the acquisition of citizenship is furthermore crucial, both to be able to enjoy political rights and to be able to work in public administrations where people with migratory backgrounds can make a difference and offer their point of view regarding policies and services. An interesting point of view related to the criticalities of acquiring Italian citizenship was given by a participant:

shape

> Democracy is there but there are no rights. The will to change things goes away when citizenship rights are not given. There's a risk of disillusionment. When the time comes to acquire citizenship after years, maybe the will passes and there is no more impetus. (S.)

One participant suggested furthermore that a possible solution could be establishing quotas for the political participation of people of foreign origin: "at the political level it would make a difference" (J.)

The issues of shortage of adequate communication and information regarding services and opportunities and the lack of approaches sensible to cultural diversity are always mentioned as an obvious deficiency that is the first and decisive obstacle to people's willingness to actively participate.

In the area of health for example, different people claimed the importance of working on healthcare staff.

> In what way? By starting from a base, which is to become aware of not being aware of the interlocutor who is different from us, if I know that I do not know, I inform myself before I act and I do not act based on what I learned in school or university, because, whether it is a psychological field, health, disability etc., if I do not know, they can be the best doctor or educator in the world, my intervention will be ineffective, because it will not be calibrated to the emotional cultural needs of the person I assist-help. Today in Italy we have very good doctors, educators, psychologists, when I work as a mediator I realize that we are very much anchored to methods, tools that are not up to date or effective, this is because people have changed. That's why interventions that should be effective turn out to be totally unsuccessful. For instance, in the area of mental health, I touched on how far professionals felt from what they were hearing. They were trying to field personal studies-experiences, very folksy, but totally ineffective. If I am telling you that I see gins, you cannot categorize me and tell me to take drops. You have to know the culture of the person and what surrounds them. You have to put yourself out there. (R.)

In this sense, several testimonies argued the utility to have people with migrant backgrounds, in health care settings as in other fields, since they could provide advocacy and support work in certain areas, to know what is going on. "No one knows what goes on for example in psychiatric hospitals" (A.). In addition to the shortage of linguistic-cultural mediators in health care environments, under Italian law to work for a public administration, thus also in health care services, it is necessary to be an Italian or EU citizen, and this element represents for the respondents an important "racist block" (S.), which prevents a significant contribution to the positive outcome of the care pathway and to people's trust in institutions.

Several people affirmed that **schools could represent a starting place to be able to work and encourage participation**. Ensuring proper orientation, pathways to inclusion for the new students, and anti-racism projects would lead to removing stigma and exclusion, a crucial first step in enabling people to participate:

> Tools are needed starting in school. Through education, they can better understand who they are, and who they are with respect to the Italian socio-politic context. If you don't give them the tools needed to understand what is around them, you make people isolate themselves, they don't participate on all levels, and they lock themselves up in their cultural bubbles because that is the only way they can feel part of something. (S.)

In the area of education, it would also be appropriate to work on networks, on improving the relationship between educational institutions and parents, providing them with support and a **support system** that limits school dropout, including through mentoring paths in schools with competent figures.

Even in the area of housing, solutions can be thought of that may, in fact, incentivize participation, for example, one person reported the importance of having free access to student residence, as they are gathering places that can represent important opportunities for socialization, especially for newcomers.

As defined earlier, several participants highlighted the need for work on active participation that is not limited to people with migrant backgrounds, but extends to and with everyone, especially young people because they are considered the key of the future. It is also important to enhance the dimension of the network, of relations with external parties, to talk, and confront people with different opinions, age groups, histories… In this sense it was discussed the opportunity of strengthen and build participatory and sharing processes in the community.

Here's an interesting final quotation by one of the participants:

> It would be interesting to involve more people, even not exclusively with migration backgrounds, it would be nice to create a space where people can compare, question, and participate. That it is a space where everyone has the opportunity to do that without feeling judged and to be able to express themselves, and then everyone's experience is an enrichment for each other. To do would be nice to involve different types of people and age groups. (D.)

2.3 Added value of migrants' involvement

a) ADDED VALUE

The opinion concerning the added value given by people with migratory backgrounds' active participation is shared by most participants.

People with migratory backgrounds have a diverse background that can foster and create "bridges of communication, dialogue, closeness, where there is much distrust and fear of the other" (A.): their knowledge of cultural codes allows them to be able to help to build policies and projects with effective methodologies and tools that recognize the importance of including different approaches according to the specificities of the person, creating trust.

> This background represents our added value. Actors are needed to serve as bridges so that actors can meet each other. There is no point in denying existence biases. We need people who can handle cultural codes of both specificities with ease. Understanding why one person may react to a particular issue differently than other benefits me in the approach I can have with him or her. Knowing specificity can help in understanding how to engage people in participatory processes and build trust. (A.)

The added value of migrants' active participation is also considered:

> The point of view of a minority with all that it brings. Being that migrant people and children of migrant people are underrepresented it is as if they are not there. This requires you to be like the others, but you are not because you have a different story. You have to conform to a certain model and it makes invisible problems that you may have. (J.)

b) GENDER ISSUES

A key theme that was addressed in the focus groups concerns gender issues that could influence the active involvement of migrants in local policies.

All participants reported that gender issues are fundamental and must be addressed through the right tools and knowledge, trying to avoid simplifications. Women's activism in each culture has its own course and it is counterproductive to make judgments about, for example, the status and situation of certain women based on their background.

As reported by one participant:

> Often social workers ask me the reasons why women for example from the Maghreb, Asia, do not go out. Often the first assessment that is made is: female segregation, patriarchy... but sometimes not always so. Maybe in the country of origin the context was different, and they had a totally different form of sociality, of living even the family, extended; once they arrive in Italy they experience loneliness, social exclusion, maybe in their country they lived in very large housing contexts, or villages, where they felt free to go where they wanted because everyone knew them. Here they experience instead a disorientation, not knowing the language and different

codes, the other sees you different and you feel different and you self-isolate, you are afraid, you close yourself off. Psychological stalemates are born that are very difficult to unlock in people. Sometimes families have been ruined by interventions by social workers who did not address the issue thoroughly. (A.)

The shared opinion is at the same time to take action to encourage and incentivize women's participation. It is recognized that although some progress has been made, the status of women is still difficult, and even more so for migrant women.

Since migrant women are often marginalized and relegated to domestic work, we need to try somehow to involve them. Making them also have a space in society, which is not only the domestic space, is also a way to make them participate. (J.)

Involving women of all ages and from all backgrounds, especially the disadvantaged, would be important to enable women to be able to express themselves and understand their potential. We need to give individuals skills and tools to be able to empower themselves, despite the fact that society is a bit behind on certain changes. (D.)

At the level of personal experience, one participant with respect to gender differences in participatory processes notes that in her association a very large female presence and willingness to do the different activities planned.

One protagonist referred to "Donne a Pedali" in Carpi, the two-wheeled women's inclusion project aimed at foreign and Italian women who do not know how to ride or wish to regain familiarity with the bicycle, to go a long way toward their own autonomy.

Part of the focus group discussion, particularly the one related to health, focused on gender issues related to access to services, and consequently any limitations encountered from direct experiences or from what has been elaborated.

Interesting is the insight provided by one participant, who in particular feels that often, in the area of access to services what she perceives is that there is a tendency to see you and categorize you only by origin and not so much by gender:

As racialized people, presenting ourselves in the health care setting, I perceive as a woman that there is a tendency not to see you as a woman, a man, but as Moroccan etc., in front of origins and nothing else, it's a critical cross-cutting issue. The health sector is not prepared at all on critical issues that are fundamental to mental health: homolesbobitransphobia, racism... is harmful, it prevents people from telling their stories in the sense and function of all their social identities. (S.)

Other participants believe that, again in the area of access to services, there are differences:

> Differences are noticeable. When a woman presents herself to the service, she always finds it difficult to present herself at a counter or otherwise, mainly if she is of foreign origin, mainly because of language issues. Wives do not often show up at the emergency housing service, always the man. I notice that in other cultures women also interface. There are different issues based on cultures they belong to. I deal with mental health professionals who don't try very hard: there is no listening. (M.)

3. Recommendations/suggestions

In conclusion, the main recommendations can be summarized in different fields that were also identified by the participants' reflective work on the future areas of improvement.

Recalling also what was found in the direct interviews with local public authorities, the question of the conditions that allow the feeling of being part of the community and thus the willingness to actively participate in the definition of local policies is crucial. "Being participatory and aware citizens has, as a basic prerequisite, the knowledge of opportunities, regulations, procedures, and services active in the area." (CoNNGI) Ensuring an equitable citizenship law, giving proper information and orientation on the services and facilities, preventing discrimination in the contexts of education, health, and housing, and recognizing equal rights and opportunities for all people, are crucial in order to incentivize the active participation of people with migrant backgrounds.

On the issue of participation of citizens with migration backgrounds, the work in local contexts needs to be developed and in certain cases refined, through a determined investment of political authorities.

In the research activities, a vitality of associationism, particularly of the 'new generations' against missing references to participatory processes established by local authorities has to be highlighted and thus it becomes important to valorize these forms of participation.

To be able to create opportunities for exchange, dialogue and collective work, it is essential to reflect and investigate the meaning of participation that is attributed by the different communities of foreign origin in the area. In this sense, as anticipated, it is important to consider that immigration is not a big monolith where everything can be encapsulated and that there are a variety of experiences and backgrounds to consider. Such as when we consider the so-called 'new generations':

> When we talk about new generations that can give in the various processes, we have to take into account that they are not a cohesive group (e.g., those who feel only Italian, those who feel only Afro-Italian, those who feel only African because they reject country that discriminated against them...). So there is a strong heterogeneity: from this go to see how to unite the different points

of view with the characteristics of the institutions. I bring you the case of me and friends being/feeling mixed: bringing together different cultural dimensions. We have a point of view with respect to social challenges, from the point of view of managing migration policies, and managing new generations within educational institutions. (S.)

The absolute first work to be done concerns precisely listening. "Listening is fundamental to everything. If there is no listening, there is no knowledge either. Otherwise, you can't work on the issues that have arisen." (M.)

Listening and knowledge development are therefore crucial aspects and must be concretized in more research activities, strengthening of linguistic-cultural mediators, work and awareness-raising in all sectors of society on diversity issues.

It is necessary to build awareness of the enormous added value of the active participation of people with migrant backgrounds in the local policies and it is crucial to create the conditions to this new scenario based on trust, inclusion, and a more open and cohesive society.

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Migrants' needs assessment

GERMANY

Carla Dessi, Fulvia D'Incerti, Eliana Gabellini

SHAPE

SHaring Actions for Participation
and Empowerment of migrant communities and
Las

Index

Executive summary

This document aims to report the results of research activities carried out by the Institute for Social Research as part of the SHAPE (SHaring Actions for Participation and Empowerment of migrant communities and Las) project.

As further better explained, the purpose of the research and Work Package 2 was to build an adequately in-depth overview of the situation around participation and active citizenship of people with migrant backgrounds in each of the project partners' countries. This report follows a previous document ("Background Analysis") which aimed to provide an initial look at the context of each state through work on the existing literature.

The fieldwork, which will be outlined in the next few pages, has been nourished by the valuable contribution of the first analysis and intends to follow up by giving voice to a number of people with migratory backgrounds from different local contexts in the field of participation and active citizenship.

1. Methods and participants

This area of activity involved the implementation of online focus groups with people with migratory backgrounds in order to explore their attitudes with respect to the topics of civic participation and active citizenship, trust in institutions and perceptions and needs regarding participation in the definition and implementation of policies for the integration of the migrant population.

In particular, the design methodology established the organization of 3 online focus groups involving participants identified by project partners.

Focus groups were planned by theme (housing, work, health, education) with a cross-cutting attention to gender issues.

Each focus group was conducted by a moderator and assisted by an observer who took field notes.

In particular, the structure of the in-depth interview included a brief presentation of the research (main goals, activities, and outputs) and of the participant (professional role in his/her organization) and it was organized in four sections:

PART 1 - EXPERIENCES OF MIGRANTS' ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT

This first part of the focus group aims to gather information about your direct or indirect experience in how migrants or migrants' organizations are actively involved in your country in the decision making of policies related to the main topics of our research (e.g. housing, health care, education, training and employment).

In your experience:

1.1 What do you mean if you think about a «participatory process»?

1.2 Are there such initiatives directly involving migrants in the decision making about the main topic of our focus in your local area?

1.3 Which are migrants' main needs that could be better tackled through a participatory process and that migrants' organizations can promote in a participatory decision making process?

1.4 Are you interested/is your organization interested in actively participation in decision making? If no, why? If yes, why do you think is necessary to be part of this process? In your opinion are there any differences on how women and men can be involved?

1.5 Which is the strategy your organization is following/will follow in promoting this involvement? How can your organization be part of this process?

1.6 Which are the main strengths and main weaknesses in your context?

1.7 Could you describe main areas of improvement in brief/medium and long period?

PART 2 – STAKEHOLDERS/OTHER ORGANIZATIONS/ACTORS

This second part of the focus group aims to gather information about stakeholders/other organizations/actors that are involved in the "participatory process" we are talking about.

In your experience:

2.1 Which are the key actors in this participatory process?

2.2 Are there any stakeholders/other organizations/actors that could be particularly useful and relevant in this process and that has been difficult to involve? If so, why? Which are main problems/obstacles in the participation of some key actors? Are there any actors that are interested in participation but do not have the chance to do it for any reason (e.g. discrimination…)? In your opinion are there any differences in the involvement of women in these organizations that need to be highlighted?

2.3 How these aspects could be improved in brief/medium and long period?

PART 3 - ADDED VALUE OF MIGRANTS' INVOLVEMENT

This third part of the focus group aims to gather information about what you think is (or could be) the added value of migrants' involvement in the decision making (refer to the policy discussed in this focus e.g. housing, health care, education, training and employment).

In your opinion:

3.1 Which is (or could be) the main added value of migrants' active participation to local policies?

3.2 In your country, how much interest and knowledge do you see in local authorities concerning the migrants' involvement and active participation in policy choices that involve them? Why?

3.3 Which is in your opinion migrants' trust in institutions at national and local levels?

3.4 Which are the lessons learnt from past experiences or other best practices/concrete examples we shared?

3.5 In your experience do you think that women will face more difficulties in this participatory process? Are there specific issues where women are more involved than in others? Are there any specific issues that you would highlight?

PART 4 – SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

We are now approaching the end of this focus group and we would like to invite you to give us some suggestions for the future:

4.1 Which are in your opinion main areas of improvement in the brief/medium and long term?

4.2 Are you involved in national and EU networks promoting this approach? Do you think that this networking could be useful? And finally…

4.3 Do you have any other issues to share/to discuss before closing this focus group?
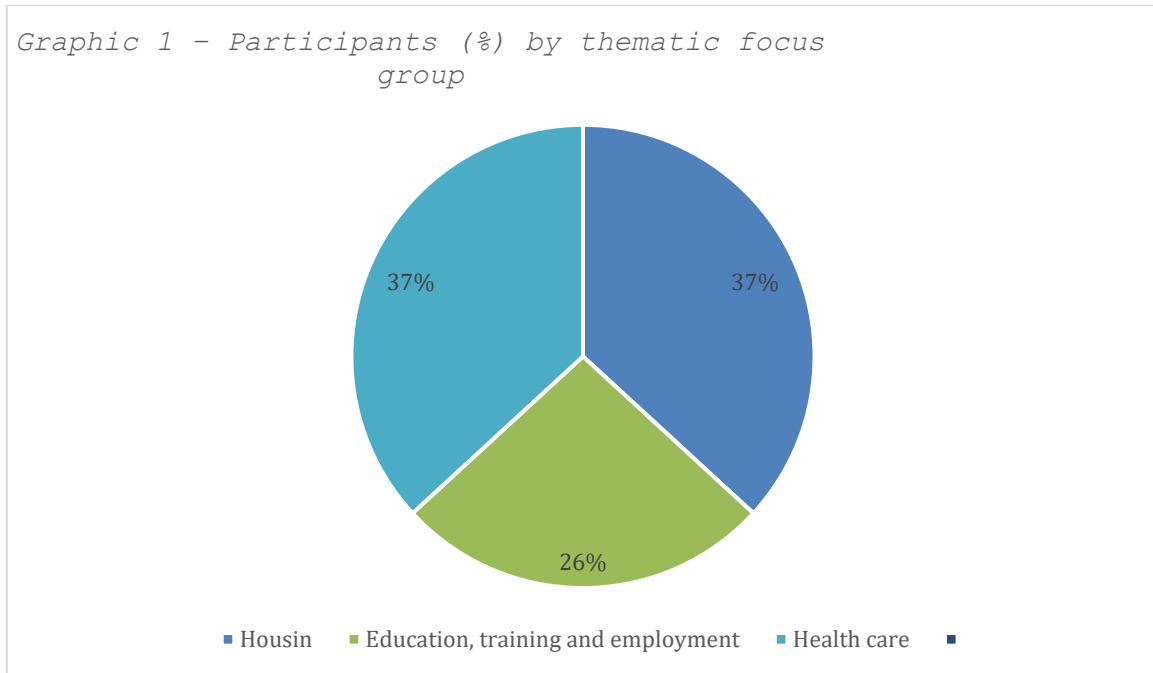
Regards the selection of participants, it was defined that each group had to be composed of people with heterogeneous characteristics concerning age, gender, place of residence, country of origin, migratory past (recent migration, naturalised citizenship, second generation migrants) and legal status (type of permit: international protection, for work ...). Furthermore, each group had to consist of 6 to 10 participants.

The selection of participants was made thanks to the German partner LAKA. Thirty people with a migration background were invited to the focus groups, and about half responded to the invitation. Most of the participants were adult women aged between 30 and 50 with different migratory origins, and some of them were naturalised Germans.

Most of the participants reside in the Baden-Württemberg state, one of them in the city of Berlin. Compared to their origins, the places of origin are various: Gambia, Turkey, Philippines, Russia, Iran, Togo, USA, and Italy.

All the participants are active in the participation processes, and two of them are part of the local Integration Commissions. In addition, many of them are in direct contact with Laka and work in local welfare and health

services, and some work with migrant associations. The other participants are or have been active in politics and associations.

Graphic 1 – Participants (%) by thematic focus group

Legend: Housin ▪ Education, training and employment ▪ Health care ▪

2. Migrants' active involvement

First is relevant to consider that what emerged in the focus groups represents a limited point of view, mainly of people living in Baden-Württemberg.

As anticipated in the description of the participants, they are mainly first-generation people, and some of them are naturalised German.

The discussions and narratives emanating from the testimonies of the focus groups have highlighted numerous issues and criticalities about the German context.

shape

The question certainly most felt and reported by the testimonies is the racial discrimination that determines the difficulty in integration and inclusion in German society. Greater awareness by all institutional actors is not necessary for the inclusion of the migrant population.

Also, recalling what emerged from the interviews directed with the German local authorities, the issue of inclusion and the will to actively participate in defining policies for a greater sense of belonging to the local community are predominant aspects.

The participation of people with a migratory past is encouraged by removing numerous elements such as language barriers, access to the world of work and housing solutions, preventing forms of discrimination in institutional contexts and recognising equal opportunities and rights for all segments of the population.

The experiences of active participation mainly concern projects activated by migrant associations active at local level which the institutions scarcely finance.

Even the integration commissions present in the contexts analysed, with respect to the issue of active participation at the local level, fail to have a political weight due to their only consultative function.

> *To sum it up, we aim to have equal rights and equal opportunities, work and houses. (D.)*

2.1 Migrants' needs and civic participation/active citizenship

a) DEFINITION OF *participatory process* according to the participants and PARTICIPANTS' INTEREST in actively participate in decision making and opinions

The interviewees highlight how participation processes are tools that allow connection between citizens and local institutions. To best represent a concept central to the active citizenship of people with migrant backgrounds, it is helpful to begin with a meaningful quote from a participant:
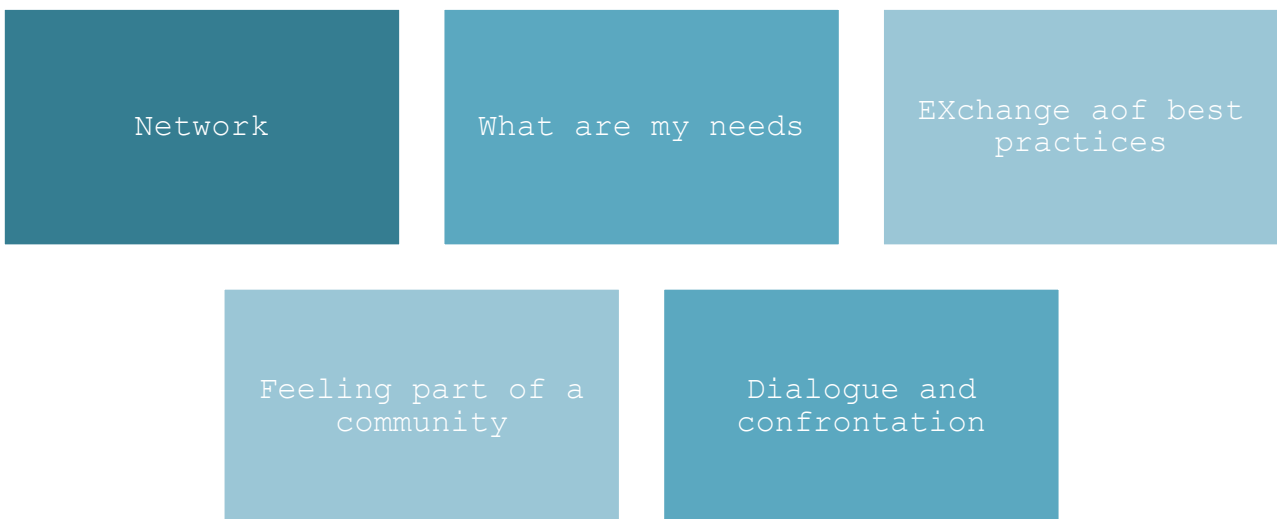
> *I believe that anyone who lives in a society must be aware of what is happening in the city. One important part is the participation of the migrant community for themselves to take part from the network for dementia and migration. It's to have more offers because this community with a migration background is a big topic. Migrants have to know what they need, and they have to talk*

for themself. Make them feel like we want to know what you need, and we take you seriously. Your problems are important for us. (S.)

The responders mean participation as the involvement of people with migration backgrounds in all shapes of society and networks of the institutions. It is essential to consider the needs and give them an answer.

A number of keywords and concepts that have occurred in the discussion can be traced:

Figure 1 – Keywords

Network	What are my needs	EXchange aof best practices
	Feeling part of a community	Dialogue and confrontation

b) MIGRANTS' MAIN NEEDS that could be better tackled through a participatory process and the main criticalities they are facing

Below are highlighted the significant needs of people with migratory past that the interviewees have reported.

As reported by a participant in one of the focus group, refers that talking about migrants or people with a migratory past, it is necessary to specify which group of people we are addressing because the different origins, paths and experiences of migration are different from each other and impact in ways various in life in the context of the arrival.

When we talk about migrants, it's a very heterogeneous group. Its' difficult to deal with this heterogeneity, you can get two or three people with international background and say "ok, you are a migrant", but how do you define migrants? Sometimes people tend to consider migrants a homogeneous self-group. So, I believe it's important to keep this heterogeneity in mind when we are making policy. (D.)

The need for greater clarity and specification concerning different groups of people with migratory past is also highlighted by a need for greater knowledge of the languages and cultures of reference. One of the main needs identified is a greater intercultural sensitivity of the people who work in local services.

The main topic is the resulting cultural sensitivity. Everyone can see that I am a Muslim, so my parents socialize in their country and in a culture where they are really in that country. So, if they are trying to take a consulting on the topics of health, they first always try to explain their own culture to get a small understanding of why they are doing what they are doing. If the consultant is not culturally sensitive, the diagnosis could be wrong. So we need more consultive in our mother language. Or consultative people that know the language and culture of the people. (S.)

Cultural and linguistic diversity is a barrier when it is not considered and sufficiently understood by the institutional figures and people who work in local services.

I see that when you go to an office, they don't understand your language. We receive a lot of letters that you can't read. It's a big issue with the language because if I have to accompany someone to the hospital, I think Germany can do better in that area. (S.)

The need for greater intercultural awareness is therefore reflected in access to local services and offers.

Access to services is also hindered by knowledge of the German language, which becomes a barrier in the search for work and the possibility of accessing a selection interview

The problem is that people don't have German knowledge. It's not easy to go up in an office and explain something to find a specific position. If a person wants to find a regular job, like a stage, normally they don't have so many chances to be invited even to the interview. The application document, for example, will be rejected without explanation. (E.)

In addition to job placement, the participants of the focus groups highlight how access to private accommodation possibilities becomes an experience of discrimination.

> *I am married to a German without a migration background, but I kept my name, so when we are looking for an apartment, I use his name because we will be invited to look for the apartment. My German is fluent, and when you are listening to me on a call, you don't know that I am not actually born here. When we talk in access to a house and where you live, if you live in a special quarter, there are place just for Russian or Turkish people or just foreign, or people who look like me. Still, I am a German now, and I am working for the state. It doesn't matter at all but as soon as I look like this and have that name, it doesn't change. (Z.)*

> *Refugees get problems when looking for an apartment when they say: "sorry, the apartment is taken". It's not so easy to find a place in our town, many people who don't have an apartment because a landlord prefers to give the apartment to a person with a German nationality or a German name, it is a big problem. Even a person from the second or third generation, not the person from the first generation like me. (E.)*

The awareness' need is also expressed in a greater representation of the migrant population. Participants of thematic focus groups often quote the Integration Commissions, explained in the Background Analysis, active in local contexts but, unfortunately, do not bring sufficient attention to the needs of migrants.

> *I think the participation of migrants hasn't reached the level of actual need. In most cities, these commissions are just consultative. They don't have decision power. In some towns, they are called international commissions where issues of people with migrations background should be discussed, but if you look at these people, they don't have migrations background. Actually, you end up talking about people's issues, but they don't have a link with it. (D.)*

The question of representation is more extensive because, as told by Z., if we take as a reference the statistical data on the percentage of migrant people who live in a city, it is a figure that expresses only the number of people without German citizenship.

When we talk about the need for awareness and cultural sensibilization, it is important to consider all people born in Germany or naturalised German but with a migratory past of their own or inherited from their parents.

> *In Mannheim, almost 50% live there with a migrations background. It's a statistical word in migrations background means that parents migrated or you migrated. My son will have a migrations background because of me, but the son of my sister won't have one because she was born here, but she has Iranian origin and her husband Turkish. But my son is white with blond hair, and her doter not, but she will look like me and will be discriminated for that. But my son has one but will never have a problem with this because he is a man, white with privilege. (Z.)*

In this case, we see how the number of people who suffer discrimination due to their physiognomy are expands.

The right to vote for the migrant population is considered the main need. It would allow the more significant political influence of the integration commissions in municipal councils and other democratic structures.

> *This commission has consultative characteristics but doesn't have the power to influence the elections, so it's weak. This is a challenge, the right to vote for migrants. Not only in the commissions but also in the city council where the decisions are made. They have to be at the political core so it can have an impact. (E.)*

2.2 Local best practices

Concerning the participation initiatives existing at the local level, some examples have been collected. From the rich testimonies of the people listened to in the focus groups, for their personal history and professional integration, it was possible to gather a broader opinion of criticism and future improvement lines.

    a)   EXISTING INITIATIVES, NEEDS and STRATEGIES

The participants reported two participation initiatives activated locally in the municipalities of Freiburg and Mannheim.

The first initiative activated in the municipality of Freiburg is informal. Every time elections are held at the municipal, regional and national level, migrant associations also organise elections for all those who do not have the right to vote.

> *We have an initiative called Freiburg 100%, which has been around for years. It is held every time there are elections at the municipal, regional and national levels, and they hold elections with all those who do not have the right to vote. In the end, they present the results to the town hall. This is to promote the idea that the municipal vote must be free for everyone who lives in this city. It is not an institution. It is an initiative that has taken the form of an organisation that is very effective. It is now a movement and has done so in other cities as well. (E.)*

The aim of this initiative is to promote the idea that voting should be free and a right guaranteed to all people living in the city.

Z., one of the participants in the focus groups, highlights how over the years, the number of people with a migratory background with institutional roles has increased.

> *I'm a government worker. The state started years ago to put people like me into that kind of work. This is something that has changed during the last few years. I think it's possible in any area. At the local, I don't see a lot of majors who have a migration background or city workers who have a migration. (Z.)*

Specifically, it is quoted the example of the cities of Mannheim. To ensure equal access and forms of racial discrimination, the local administration receives anonymous job applications.

> *In Mannheim make unanimous applications, so you don't see any name. This is a good practice at the local level. They try to put migrants organisations and people with migrations background, try to focus on that. (Z.)*

The people interviewed report that other active participation experiences at the local level are the dense support networks of volunteers. As the interviews with local authorities had also highlighted, formal and informal migrant organisations are involved in providing assistance to multiple target groups of the population. They

offer after-school services, translation, accompaniment to local services, assistance filling out procedures and understanding bureaucratic language.

Some of the networks of volunteers are created by local institutions, such as the Stuttgart Welcome Centre, which also makes volunteers available for access to the health system and prepares work placement paths.

> *You can contact them, and they will help you to get help in the health system. We have a welcome centre from the local government, and you can say I need a doctor who can speak a language that I understand. They help you by giving you an address where you can go. Or to get a work licence and all the other paper you need when you arrive in Germany and you don't know where to go. (S.)*

c) ACTORS.

By analysing the actors most involved in the integration processes, the participants greatly committed to volunteers. In addition, as was highlighted by interviews with local authorities, a large informal support network helps and facilitates people in accessing services.

> *I think community participation is the key because, according to my experience, the integration is mostly driven by volunteers. I could not recall a single incident of someone purring who is able to get into the role in international training through the local government. I am not saying this is not available, but I haven't experienced that. I think volunteers are mostly people who have time to help people. These are the key drivers of the integration here in Germany. (S.)*

At the local level, there is a strong network of volunteers comprised of migrant organisations, people in parishes and informal organisations. Volunteers are all those people within families who help and support other members in facilitating paperwork.

> *If you have a lot of engagement from the population, you can help involve migrants in the system and society. It can be really helpful if there are groups that can connect newcomers to the city and people who know the city already and are involved in society. That can help to introduce migrants to the institutions there. (E.)*

d) STRENGHTS, WEAKNESSES, and AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

The participants illustrate numerous critical issues in the local contexts of reference. The testimonies are varied and diversified.

The welcome system and residence permit with which foreigners can stay on German territory are analysed.

E., who works with asylum seekers, says many of them have a Duldung residence permit. This temporary permit is issued to persons forced to leave German territory but still have reasons, such as family ties, for which the expulsion is suspended. The temporary permit allows to work and enrol at university and can be renewed for up to 5 years.

This residence permit, even if it suspends the expulsion measures, has implications for the integration of the people who receive it.

> *The Duldung does not give freedom to the people who are here in Germany. It only allows them to go to work and get university credits. (E.)*

This topic is dealt with in the thematic focus group on health because the Duldung also impacts on access to health care services. It does not allow to receive a health card and a referral doctor.

> *For migrants, it's very a problem also in the health system with the medical ensure care, if the person has a Duldung, has no chance to get some health to ensure card which allowed person to got to find a doctor. The persons have to wait about 15 months. If a person has a disease, the person waits for the card. Without a treatment certificate, the person can't make an appointment with any doctor. (E.)*

Another weakness that characterises the German welcome system refers to the housing issue and the possibility of accessing private homes. In addition, asylum seekers and people with a temporary Duldung permit must apply for state certification to have residency.

> *When there is a residence requirement or restriction, it means, for example, that the persons get a registered permit to stay in Germany. But, the persons with asylum need permission from the state to change their residence. If they find something, they always have the problem of the residence because if they want change apartment, they have to make a special application to the government of residence office. This application takes a lot of time. So in the housing system, there are a lot of problems. (E.)*

A further weakness that emerged, is the local fragmentation of services in guaranteeing appropriate forms of social inclusion.

> *Here in my district, many of my country and migrants can get vocational training quickly. If you go to another district, it is not quite easy. There are people who come with me, especially in 2014; with no motivation, people have been talking that they will be deported but are still in the country. Unfortunately, we do not have the opportunity to get in vocational training so. Here you see that every German district has an exact empower that can be useful with a migrant. For instance, here, it is a bit easy for us for the application to subscribe, and it was explained to us what we need to do to integrate more people, especially at the moment. (S.)*

2.3 Added value of migrants' involvement

a)   MIGRANTS' TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS at national and local levels

In the added value of migrants, it is essential to describe and analyse the relationship between migrants and the institutions and their trust in addressing local services.

Participants have different views and are consistent with their own life experiences. In particular, those of the participants who work with people who have arrived in Germany through a process of requesting political asylum show high scepticism.

> *Especially even migrants who came through the asylum process have been told we have to deport them and if not given asylum, so people are very sceptical. If you don't have documents, it's difficult to continue. (S.)*

The historical analysis proposed by S. explains how the generations of older people with migratory past are workers in past years. The participation processes were less structured and implemented at the local level. The offices with the most contact with the migrant population were the Minor Protection Office, the job placement office and the office for foreigners.

These three offices had a hard line in the past. If one of these offices in the past was coming to you, you knew there was a problem. If any officer is coming now or you have to go to an office, you always think ok, I am telling too much, or if I tell that I need something, I will get some problems with my children or my stay, or residence permits. Everyone think two times before going to any office. (S.)

Another testimony highlights how past relationships have influenced the relationship between migrants and institutions. D. does not believe that people with migratory past do not trust the institutions, but rather an awareness that the officers who work at certain offices can be not inclusive towards people with migratory past.

When you talk to people about the German administration, they'll tell you it works well even if sometimes it is very rigid. So, we have trust in the institutions even if sometimes there is a violation of some rights. But compared to many other countries, maybe where people come from, they don't have to pay a fee before getting a document. So the trust is there, but the thing is how people are treated. You are getting what you want, but how you are treated as second class citizens and so on. (D.)

The relationship described between the migrant population and the institution affects the involvement in the participation processes and, more generally, in local political life and the identification of people with the local administration and consequently with the city.

So how can they come of having the idea to come to politics and influence something? [...] Where you ask for a residence permit is where migrants, in many cases, have bad experiences but at the same time where you have to go where you are a migrant. For many people it is the only place they know of the administration city, so it is where they get the image of the administration forms. This is where this sort of distortion and this distance between politics and people go to live their own life, what we call parallel society. D.

b) GENDER ISSUES

Gender issues affect the participation of the migrant population in decision-making processes. As the interviews with the German local authorities reported, the care of the family and children is often left to the women.

First of all, the question of language learning emerges because, when it comes to migrant women, they usually have to learn a foreign language.

> *If you live in Germany, you also have to learn the language, and there is a problem with learning the language for women so far. What is helping us is to have language courses with child care. This is a huge issue to address. (E.)*

S., who works as a social worker for migrant people with dementia, explains how due to the type of socialisation a person has had during their life, it impacts their access to local services.

> *Culture is creating the destiny of people, and how the socialisation of people is going on in the youth, in the elderly grow up in life they get old. They also bring different self-confidence, so for a man, it is easier to get access to anything he needs. For a woman, it is more complex because they are always second in a lot of cultures. (S.)*

The gender differences also concern, in particular, to inclusion in the labour market. Many interviewees tell of how the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted this aspect.

> *Germany is talking about 42 hours a week instead of 32 hours a week. So people could have a balance between family and work. If you want women inside, you have to change the work atmosphere. The scary word is I have children. I have two children. I work part-time, I am a volunteer and my husband 100/. When I get to work, I come for 6 hours and then go. I don't do the work they do. So I get less money, don't get the opportunity to high up, and work all the time. (Z.)*

Greater protection is needed in terms of representatives and access opportunities. The issue of gender issues is transversal to local participation because it is a phenomenon that affects all segments of the population.

> *In our community, they discuss a quota about migration in political parties, like the example of the women's movement, and they say it works. Now we have a lot of women in political positions, so if we do the same thing with migration, we will have more migrants in political parties. (D.)*

To allow greater participation of migrants, and in this specific cross-section of women, it is necessary to implement more subsistence policies that will enable migrant women to participate. Suppose the goal is to actively involve all groups of people with a migration background. In that case, they must be represented by those who pass and experience those same conditions for an equal representation and understanding of the phenomenon of female participation.

> *If we want to learn something from our women's movement, it will not be just this quota. It's just a small thing. All the system has to be reformed. The political party always says that migrants are not interested in the political issues in Germany, but it's not true. They say we always organise some meetings, and nobody comes, but what are your issues? Are you inviting them? Are you really addressing everyone and asking what is' belonging' or do you make the agenda and you make your interest? This is the problem. (D.)*

3. Recommendations/suggestions

In conclusion, these are some of the suggestions and recommendations that the interviews report.

Improving the participation of people with migration backgrounds is manifold, including extending and strengthening legal democratic rights to better living conditions.

The recommendations for the future proposed by the interviewees are varied and often concern strategies that can be activated in short / medium term for greater involvement of migrants in democratic processes.

> *We go directly to migrants and talk to them and in parallel, we try to end structural racism and tell them you have to talk and participate in the decision-making and changing the voting right. (Z.)*

It is supposed that the institutions directly address migrants who are less active in decisional processes. In that case, the solution proposed by Z. improves the relationship of trust in the population between people with a

migratory past and institutions. Direct dialogue for involvement in decision-making processes strengthens the trust and sense of belonging of the local community.

> *It's not enough to say we are for migrants. You have to talk to them to get their trust. We don't trust them; we don't believe they want to help us. I think they want to use us to get what they want. We want to be sure that they want us for the decisions. This is something that the parties and the government have to do. It's not the volunteer's work that can change the world. It's just one person. We have to do it from the state and down. (Z.)*

The issue of representation is repeatedly highlighted. People with a migratory past are needed both in politics and in services that cater to migrants.

> *I would also say that we cannot put all the work on the volunteer because the system has something missing. This missing part must be filled with people who do this job professionally. So more people with migrations background in the government, health care system, and consultive institutions. A lot of people with migrations background, like social workers like me, focus on children and teenagers to make a better future for them. Still, a lot of them are needed in the area with elderly people, like consulting, like to get the helps you need in any sector. So, more professionals with migration backgrounds in the system. (S.)*

As illustrated above, volunteers play a central role in the processes of participation of the migrant population because they are able to facilitate access to local services and connect people with a migratory past to the institutions.

The recommendation that emerges for the future is a greater financial investment to strengthen the activity of migrant and volunteer associations. An investment is needed to strengthen the coordination structures of local association networks.

> *Financial help it's necessary, and I was able to get the money to the volunteer.*

> *I think it is important to increase the coordination of migrant organisations, but you have to decide who coordinates that. A person has to learn everything; first it's not good enough (Z.)*

A strategy to strengthen migrant organisations is to create several umbrella associations that bring together various individual realities. This strategy would also allow involving all those people whose interest in political participation is not strong because they believe that it does not concern them at home because they are unable to vote.

> *One strategy is their coming together with umbrella organisations. This would give them more power so they can better interact with politics and so on. The umbrella organisations bring us again to equal rights. More can participate in local politics. If you look at the city council, there are more or fewer people who have a stable professional situation, but when you work alone, you don't have any solid associations, and so on, you won't have so much time. So all goes together, the equal opportunities, the social opportunities and the economic opportunities and again, the political opportunities. We have to consider them as interlink parts of something where you cannot have one without the other. There are some strategies that can take themself, but at the end of the day, equal participation and equal opportunities are what we have to keep in mind. (D.)*

In parallel strengthening volunteer networks and migrant associations, it is essential to give more recognition to local service operators.

> *You have somebody who loves it and does it just for an idea, but this is not just good enough. You have to increase the amount of money in integration. If we don't spend the money, at what point do we have an integration manager who would help people live and integrate well? But if you don't spend enough money on them, they will be gone. They come here to work for years and then come to another person who has to learn all over first. It's not good enough. (Z.)*

The interviewees agree that more excellent protection of social workers is needed. However, a greater economic investment can also guarantee greater stability of the contractual forms, particularly for an indefinite period.

The salary for the integration manager, who I am, but another point also because of this work contract should be unlimited because we need the safety of social workers coming and working with migrants more and more. (E.)

We have described one of the greatest needs to facilitate participation processes is an internal and external awareness-raising action to services. Z., identifies a change in the education system at the local and national levels as a solution in the short and long term. The narration of migrations and reference cultures must be told from the various points of view of the populations involved.

You have to increase in education, the history we teach because we are very European centric and the way you repeatedly think about it instead of putting in the history the different ways to see things. So, we can learn from our history and know why we live in a world like this. I guess this is something we have to be more in the student plan in the school, in the university. You have to teach from the beginning. This is something you should increase to say how the integration is. (Z.)

A less Eurocentric narrative of the migratory phenomenon can affect people's awareness and the construction of identities of individuals. Both migrants and those who do not have a migratory past.

A further suggestion concerns the methods of accessing services. If migrants find it difficult to contact the institutions, it is also due to the difficult understanding of the German language. It, therefore, becomes necessary to provide information on local services and interventions in multiple languages and to use a more informal language for more.

It is a good point to have more information in more languages, it should be more info in the people language and not only institution language. even something you can understand. (E.)

For better participation and inclusion of migrants, it is necessary to disseminate information on the functioning of the German democratic system and current news.

We get a newsletter every week about what is going on in the city, but it is in German. If it could be translated into other languages, it could be ideal. It takes a lot of work and time and money but in other languages people from all different countries could know what is going on. It still

wouldn't reach everybody because many newcomers need to learn to write and read their own language. But maybe a way to spread information in other languages to know what is happening would be a big help. (E.)

It's important to give more opportunities to explain our political society because many migrants don't have information about the political system and its structure. (E.)

Sitography

1. https://www.stadt-muenster.de/en/auslaenderamt/humanitarian-stays/duldung