

## **Integrative Mechanisms for Addressing Spatial Justice and Territorial Inequalities in Europe**

### **D5.3 Synthesis report on perceived and actual spatial and social inequalities and migration**

Version:	7
Authors:	Magdalena Ulceluse, Bettina Bock, Tialda Haartsen
Grant Agreement No.:	726950
Programme call:	H2020-SC6-REV-INEQUAL-2016-2017
Type of action:	RIA – Research & Innovation Action
Project Start Date:	01-01-2017
Duration:	60 months
Deliverable Lead Beneficiary:	RUG
Dissemination Level:	PU
Contact of responsible author:	<a href="mailto:m.m.ulceluse@rug.nl">m.m.ulceluse@rug.nl</a>

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement No 726950.

#### **Disclaimer:**

This document reflects only the author's view. The Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

Dissemination level: PU

- PU = Public
- CO = Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	3
1. Migrants – decisions to migrate and perceived vs. actual social and spatial inequalities .....	5
1.1 Migrants’ perceptions of social and spatial inequalities.....	7
2. Residents: perceived vs. actual social and spatial inequalities.....	10
2.1 Standard of living .....	10
2.2 Employment.....	13
2.3 Access to and quality of services .....	16
2.4 Environment.....	19
3. Migration, inequality and COVID-19.....	21
4. Discussion.....	23
References .....	25

# Introduction

Internal and international migration is perhaps one of the most potent symbols and outcomes of social and spatial inequalities, and much has been written about inequality being a driver of migration<sup>1</sup>. Yet, to what extent do migration flows confirm existing spatial and social inequalities between sending and receiving areas, and perceptions of such inequalities, and to what extent do they affect them, either positively or negatively? The aim of our report is to provide an answer to these questions.

We conduct our analysis by triangulating three sources of data obtained across three Work Packages (WP5, WP4 and WP2) within the IMAJINE project, covering six European Union (EU) countries (receiving countries Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom – Wales, and sending countries Poland and Romania). Specifically, we employ primary data collected through over 350 interviews with immigrants (internal, international and refugees) and residents on perceptions of social and spatial inequalities and reasons for migrating in all six countries (WP5, please see Table 1 for an overview of the case studies), the insights of which are detailed in our *D5.2 Synthesis report on migration, inequalities and justice*. We complement this source of data with the comprehensive cross-country survey conducted within Work Package 4, which includes the Netherlands (total sample size 2,310, of which 151 immigrants), Poland (2,815 total, 36 immigrants), Romania (2,125 total, 34 immigrants) and the United Kingdom (2,125 total, 154 immigrants) and covers topics ranging from perceptions of inequality, territorial cohesion and spatial justice, to reasons for migrating and perceptions of immigration. Lastly, we complement these two primary data sources on perceptions of migration and inequality with secondary data sources on actual spatial and social inequalities within the EU, collected within Work Package 2 (detailed in *D2.4 Report on Inequality Indices at Local Level*) and maps from ESPON's Atlas for the Territorial Agenda 2030 (ESPON 2020).

There are two groups that we analyse in this report: migrants and residents. We consider migrants to be individuals who have been born in a different country, and residents to be nationals who have been born in what we call the receiving country. We employ the term migrant broadly, to refer to EU migrants (e.g. German, Romanian, Polish), non-EU migrants (e.g. Ukrainian) and refugees (e.g. Syrian). We employ the term residents and not nationals, to maintain continuity with our previous work in *D5.2 Synthesis report on migration, inequalities and justice*. Furthermore, our analyses include migrants and residents both in the interviews and in the survey. That is, we juxtapose the perceptions of the interview migrants with those of the survey migrants, and the perceptions of the interview residents with those of the survey residents. We are fully aware that the two types of data differ in sample and scope, and have been collected in different time periods, using different methodologies. Nevertheless, we find that the qualitative information obtained from interviews provides further insight and understanding to the bare figures revealed by the survey results.

---

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Czaika 2013; Czaika and de Haas 2012; Hyll and Schneider 2014; Liebig and Sousa-Poza 2004; Quinn 2006; Stark 2006; Stark, Micevska, and Mycielski 2009; Stark, Byra, and Kosiorowski 2020.

Our report is structured as follows. Section 1 presents an overview of the determinants of migration decisions revealed by the case studies in WP5 and survey in WP4, and of migrants' perceptions of inequality in sending and receiving countries. Section 2 presents the residents' perceptions of inequalities at the regional and national level in sending and receiving countries, contrasting them with and socio-economic indicators, where available. Section 3 discusses the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on patterns of migration and inequality, using examples of past developments and attempting to predict future ones. Section 4 discusses our insights and their implications for theory and policymaking.

Table 1. Case study locations and groups interviewed

<b>Main Location</b>	<b>NUTS 2 Region</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Groups interviewed</b>
Athens	Attica	Greece	Romanian immigrants, Syrian refugees
Iliia and Achaia	Western Greece	Greece	Residents, internal migrants, Romanian immigrants, Syrian refugees
County Galway	Northern and Western	Ireland	Residents and Polish immigrants
Steenbergen	North Brabant	Netherlands	Residents and Romanian immigrants
Noordoostpolder	Flevoland	Netherlands	Residents and Polish immigrants
Several villages	Friesland	Netherlands	Internal migrants
Nysa	Opolskie Voivodeship	Poland	Residents
Lukow	Lubelskie Voivodeship	Poland	Residents
Piaseczno	Masovian Voivodeship	Poland	Residents, internal migrants and Ukrainian immigrants
Suceava	North-East	Romania	Residents
Ceredigion	Wales	United Kingdom	Residents, internal migrants and German immigrants
Swansea	Wales	United Kingdom	Residents, internal migrants and Romanian immigrants

Table 2. Sources of data

<b>Type of data</b>	<b>Sample group</b>	<b>Source</b>
<b>Interviews</b>	<i>Migrants (internal, international, refugees), residents and stakeholders</i>	<i>WP5, D5.2 Synthesis report on migration, inequalities and justice</i>
<b>Survey</b>	<i>Migrants and residents</i>	<i>WP4 Survey</i>
<b>Economic Indicators at LAU level</b>		<i>D2.4 Report on Inequality Indices at Local Level</i>
<b>Economic Indicators at NUTS2 level</b>		<i>ESPON's Atlas for the Territorial Agenda 2030</i>
<b>EUROSTAT</b>		<i>Job vacancy rate</i>

# 1. Migrants – decisions to migrate and perceived vs. actual social and spatial inequalities

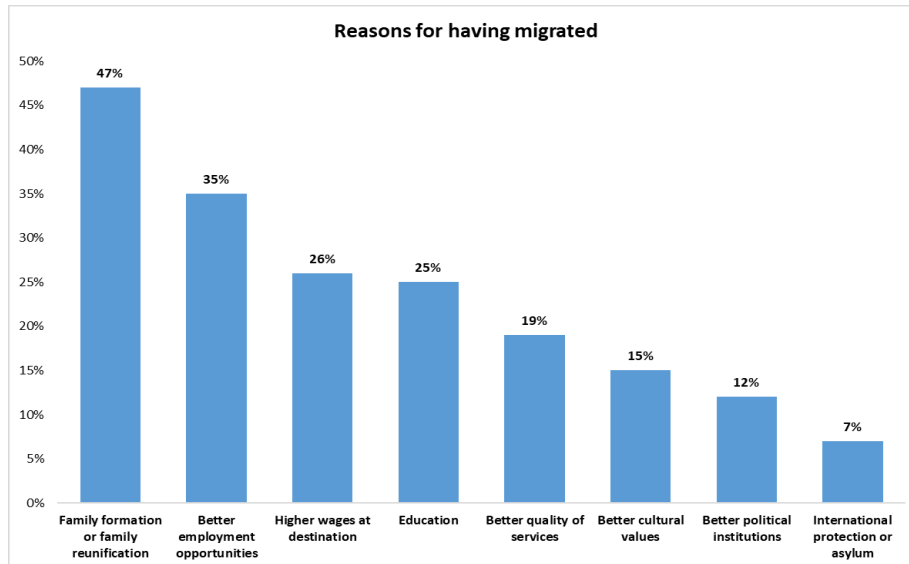
*In this section, we compare the main reasons for migration revealed by the WP5 interviews and the WP4 survey. Additionally, we present migrants' perceptions of spatial and social inequalities at destination, again comparing insights from WP5 with results from WP4. We analyse these perceptions along four dimensions of inequality, i.e. standard of living, employment opportunities, access to and quality of services and the environment.*

In D5.2 *Synthesis report on migration, inequalities and justice*, our interviews with international and internal migrants and refugees revealed that, indeed, **the decision to migrate is motivated by perceived spatial inequalities between sending and receiving areas**, and that importantly, these differences are of both **material and non-material nature**. Materially, migrants perceive receiving areas to offer higher wages, a higher standard of living, better employment opportunities, more affordable housing or higher quality services than the sending areas. Non-materially, migrants move because of aspirations for a different culture or political system than in their sending areas, but also for the peace, quiet and natural surroundings of some of the receiving areas. Migrants' decision to migrate may include both material and non-material reasons simultaneously. The same combination of material and non-material migration determinants also applies to the Syrian asylum seekers and refugee respondents in our case studies. Many left their origin areas in search of a safe place as they perceived their lives to be in danger, others decided to leave Syria because they did not want to participate in the rapidly evolving political, ethnic and religious strife, while others still emigrated in search of a better quality of life elsewhere.

Importantly, we find significant variation in the reasons for migrating of different migrant groups. **Higher educated individuals are more likely to migrate because of perceived lifestyle differences than lower skilled migrants**, who are more inclined to migrate because of perceived economic differences, in order to accumulate resources and improve their lifestyle at home. Moreover, the former is associated with longer-term migration, while the latter with short-term, seasonal migration episodes. **Women are more likely than men to migrate for family reasons**, including family reunification and family formation. Internal migrants are likelier to move because of perceived differences in the quality of life, including services and the natural environment as well as culture between sending and receiving areas, than international migrants. Lastly, we observe that **motivations for migration and settlement evolve over time**, reflecting the importance of considering the various stages of the migration process and the life course of the individuals migrating. While those who decide to migrate do so for material or non-material reasons (or a mix thereof), those who decide to settle do so largely because of non-material motivations, such as the joy derived from living in a particular natural or cultural environment at destination, and broader processes of loosening attachment to the origin area, family formation and place attachment and rootedness at destination.

The results of the WP4 survey largely confirm the reasons for migrating revealed through interviews (fig. 1). Family migration (either for family formation or reunification) looms large within the migrant sample, followed by material motivations, such as better employment opportunities or higher wages. Non-material motivations are less prominent, yet still relevant for 12-19% of the sample. Moreover, since our respondents could select all the options that applied to them, it is very likely that many migrated for a combination of both material and non-material factors.

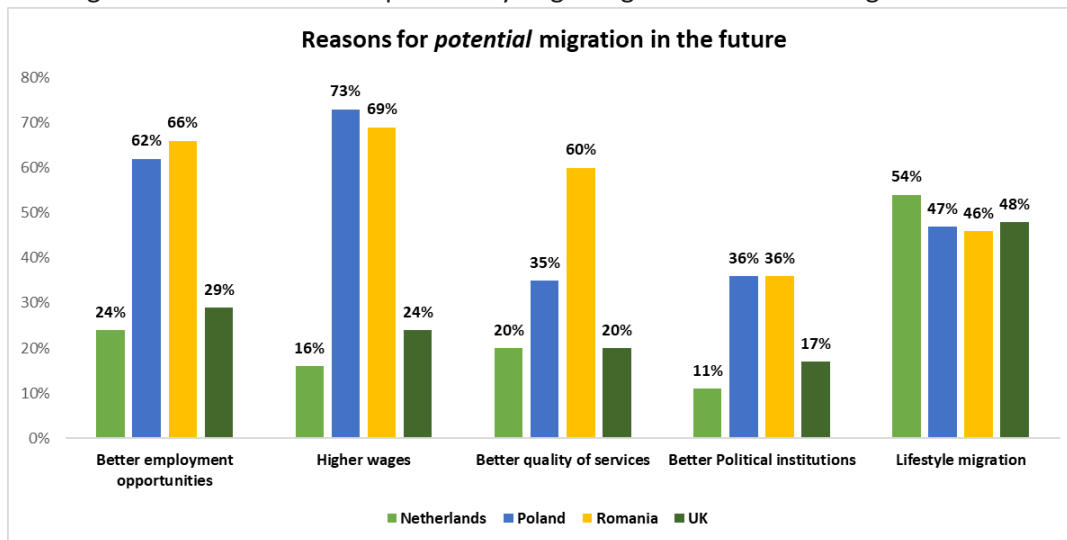
Figure 1. Migrants' reasons for migrating (N=375)



Source: Own calculations based on the WP4 Survey

Our survey also asked *residents* if they would consider migrating in the future. The results revealed that about 19% of the residents in the Netherlands, 18% in the UK, 29% in Poland and 28% in Romania, have thought of doing so in the future. Their main reasons for *potential* migration revealed significant differences across the four countries (fig. 2). While almost three quarters of the Romanian and Polish residents in our survey would migrate because of higher wages, less than a quarter in the UK and the Netherlands would migrate for this reason. Better employment opportunities would constitute a reason for migrating for two thirds of the Romanian and Polish residents in the survey, but for less than a third for the UK and Dutch residents. On the other hand, the most important reason for migrating among the Dutch and UK residents is lifestyle migration, including experiencing a better climate and a different way of living. These results reinforce the interview findings in D5.2, which indicate that **emigration from Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC) is largely motivated by economic (material) disparities, while emigration from Western European countries is largely motivated by non-economic (non-material) differences**. The fact that migrants from Central and Eastern European countries feel the need to migrate to access material welfare, whereas Western European migrants have the liberty to search for a different lifestyle, forcefully **reflects spatial inequality in material welfare across EU countries**.

Figure 2. Main reasons for potentially migrating in the future among residents



Source: Own calculations based on the WP4 Survey

Our results, thus, strongly suggest that the decision to migrate is motivated by perceived social and spatial (material and non-material) inequalities between sending and receiving countries, and that migration patterns reflect such perceived inequalities. In the next subsection, we explore whether migrants' perceptions of inequalities, both material and non-material, are confirmed at destination.

## 1.1 Migrants' perceptions of social and spatial inequalities

Most migrants interviewed in our case studies considered that migration has bettered their standard of living in a material way, tending to evaluate the standard of living in the sending areas to be lower than the one in the receiving areas. An exception to this generalization were the German migrants, many of whom perceived the standard of living to be higher in Germany than in Wales.

Positive or negative evaluations of the quality and availability of services in the receiving vs. sending area depended to a large degree on the socio-economic context of these areas. For instance, Romanian migrants interviewed in Wales or the Netherlands, almost universally evaluated the quality of services in the receiving areas to be higher than in Romania. On the other hand, while Polish respondents in the Netherlands assessed the quality of services to be higher than in Poland, if not always easily accessible, Polish respondents in Ireland appraised the quality of services in Poland to have dramatically improved in recent years, while remaining stagnant in Ireland. Similarly, many German respondents assessed Wales as having a lower quality of services, including infrastructure, public cleaning, childcare, healthcare, among others, than in their origin areas in Germany. The refugees living in camps assessed their access to services to be limited, due to the isolated location of the camps and the high costs of travelling to larger cities.

The survey results substantiate these insights on the perceived quality of services at destination. Figures 4-8 present the share of migrant respondents who perceive the quality of a particular service to be bad, average or good. Generally, many more migrants consider the quality of services such as healthcare, public transport, cultural facilities or education to be good in the UK or the Netherlands, than in Poland or Romania. The latter is perceived rather poorly in all but one category, that of internet services, the quality of which seems to be appreciated by the migrants living in the country.

Fig 4. Perceptions of the quality of education, %

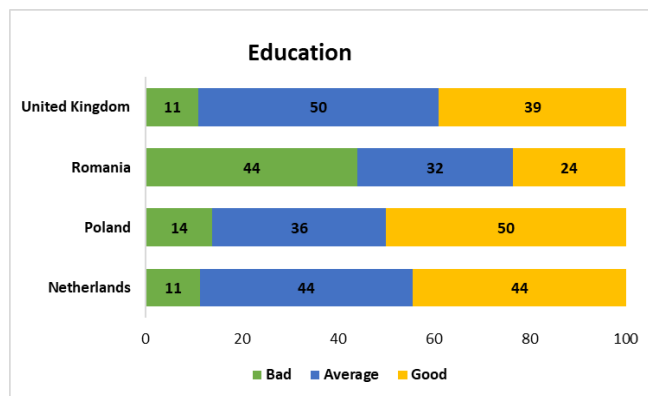


Fig 5. Perceptions of the quality of healthcare, %

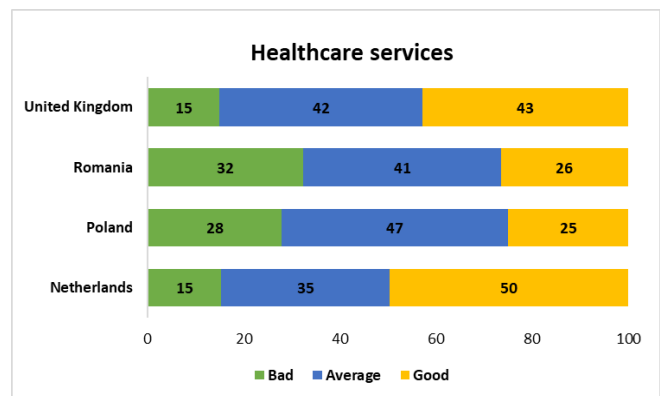


Fig 6. Perceptions of the quality of public transport, %

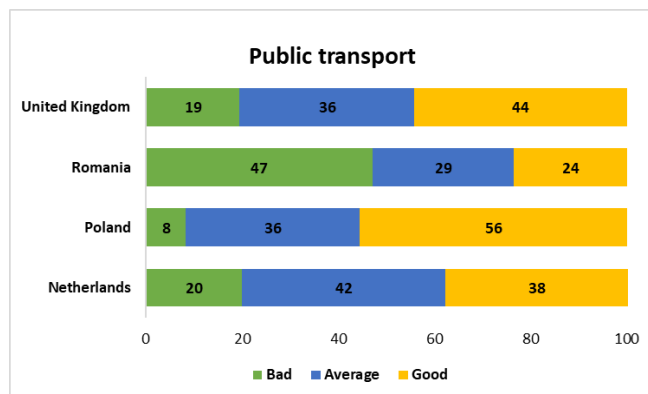


Fig 7. Perceptions of the quality of cultural facilities, %

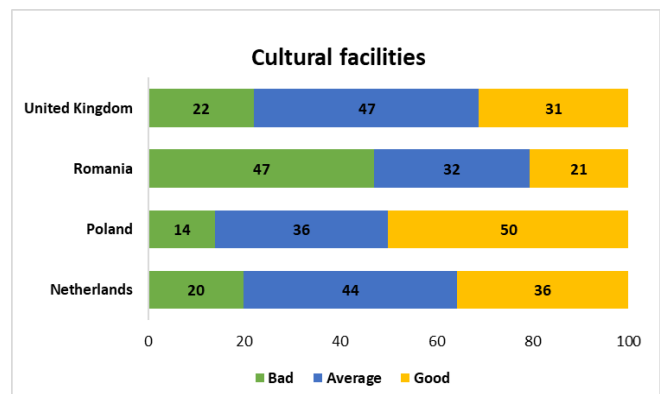


Fig 8. Perceptions of the quality of internet services, %

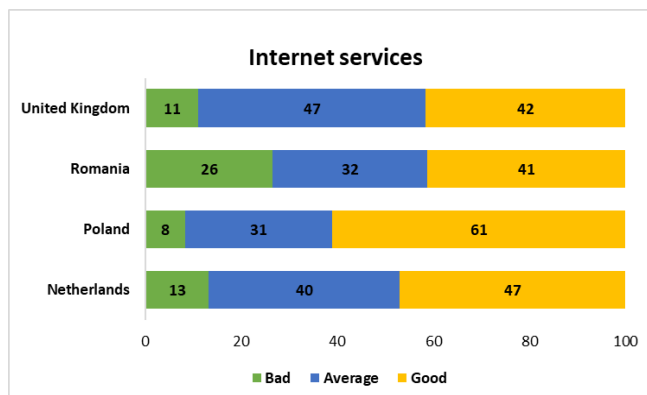
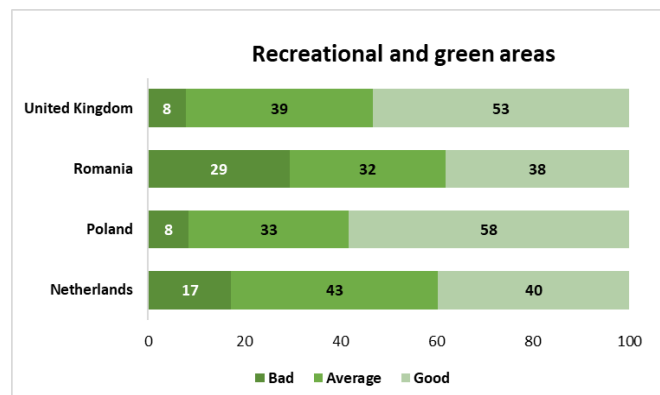


Fig 9. Perceptions of the availability of green areas, %



Source: Own calculations based on the WP4 Survey

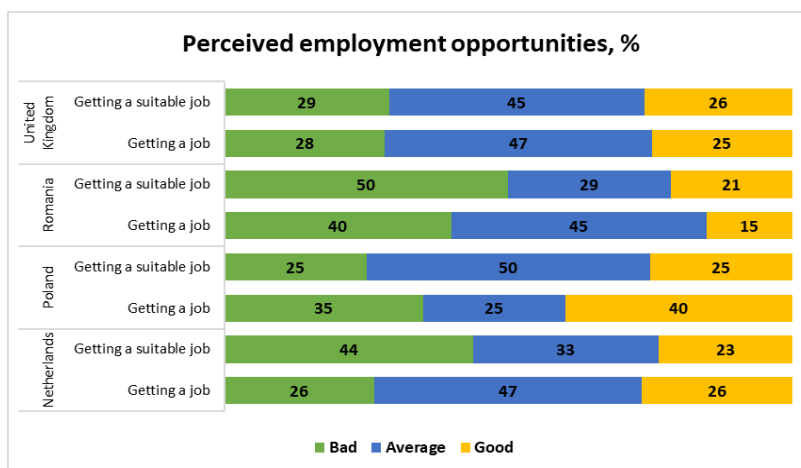
Sample size: NL=151; PL=36; 30=34, UK=154



The interviews also revealed variation in perceptions of the green areas and the surrounding environment across all migrant groups. For instance, while Polish migrants in the Netherlands praised the clean streets and parks, the beautiful landscape and the quietness and low pollution of the villages in which they reside as opposed to their origin areas, Polish migrants in Ireland felt that Poland has far surpassed Ireland when it came to designated parks and recreational areas. On the other hand, Romanian migrants positively evaluated the surrounding environment in all analysed countries, i.e. the Netherlands, Greece and Wales, in opposition to the more polluted Romania. The Syrian refugees appreciated the landscape, the geomorphology, the environmental setting, peoples' attitudes and the culture in Greece, which reminded them of Syria. The survey results corroborate some of these insights (fig. 9). Only 38% of the migrants surveyed in Romania believe the availability and quality of recreational green areas in the country is good, confirming the less positive perceptions of the country from the interviews. Surprisingly, the Netherlands did not fare much better in the surveys, despite the positive perceptions revealed by the interviews. Rather, the green areas in Poland and the UK are appreciated by most surveyed migrants.

Lastly, the interviews revealed variation in migrants' perceptions of employment opportunities in each country analysed. For instance, Romanian and Polish respondents in the Netherlands perceived there to be plenty of job opportunities in their areas, particularly available if one speaks English or Dutch. German migrants in Wales, on the other hand, noted the lack of employment opportunities in the area, with many jobs becoming increasingly short-term or casualised. Polish migrants in Ireland, also perceived the country and the region of Galway to offer plenty of employment opportunities, however, they noted that for many of these jobs they were overqualified. The survey results partially confirm these insights. Figure 10 presents the share of migrants who perceived (suitable) employment opportunities to be bad, average or good in their area. Generally, getting a suitable job was perceived to be more difficult than merely obtaining a job in most countries, with the exception of Poland. The worst possibilities for obtaining a job were perceived to be in Romania, followed by Poland, while the worst possibilities for finding a *suitable* job were perceived to be in Romania and the Netherlands. The results in Poland were rather polarized, as the country also presents the highest share of migrants finding it easy to get a job (40%).

Figure 10. Perceived employment opportunities, migrants



Source: Own calculations based on the WP4 Survey

## 2. Residents: perceived vs. actual social and spatial inequalities

*In this section, we compare the residents' perceptions of inequalities in sending and receiving countries revealed through interview and survey questions and actual inequalities reflected by socio-economic indicators. The section builds on insights and data collected in WP2 (D2.4 Report on Inequality Indices at Local Level), WP4<sup>2</sup>, WP5 (D5.2 Synthesis report on migration, inequalities and justice) and the Atlas for the Territorial Agenda 2030 (ESPON 2020). We focus on several dimensions of inequality, namely standard of living, employment opportunities, access to and quality of services, and the environment, as important (and quantifiable) dimensions of a good quality of life (please see detailed discussion on how the concepts of quality of life, liveability and wellbeing are the building blocks of the theoretical framework underpinning the WP5 study in D5.2 Synthesis report on Migration, Inequality and Justice).*

### 2.1 Standard of living

The concept of standard of living is intended to allow for the comparison of the economic well-being of households of different sizes and composition, its construction being based on the disposable income of households (Ponthieux and Meurs 2015). Our case studies revealed different levels of satisfaction with the standard of living across all locations, highlighting both between and within country differences.

In the Netherlands, residents in the **migrant receiving** municipalities of Steenbergen (in North-Brabant) and Noordoostpolder (in Flevoland) were generally satisfied with their standard of living. In Greece, on the other hand, residents in the receiving areas of Ilia and Achaia (in Western Greece), perceived their standard of living to have severely deteriorated over the past 10 years. Many respondents attributed this decline to the 2009/2010 economic crisis which greatly affected Greece and led to the deterioration of local living standards. A similar perception was encountered in the immigrant receiving county of Galway (in the West of Ireland) where residents perceived a decline in their standard of living due to the austerity measures implemented in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis. Residents in the immigrant receiving areas of Ceredigion and Swansea in Wales, typically understood their standard of living to be comparatively good in the region, noting that although their incomes were small, they were able to pay their bills and get by. Their attitude reflected a sense of modest living and affordability, although many noted signs of poverty and effects of austerity measures in the community.

Residents in the **migrant sending** area of Suceava (North-East Romania), on the other hand, perceived their standard of living to have increased as result of a mix of emigration effects and local economic investments. For instance, residents would refer to the beneficial effect of remittances, which increased their purchasing power, and led to an increase in the number of grocery shops and the

---

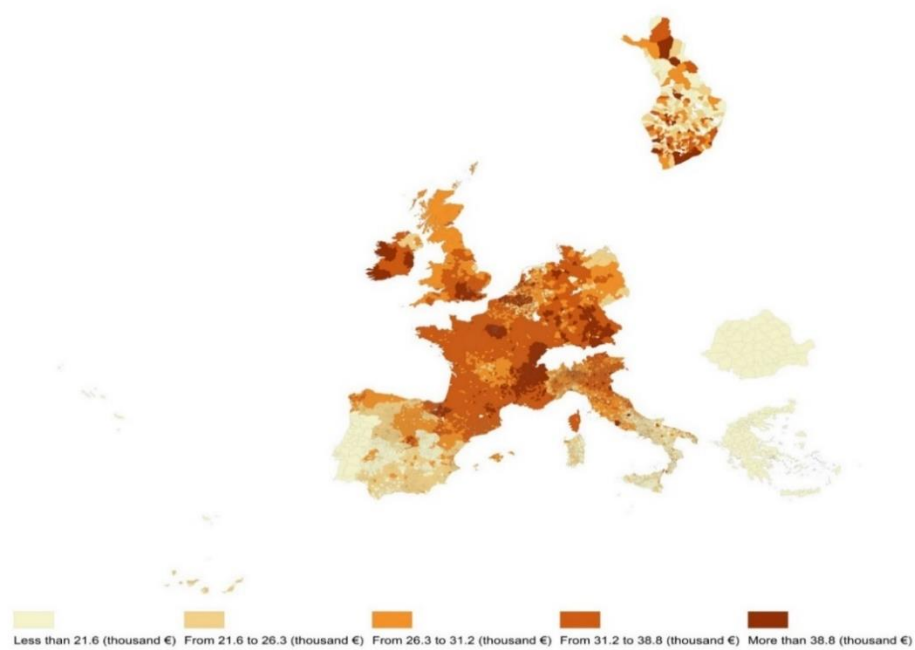
<sup>2</sup> The survey asked questions scaled from 0-10. For the purposes of making the results more straightforward to interpret, we combined the scale as follows: 0-3= very poor; 4-7= average; 8-10 = very good.

expansion of the existing ones. The sales taxes from goods, income taxes from the staff and duties on the business go into the local budget, funding new infrastructure projects and investments that better the standard of living of the community. Interestingly, residents here also perceived their standard of living and quality of life to be generally higher than in neighbouring villages and the region more broadly, comparing themselves to the richer areas of the country.

Lastly, residents in the three regions of Poland assessed their standard of living differently. In the **sending area** of Lukow (Lubelskie Voivodeship), residents perceived their standard of living to not have changed much, whereas in the migrant sending area of Nysa (Opolskie Voivodeship), residents considered it deteriorated as a result of the emigration of professionals and the subsequent lack of services in Nysa. In the **receiving area** of Piaseczno (Masovian Voivodeship), its proximity to Warsaw has resulted in an influx of (mostly) Ukrainian immigrants, which is perceived to have affected the residents' standard of living. While some pointed to positive effects such as economic development, others highlighted negative changes in the safety of the area or the lowering of the wages.

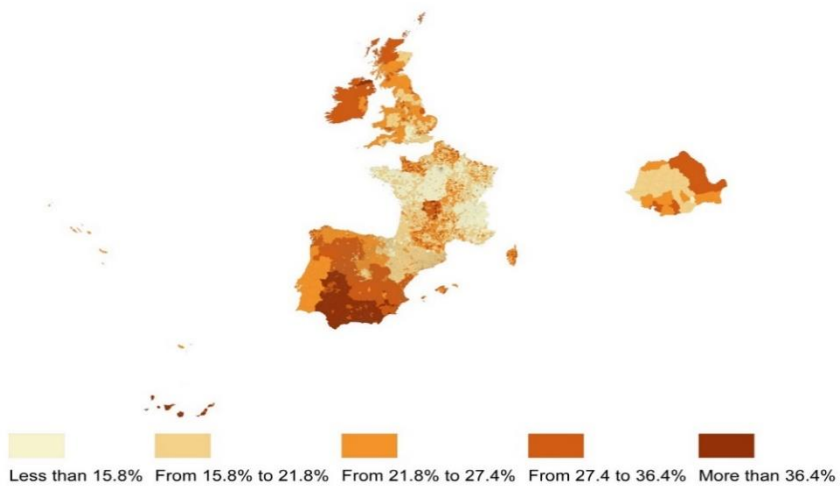
There are interesting differences between the standard of living as perceived by residents and the quantitative economic indicators. Figures 11 and 12 provide information on actual average household income at the local level and population at risk of poverty and exclusion for the year 2011 with information based on data collected in *D2.4 Report on Inequality Indices at Local Level*; Figure 13 presents the average level of GDP per capita at the NUTS 2 level for the year 2016. All three figures illustrate the relatively lower levels of income for Ceredigion and Swansea in Wales and the North-East region in Romania, which do not match the perceptions of our respondents – that of self-contentment for Welsh residents and self-satisfaction for the Romanian residents. All three regions consistently present some of the lowest incomes both in their own countries and across the EU. On the other hand, the perceptions of the loss of standard of living for residents in West Greece and West Ireland is confirmed by the income indicators presented in figures 11 and 13. Lastly, in the Netherlands, although residents in both North Brabant and Flevoland are satisfied with the standard of living – and the economic indicators point to regional economic levels higher than the EU average – figures 11-13 reveal significant differences between the two regions, with North Brabant generally scoring higher than Flevoland.

Figure 11: Average household income in Europe at local level, 2011



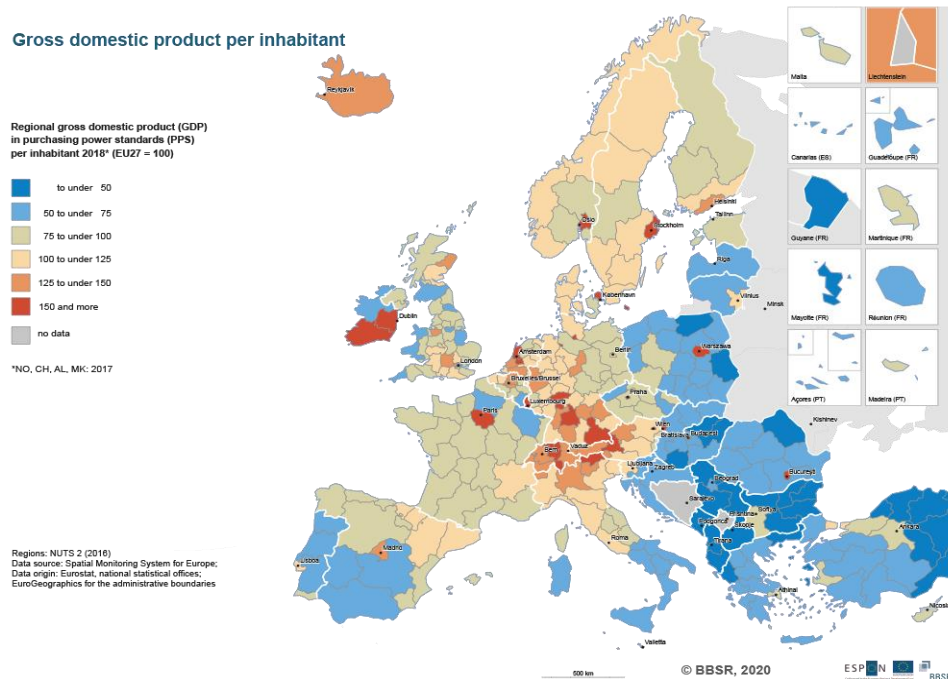
Source: *D2.4 Report on Inequality Indices at Local Level*

Figure 12: Population at risk-of-poverty and exclusion in Europe at local level, 2011



Source: *D2.4 Report on Inequality Indices at Local Level*

Figure 13. GDP per capita, NUTS 2 level, 2016



Source: (ESPON 2020)

## 2.2 Employment

In this subsection, we consider aspects relating to obtaining a (suitable) job, the quality of employment more generally and the employment situation in each country.

Our interviews as part of the case studies revealed significant variation in terms of the perceived opportunities for employment across the countries and regions analysed. In the **sending region** of North-East Romania, for instance, some interviewed residents were of the opinion that the number of jobs available had increased considerably due to new business investments, but also due to the significant emigration from the village. Moreover, the labour shortage in certain sectors, such as construction, a booming sector due to intense building by migrants and returnees, had led to increased salaries in their view. Perceptions about employment opportunities within the village, however, differed between skill levels. Most of the jobs created were in lower-skilled occupations, such as construction or services, with few jobs created for higher skilled individuals, who perceived the labour market situation to not have changed significantly. Emigration has led to a shortage of labour in certain sectors in the net **sending regions** of Nysa and Lukow in Poland too, with some interviewed residents perceiving more employment opportunities in recent times. Others attribute the increase in labour demand to local economic investments and new business creation. Some other respondents referred to a decrease in general

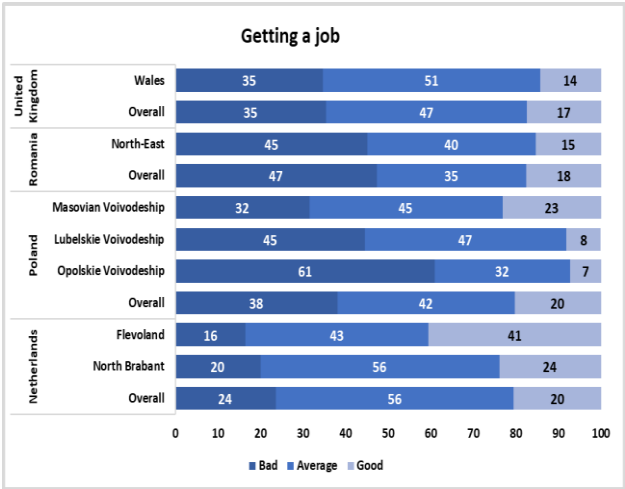
employment prospects over the past three decades, during which big industries employing large numbers of people had been replaced by small businesses hiring only a dozen or so of people. In the net migrant **receiving area** of Piaseczno, some residents experienced immigrants as competitors for jobs, given their flexibility and acceptance of lower wages. The regional differences forcefully reflect the Poland's dual status as an emigration and immigration country (Komornicki, Czapiewski, and Szejgiec-Kolenda forthcoming).

In the **receiving region** of West Greece, the common experience among our interviewees was that the economic recession decreased employment opportunities and led to rising unemployment, with significant downward pressure on salaries. Similarly, residents in the immigrant-**receiving** Ceredigion and Swansea in Wales described employment in their areas in terms of a lack of opportunities and of difficulties of finding a job, echoing the perceptions of the German immigrants in Section 1.1. In the Netherlands, on the other hand, interviewed residents in the more affluent North Brabant generally perceived their location to offer good opportunities for employment, while some residents in Flevoland considered immigrants as competitors for certain jobs. Specifically, sectors such as agriculture and construction were perceived to be more difficult to accede now, because of the availability of immigrant labour. However, there seemed to be a clear distinction between low- and high-skilled jobs, with higher-skilled individuals experiencing no competition by the (low-skilled) wave of immigration.

These perceptions were partially confirmed by the survey results. Figure 14 presents the share of residents who perceive employment opportunities in the area and the country to be bad, average or good, while Figure 15 presents the share of residents who refer to *suitable* employment opportunities in the area and the country as bad, average or good opportunities. As in Section 1.1, in this case too, obtaining *suitable* employment is perceived to be more difficult than obtaining merely a job. Moreover, the graphs reveal significant variation both between and within countries. For instance, almost half of the surveyed residents in Romania perceive employment opportunities to be bad, compared to only a quarter in the Netherlands (similar figures to those revealed by the migrant survey in Figure 10). However, within the Netherlands, only 16% of the residents in Flevoland consider the possibility of getting a job in the region to be bad. Similarly, while at the country level, 38% of the Polish residents surveyed evaluate employment prospects to be bad, over a half (61%) do so in the Opolskie Voivodship, pointing to **significant perceived spatial and social inequalities both between and within countries**.

These perceptions are largely supported by economic indicators. Figure 16, which presents the unemployment rate at the local level, pictures a higher unemployment rates and thus less jobs available in Greece and county Galway in Ireland. Figures 17 and 18, which present the job vacancy rate at the country and regional level, respectively, also points to less jobs available in Greece, Poland and Romania compared to the Netherlands or the UK. Figure 18 suggests significant variation in job availability within the country, with the North East region faring significantly worse than the much economically dynamic Western regions. **These indicators confirm the perceived social and spatial inequalities in terms of employment opportunities both between and within the countries analysed.**

Figure 14. Perceptions of employment opportunities, residents



Source: Own calculations based on the WP4 Survey

Figure 15. Perceptions of suitable employment opportunities, residents

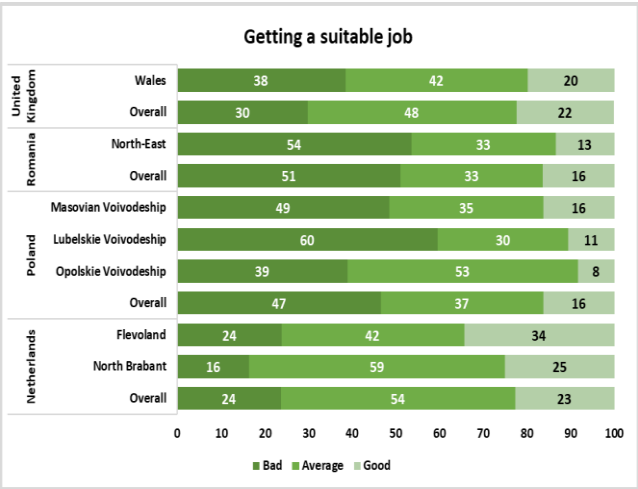
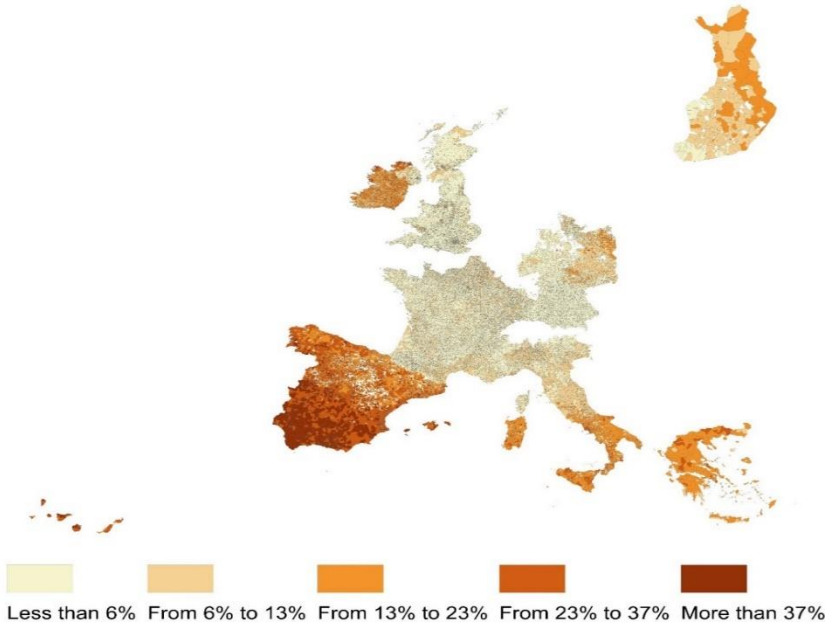


Figure 16. European unemployment rates at local level (LAU2), 2011



Source: D2.4 Report on Inequality Indices at Local Level

Figure 17. Job Vacancy rate, 2020-Q3

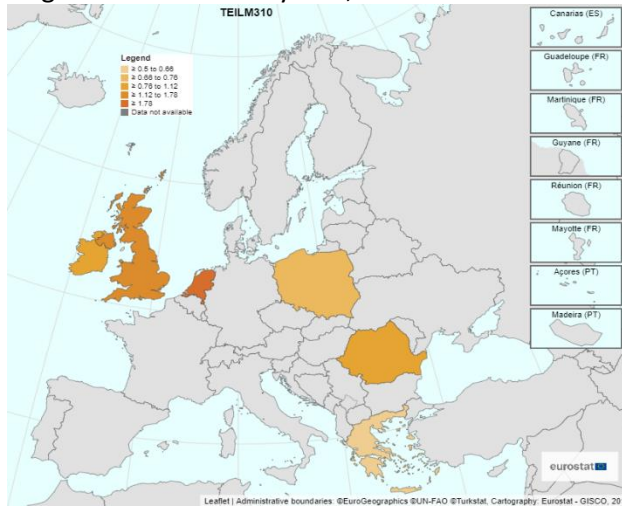
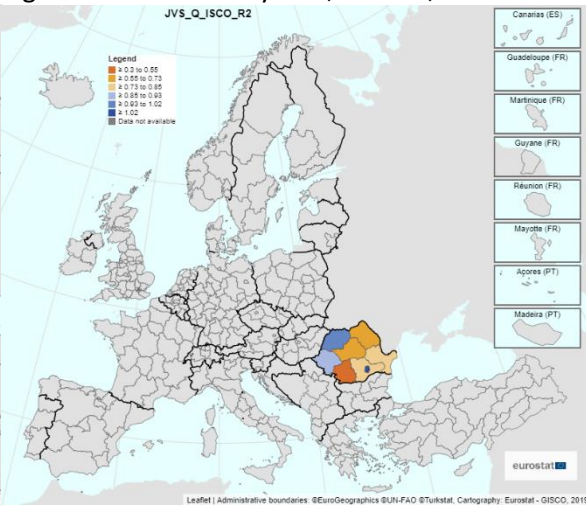


Figure 18. Job Vacancy rate, NUTS 2, 2020-Q3



Source: (Eurostat 2021)

## 2.3 Access to and quality of services

Perceptions of the quality and the degree of access to services varied across the countries and regions analysed in our case studies. In the migrant-receiving county Galway in West Ireland, for instance, interview respondents were of the opinion that considerable change is evident in accessing services, on both national and local level. From a positive perspective, there was a considerable increase in the level of retail options, with a multitude of shops, products, restaurants and food areas to choose from. Within a rural context, however, many felt that the provision of such services as transport and health were poor in comparison to what is available in the larger cities, blaming these developments on the lasting impacts of the recession. **Rural-urban inequalities** were also perceived in the migrant-receiving Wales. Discussing healthcare services specifically, Welsh residents reported that they have adequate access to healthcare, however, some noted that it was more difficult to access services locally in rural areas, especially for specialist treatment. More generally, residents perceived a decline in the provision of services in the region, which they attribute to the austerity measures implemented by the government.

In the migrant-receiving areas in the Netherlands, we observed **regional differences** concerning perceptions on access to services. While in Steenbergen in North Brabant, most residents were happy with the availability and quality of services, in Noordoostpolder in Flevoland, some respondents believed the area to have become worse off, pointing out that they have to go to nearby towns or villages for basic services like grocery shopping or schools. Interviewed residents in the migrant sending Nysa (Opolskie Voivodeship) and Lukow (Lubelskie Voivodeship) in Poland, also perceived a decline in the provision of services, which they associated with the significant emigration from the country, bemoaning the departure of (medical) professionals and people offering specialized services (e.g. building roofs). On the



other hand, in the migrant sending Suceava county, in the North-East region of Romania, residents attributed emigration and local investment to the modernization and economic development of the village, which increased their satisfaction with the quality and accessibility of services in the area. They considered the village to be better off in terms of services compared to neighbouring villages, and to have reached a level similar to that of the richer Western part of Romania.

These perceptions were largely substantiated by the survey responses. Figure 19-23 present the share of residents in each country, who believe the availability and quality of a particular service to be good, average or bad in their region. The responses, as in Section 1.1., point to significant between and within country differences. For instance, while almost half (48%) of the residents in the survey believe the quality of healthcare services to be good in the Netherlands, only 19% of Romanians' residents do so. In fact, the Netherlands ranks best among all countries in all but one dimension – internet services – which seem to be appreciated by two thirds of the Romanian residents in the survey. At the regional level, generally, residents in Flevoland seem to perceive more positively the quality and availability of services than residents in North Brabant, especially when it concerns education, cultural facilities, internet services, and especially public transport. No clear pattern can be observed for the three regions in Poland.

In order to compare the perceptions of services collected in the interviews and survey responses, we employ the Good Life Enablers Index (ESPON 2020) (Figure 24), which aggregates indicators from the following spheres: housing and basic utilities, health, education, transport, digital connectivity, work, consumption, public spaces, cultural assets, green infrastructure and protected areas. The indicator confirms the perceptions of the Romanian, Greek and (western) Irish respondents, all of which score fairly low values, below the European average, and lower than the Netherlands.

Fig. 19. Perceptions of quality of healthcare

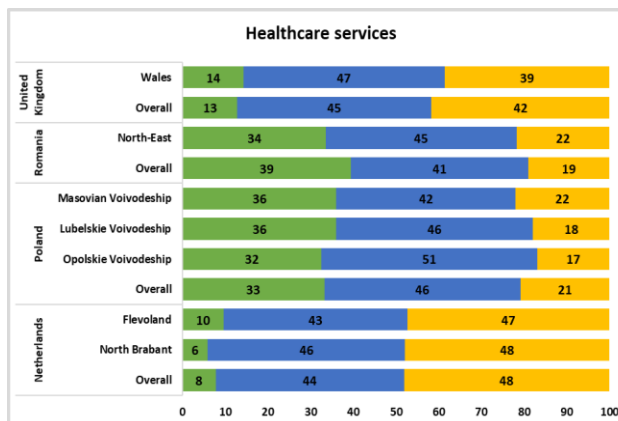


Fig. 20. Perceptions of quality of education

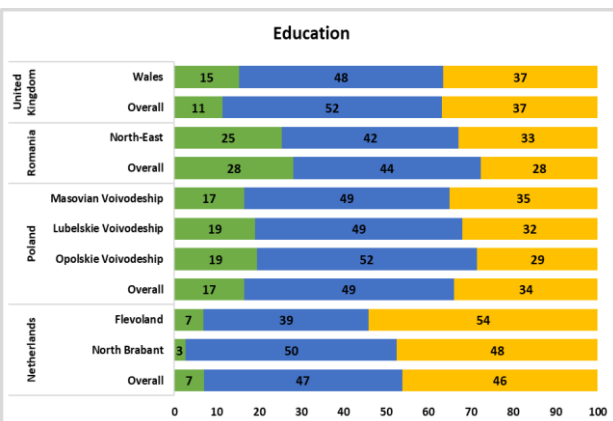


Fig. 21. Perceptions of quality of cultural facilities

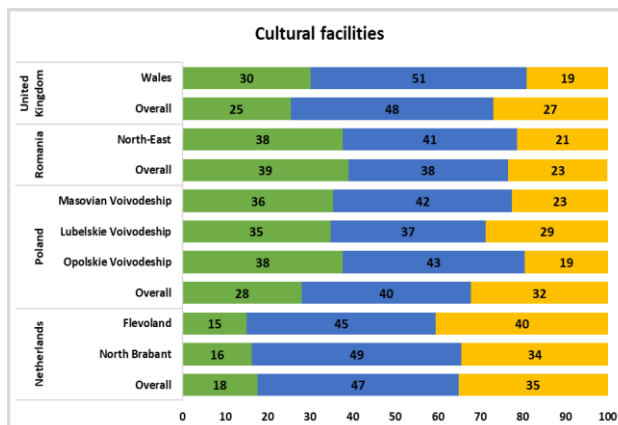


Fig. 22. Perceptions of quality of internet services

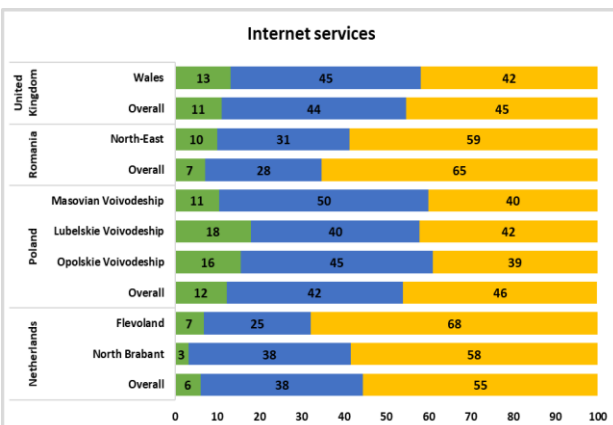
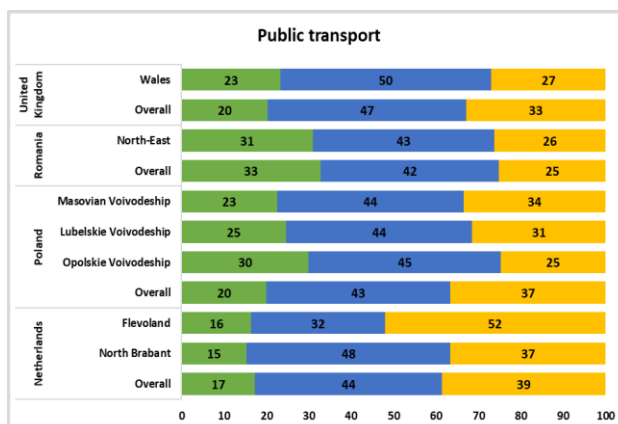


Fig. 23. Perceptions of quality of public transport



Sample size:

NL = 2310; PL = 2815; RO = 2125; UK = 2461

Opolskie Voivodship = 77

Lubelskie Voivodship = 178

Masovian Voivodship = 200

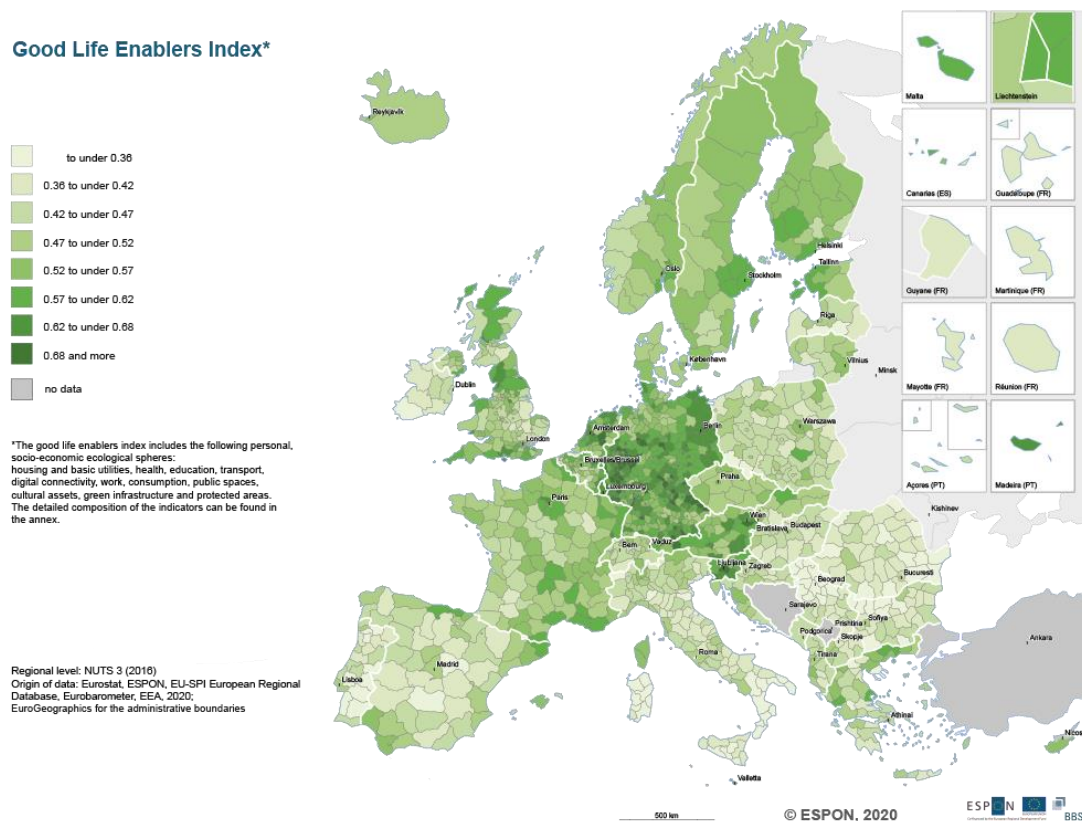
North Brabant = 221

Flevoland = 146

Wales = 189

Source: Own calculations based on the WP4 Survey

Figure 24. Territorial Quality of Life, NUTS 3, 2016



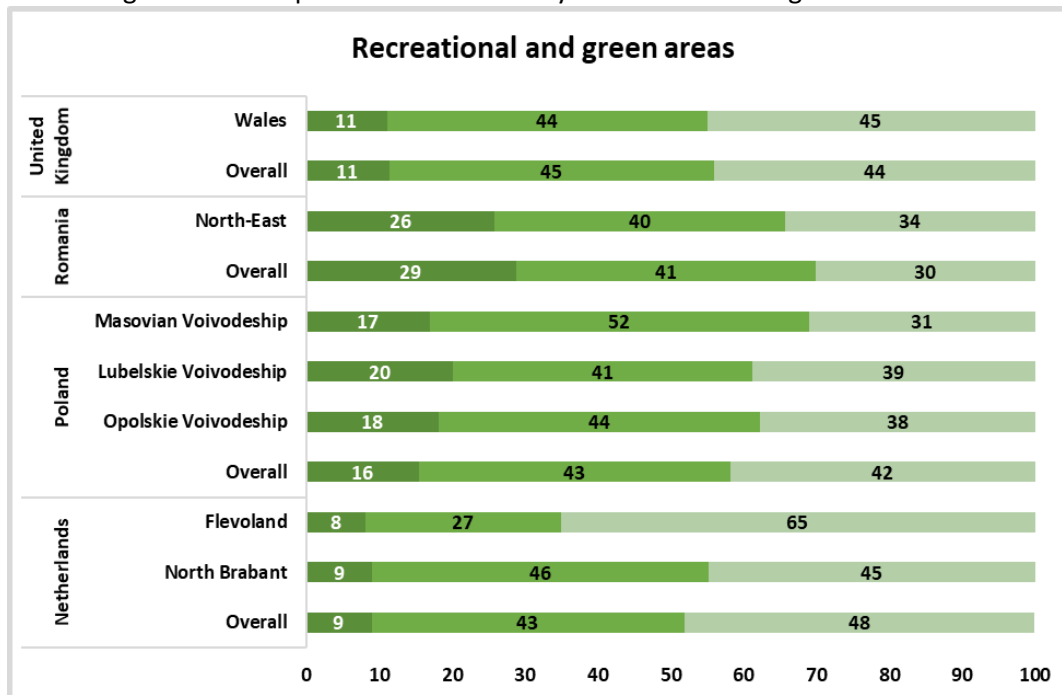
Source: (ESPON 2020)

## 2.4 Environment

Within this dimension, we consider aspects relating to traffic, air pollution, or the availability or recreation areas such as green spaces. Residents interviewed in county Galway in West Ireland, noted changes to the environment, with some suggesting that streets, parks and traffic had all seen varying degrees of change, particular an increase in traffic. Residents interviewed in the North-East region of Romania perceived the surrounding environment to have improved considerably, with new parks being built and children's playgrounds, although they also noted an increase in traffic. Lastly, migrant interviewees in Wales often drew attention to rural landscapes and green space, the physical attractions of the area in terms of proximity to the coast and the countryside inland, which are priceless. Some respondents, however, raised concerns about pollution and air quality in urban areas in Wales.

The survey responses suggest significant variation in perceptions both within and across countries. Figure 25 presents the share of residents who believe the quality and availability of green and recreational areas to be good, average or bad in their region and country. The figure shows that while an average of 10% of Dutch and UK residents consider the availability of green spaces to be very bad, almost 30% of the Romanian residents believe so. Regionally, almost two thirds of the Flevoland residents consider the availability of green areas to be good in their region, compared to 45% in North Brabant, and the 48% national average.

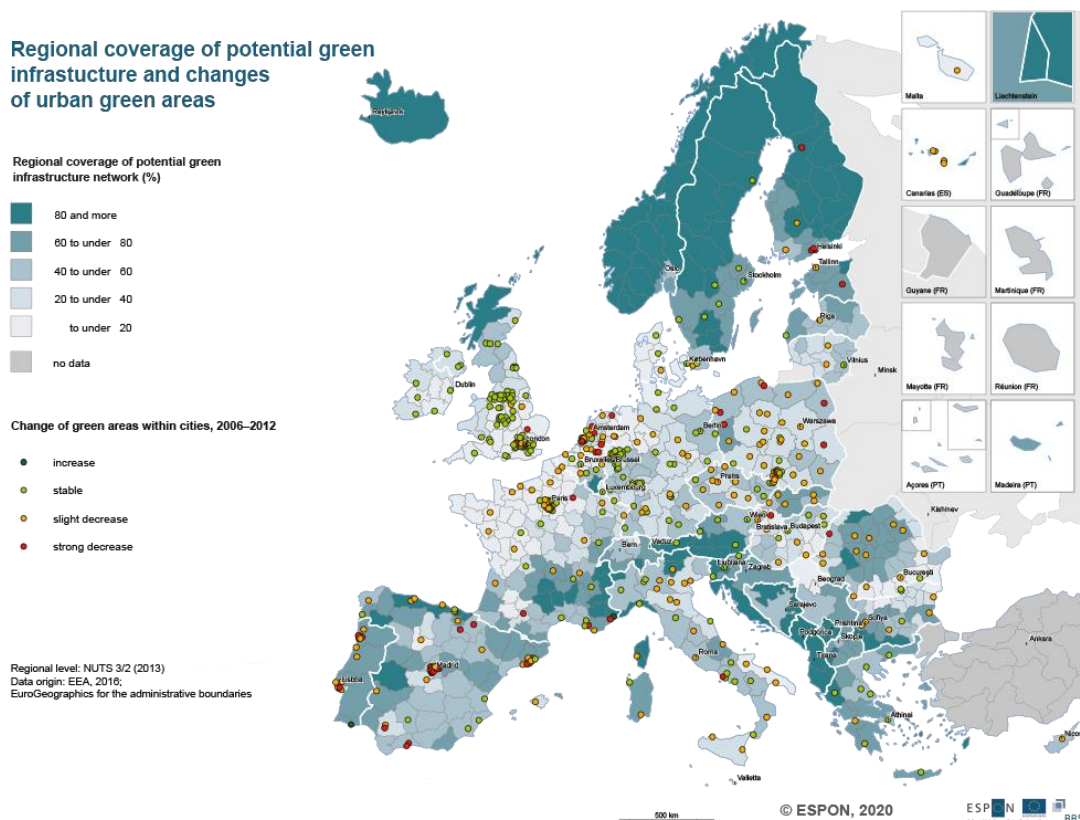
Figure 25. Perception of the availability of recreation and green areas



Source: Own calculations based on the WP4 Survey

We compare the interviews and survey perceptions of green areas, with an indicators retrieved from ESPON's Atlas for the Territorial Agenda 2030 (ESPON, 2020) on regional coverage of urban green areas (fig. 26). The figure indicates that urban green areas have slightly decreased in the North East region of Romania, in Flevoland (NL), and most of Poland, while remaining stable in Ireland and Wales.

Figure 26. Changes in Urban green areas, 2013



Source: ESPON, 2020

### 3. Migration, inequality and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is likely to significantly affect patterns of migration and inequality within the EU. Migrants, who move within and across borders, carry their social, human and economic capital with them, from sending to receiving areas and vice versa. The COVID-19 pandemic effectively halted this movement, directly through lockdowns and border closings, and indirectly through the closure of businesses and reduced demand for migrant labour. These developments are bound to have long-term effects on the push and pull factors affecting migration decisions, and on migration processes' effect on inequality and development.

It is too soon to grasp COVID-19's full effects on migration and inequality, and we will likely see mixed effects depending on policy responses and changes in migration patterns. The latter might be affected by, for instance, the potential decline in migrant labour demand in receiving countries, as

governments may seek to minimize their reliance on immigrant labour in certain sectors, or economies are slow to recover. The Pandemic may make risk averse people less likely to migrate, while making others more likely to migrate, resulting in a period of unpredictable and fast-changing migration flows (Gamlen 2020).

In a similar fashion to the economic crisis of 2008, the COVID-19 crisis might generate or reopen old corridors of intra-EU migration. The economic crisis of 2008 saw a reversal of patterns in heavily affected countries like Italy, Spain or Greece, who experienced more emigration than immigration after decades of being net receiving countries. Spain and Italy have been affected by the COVID-19 crisis, experiencing high infection rates, and their stringent measures will imply significant economic consequences. It would not be surprising, thus, to observe again high patterns of emigration from these countries, once international travel is possible again. Our own research points to the fact that the decision to migrate is triggered by perceived differences between sending and receiving countries, and that these differences are not only related to wage differences. Some of our immigrant respondents decided to migrate because they wanted to live in a different culture, a different political system, to have better access to certain services, like education or health, or to enjoy a different natural landscape. The significant differences in EU member states' reactions to the pandemic – some with better responses than others, might be an additional reason to migrate to a country that is perceived to have been “more successful” in containing the epidemic and/or avoiding an economic downturn. Future migration patterns, whether new or old, will reflect a great array of perceived material and immaterial inequalities between sending and receiving countries.

Other changes that might affect migration, and by extension, inequality patterns, will depend on the potential decline of commuter travel as a result of extensive remote-working trends and the recovery of international student migration in response to online teaching. It will also matter if and how the pandemic will fuel or suppress anti-immigrant feelings or affect demographic processes (will it increase the dependency ratio?) or on how the extensive executive powers states have taken on during the pandemic will be used in the future. The latter aspect is particularly important, as during the Pandemic, migrants and minorities have often been scapegoats for government mistakes or targets for displays of national unity (Gamlen 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the importance of assessing how critical events that are beyond people's immediate control, shape their aspirations and capabilities to move over time and space, as crises unfold and people attempt to respond to the repercussions (Martin and Bergmann 2021). The effect of these processes – their magnitude, shape, degree – on migration patterns and social and spatial inequality, will likely be diverse across all EU countries, and will depend on the measures and policies taken at the local, national and EU level.

## 4. Discussion

In this report, we have explored whether migration flows confirm existing spatial and social inequalities between sending and receiving areas, and perceptions of such inequalities. Using primary and secondary data collected within the IMAJINE project (WP5, WP4 and WP2), we have shown that, indeed, migration patterns within the EU largely confirm existing inequalities between sending and receiving countries. Our results suggest that the decision to migrate is motivated by perceived spatial inequalities between sending and receiving areas, and that importantly, these differences are of both material and non-material nature. We find significant variation in the reasons for migrating among different migrant groups. Higher educated individuals are more likely to migrate because of perceived lifestyle differences than lower skilled migrants, women are more likely than men to migrate for family reasons, and Central and Eastern European migrants are much more likely to migrate for economic reasons, including better job opportunities and higher salaries, than Western European migrants, who generally migrate for non-economic reasons, including better climate or a different lifestyle. Objective indicators point to significant differences between the countries analysed here, with the migrant sending Romania and Poland generally scoring lower in the dimensions discussed than the migrant receiving Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands and Wales. Generally, the subjective perceptions revealed through the survey responses confirmed the values of these objective indicators, with respondents from the sending Romania and Poland consistently evaluating more poorly their standard of living, employment opportunities, the access and quality of services and the availability of green spaces than survey respondents in the migrant receiving Netherlands and Wales.

More generally, throughout Work Package 5 on *Migration, Territorial Inequalities and Spatial Justice*, we have tried to understand social and spatial inequalities, and their implications to spatial justice, through the lens of migration. In all three reports – D5.1, D5.2 and D5.3 – we have explored whether perceptions of inequality influence decisions to migrate, and whether migration flows in turn affect, either positively or negatively, inequalities between regions and inequalities between social groups. In doing so, we have analysed a wide range of case studies, including sending and receiving regions/countries, rural and urban areas, but also different migration patterns that varied in volume, distance, direction and duration. This wealth of data has enabled us to gauge new insights into the relationship between migration and inequality, advancing our theoretical understanding and laying the foundation for regional and national policy measures. We summarise some of these insights below.

To begin with, our findings revealed the importance of considering context when analysing the relationship between migration and inequality. We noted significant differences in perceptions on the effects of migration between and within sending and receiving countries, but also between rural and urban areas. In rural areas, for instance, the effect of e/im-migration were felt much more strongly, but villages also were seen as providing more opportunities for interaction with local residents, paving the way for potential integration (e.g. in Galway county, Ireland, and Noordoostpolder, Netherlands). Likewise, we found that local policies can play an essential role in shaping perceptions (and effects) of e-

im-migration, both for migrants and for the residents. For instance, the local policies in the migrant sending county of Suceava, Romania were perceived as minimizing the negative effects of emigration and contributing to the local economic development (see Ulceluse et al. 2020; Ulceluse 2020), while the immigrant integration policies in Steenbergen and Noordoostpolder, the Netherlands, were shaping the perceived effect of migration on the wellbeing of residents and immigrants (Ulceluse, Bock, and Haartsen forthcoming).

Our data also emphasised the importance of distinguishing between reasons for migrating and reasons for settling (see for instance, Goodwin-Hawkins and Dafydd Jones forthcoming, for an in-depth discussion of the Welsh case study), and the role perceived inequalities play in these decisions. While initially, many individuals emigrate for material reasons (e.g. higher wages, better jobs), those who decide to settle do so because of non-material motivations, such as the natural, cultural or political environment at destination. These shifting motivations are further bolstered by a process of loosening attachment to the origin area, by family formation and place attachment at destination. (Non)mobility decisions, thus, evolve and are renegotiated over time ((Stockdale and Haartsen 2018; Stachowski and Bock 2020). These insights call attention to individual and family life courses, as well as to the different stages of the migration process, when considering the perceived effect of migration on inequalities.

In a similar vein, we need to acknowledge the external shocks or critical changes in one's socio-economic environment and the role these play in migration decisions and location choices, as well as perceptions of migration in receiving and sending areas. For instance, in Greece, some residents perceived the economic crisis to have created a less hospitable environment for migrants and to have negatively influenced local attitudes towards migration. Romanian migrants in Greece, for their part, were also affected severely by the crisis, some regretting not having moved on to a country with better post-crisis employment prospects, as many of their compatriots have likely done. Likewise, Brexit affected migration pattern to and from the UK, transnationalist practices and perceptions of European immigration. The COVID-19 pandemic itself already revealed some changes in mobility patterns, with many Romanian migrants returning from Italy – at the time heavily affected by the crisis – only to migrate to other countries such as Germany or the Netherlands, who were perceived to have done a better job in containing the virus from spreading (Pastore 2021).

Importantly, although our analysis revealed that the decision to migrate is indeed motivated by perceived inequalities between sending and receiving areas, this does not imply that migration is inherently bad or that we should attempt to curb migration flows. Inequalities do not always imply the existence of social and spatial injustice. As we iterated in D5.2, the concept of injustice calls for a normative assessment of whether inequalities are perceived as being unfair, both between places and between people. Places are different, they offer different opportunities and what they may lack in material aspects they may make up in immaterial aspects (e.g. nature and landscape, community feeling in rural areas, etc), which can weigh more importantly for some individuals. Similarly, people are different, with different skills and talents and preferences. Not all residents may worry or personally suffer from a



lower level of opportunities offered in a given place, just as not all migrants may move because of a lack of opportunities or resources. Secondly, as we have emphasised throughout this report, individuals move because of both material *and* immaterial differences, thus reducing socio-economic differences will not put a stop migration. Moreover, although the act of migrating may be perceived negatively when one migrates because of a lack of resources and opportunities in the sending area or country, migration itself is a process that opens up new doors too – migrants experience a new culture and place, may acquire new skills, expand their networks, they can represent links between sending and receiving areas, and may eventually decide to settle at destination. There is value in staying and investing in one's origin place, as there is value in migrating.

## References

- Black, Richard, Claudia Natali, and Jessica Skinner. 2006. "Migration and Inequality." World Development Report 2006 Background Papers.
- Czaika, Mathias. 2013. "Are Unequal Societies More Migratory?" *Comparative Migration Studies* 1 (1): 97–122. <https://doi.org/10.5117/CMS2013.1.CZAI>.
- Czaika, Mathias, and Hein de Haas. 2012. "The Role of Internal and International Relative Deprivation in Global Migration." *Oxford Development Studies* 40 (4): 423–42.
- ESPON. 2020. "Atlas for the Territorial Agenda 2030." ESPON. <https://www.atlata2030.eu/en/index.php>.
- Eurostat. 2021. "Job Vacancy Rate." European Commission.
- Gamlen, Alan. 2020. "Migration and Mobility after the 2020 Pandemic: The End of an Age?" Centre on Migration, Policy and Society Working Papers WP-20-146, COMPAS, University of Oxford.
- Goodwin-Hawkins, Bryonny, and Rhys Dafydd Jones. forthcoming. "Rethinking Lifestyle and Middle-Class Migration in 'Left behind' Regions." *Population, Space and Place*.
- Hyll, Walter, and Lutz Schneider. 2014. "Relative Deprivation and Migration Preferences." *Economics Letters* 122 (2): 334–37. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econlet.2013.12.023>.
- Komornicki, T, K Czapiewski, and B Szejgiec-Kolenda. forthcoming. "Poland as an Emigration and an Immigration Country – Evidence from the National, Local and Individual Perspectives." *Population, Space and Place*.
- Liebig, Thomas, and Alfonso Sousa-Poza. 2004. "Migration, Self-Selection and Income Inequality: An International Analysis." *Kyklos* 57 (1): 125–46. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0023-5962.2004.00246.x>.
- Martin, Susan, and Jonas Bergmann. 2021. "(Im)Mobility in the Age of COVID-19." *International Migration Review*, January, 019791832098410. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0197918320984104>.
- Pastore, Ferruccio. 2021. "Intertwined Systems. What the Pandemic Is Teaching Us about the Relations between Mobility and Migration Governance." MPI presentation "Migration Governance and Politics in the Face of the Pandemic."

- Ponthieux, Sophie, and Dominique Meurs. 2015. "Gender Inequality." In *Handbook of Income Distribution*, 2:981–1146. Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-444-59428-0.00013-8>.
- Quinn, Michael A. 2006. "Relative Deprivation, Wage Differentials and Mexican Migration." *Review of Development Economics* 10 (1): 135–53. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9361.2005.00306.x>.
- Stachowski, J, and Bettina B. Bock. 2020. "Unsettled Settlement. Negotiating Place, Home and Security among Polish Families in Rural Norway." *Geoforum*.
- Stark, Oded. 2006. "Inequality and Migration: A Behavioral Link." *Economics Letters* 91 (1): 146–52. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econlet.2005.09.015>.
- Stark, Oded, Lukasz Byra, and Grzegorz Kosiorowski. 2020. "On the Precarious Link between the Gini Coefficient and the Incentive to Migrate." *Economics Letters* 187 (February): 108880. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econlet.2019.108880>.
- Stark, Oded, Maja Micevska, and Jerzy Mycielski. 2009. "Relative Poverty as a Determinant of Migration: Evidence from Poland." *Economics Letters* 103 (3): 119–22. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econlet.2009.02.006>.
- Stockdale, Aileen, and Tialda Haartsen. 2018. "Editorial Introduction: Putting Rural Stayers in the Spotlight." *Population, Space and Place* 24 (4): e2124. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2124>.
- Ulcuse, Magdalena. 2020. "Local Government Responses to Emigration: The Case of Bosanci, Romania." *Migration Policy Practice* 10 (3): 9–11.
- Ulcuse, Magdalena, Bettina B. Bock, and Tialda Haartsen. forthcoming. "Housing Matters: How Local Housing Policies Mediate Interactions between Residents and Immigrants." *Population, Space and Place*.
- Ulcuse, Magdalena, Bettina Bock, Tialda Haartsen, Bryonny Goodwin-Hawkins, Rhys Dafydd Jones, Apostolos G. Papadopoulos, Loukia - Maria Fratsea, et al. 2020. "IMAJINE Report on Migration, Inequalities and Justice." IMAJINE project. Grant Agreement No 726950.