



# Share SIRA Transnational Conference: Strengthening and Expanding Social Orientation and Integration for Newcomers in Rural Areas



**23 November 2022**  
**Committee of the Regions, Brussels**

**Conference Report**



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## Background

In recent years, and particularly since 2015, small and rural communities have emerged as important actors in the reception and integration of newcomers (asylum seekers, refugees, migrants) due to resettlement programmes, national placement policies, community sponsorship and other forms of civic engagement.

Rural areas are also at the heart of the environmental, digital, social and demographic transition. Representing 80% of the EU's total surface area and home to 30% of its population, EU's rural territories are confronted with structural challenges, such as demographic decline, poor digital and transport connectivity, difficulties in meeting employment needs and constrained access to basic services (health, education, etc).

In a rapidly changing migration context with new crisis such as the war in Ukraine, building resilient and more inclusive rural territories is crucial to ensure that these can respond to new challenges and the needs of all its residents. The participation of both residents and newcomers can lead to inclusive rural territories benefiting all.

When effectively mainstreamed into rural policymaking across demographic, social, economic and development sectors, migration can be a key driver of rural revitalisation, or the long-term positive transformation of rural areas and communities. At the same time, integration policy and programmes must specifically address the ways in which structural challenges for rural territories can amplify the common integration barriers faced by refugees and migrants.

## Introduction

Established in March 2012 by ICMC Europe, the [Share Network](#) supports European regions, cities, towns, and rural communities to welcome refugees and migrants.

In January 2021, the Share Network launched [Share SIRA: Strengthening and Expanding Social Orientation and Integration for Newcomers in Rural Areas](#), a two-year project co-funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and

Integration Fund (AMIF). Working with national and regional organizations involved in welcoming newcomers in France, Greece, Poland, and Spain, the SIRA programme has established local integration multi-stakeholder platforms in ten rural regions. The project has also piloted and evaluated 10 innovative, bottom-up approaches to supporting the social orientation of newly arrived migrants and refugees that involve both local communities and newcomers.

On 23 November 2022, the **Share Network** and one of its SIRA partners, the **International Organization for Migration (IOM)**, convened the transnational conference [Strengthening and Expanding Social Orientation & Integration for Newcomers in Rural Areas](#). Held at the Brussels headquarters of the [Committee of the Regions](#), the European Union's assembly of local and regional representatives, the hybrid conference brought together approximately **150 members** of the Share network from several EU countries. Participants were drawn from EU institutions, national authorities, local mayors, civil society organizations, academic institutions, city networks, refugee and migrant-led organizations and grassroots community stakeholders.

The conference explored key issues for the SIRA project, such as the nexus between migration and rural revitalisation, fostering the participation of migrants and local communities, or the challenges and opportunities arising from the reception of refugees from Ukraine. Future opportunities for engagement and funding were other key themes of the day, as the conference served to link practice, research and policy. Participants were able to discuss the conditions for successful inclusion in small and rural communities in the EU and learnt about inspiring models and practices of local integration.

***You can access the conference agenda [here](#).***

## Opening Remarks (9h45-10h00)

**Petra Hueck**, Director, International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) Europe/Share Network and **Paola Alvarez**, Senior Thematic Specialist Labour Mobility and Social Inclusion, International Organization for Migration (IOM) Brussels Regional Office for the European Economic

Area, European Union and NATO welcomed the participants.

Both ICMC Europe and IOM have been involved in supporting reception and long-term integration of migrants and refugees in Europe. Their experience has shown that holistic, multi-stakeholder and bottom-up approaches that take into account short, medium- and long-term goals are more likely to have positive outcomes. They stressed the key role that migration plays in local development in rural areas and social change at large. Local territories are crucial for supporting integration efforts, whilst also benefitting from inclusion when the enabling structures for safe and dignified migration are in place and when migrants can participate in society.

**Antje Grotheer**, Vice-President of Bremen State Parliament and Member of the CIVEX, Committee of the Regions.

Antje Grotheer congratulated the Share Network and the SIRA partners on the achievements of the project, which successfully establishes a link between two complementary – yet still developed in silos- policy areas: refugee and migrant integration and rural development.

Both are key issues for the Committee of the Regions (CoR), which calls for greater support for local and regional authorities as integration actors. To this end, the CoR has also launched [Cities and Regions for Integration initiative](#), of which the Share Network has been a member since 2021.

The Committee has also adopted an [opinion](#) on the [EU Long-term vision for rural areas](#), which stresses that the green and digital transitions must be inclusive and lead to more resilient societies that take into account the needs of all their members, including migrants. This is especially pressing since the population over the age of 65 is expected to increase by more than 25% in one in 5 regions over the next decade, according to the [EU Annual Report on the State of Regions and Cities 2022](#).

Ms. Grotheer therefore praised the work done by SIRA programme to make rural areas inclusive for all and expressed her hope that the participatory

approaches and tools developed will inspire the members of the Integration Network and the members of the Committee of the Regions.

## High-level Panel Discussion

*Setting the scene: Promoting the inclusion of newcomers in rural areas in a changing EU migration landscape (10h00-11h15)*



The **first high-level panel** was moderated by **Petra Hueck**, Director, ICMC Europe/Share Network and brought together representatives of the European Commission (DG HOME), national authorities from France and Spain, local authorities from Poland, and European networks (ELARD). The panel focused on the opportunities for rural territories to provide bottom-up solutions and foster community engagement, in particular in the field of housing.

**Giulio Di Blasi**, Member of the Cabinet of Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson, European Commission.

Giulio Di Blasi invoked a particular political context, marked by:

- I. **A new reception crisis amidst an influx of arrivals from Ukraine.** There is a housing crisis in several Member States, resulting in a shortage of affordable housing for locals and newcomers, particularly in large cities. Against this background, he stressed that rural territories are part of the solution and opportunities to move to rural areas are at the center of migration discussion, but structural challenges need to be addressed.
- II. **European Year of Skills 2023** was launched in 2022 by the European Commission to

boost competitiveness, talent and ensure better matching of aspirations and skills and labour market needs. Small and rural areas could particularly benefit from it, as they are in need of revitalisation in terms of both demography and talent. To this end, it would be important to factor labour market needs into planning for the reception and integration of migrants and refugees.

- III. The [Work Programme for the Asylum Migration & Integration Fund \(AMIF\) for 2023-2025](#) sets out funding opportunities for community-based integration actions such as community-sponsorship, and for greater involvement of local and regional authorities in integration efforts.

[Alain Régnier](#), Prefect and Interministerial Delegate for the Reception and Integration of Refugees (Diair), France.

Prefect Régnier first gave an overview of the French context, which uniquely combines a centralised state and the largest number (over 33.000) of local entities in Europe ("collectivités territoriales" in French). However, he explained that increasing efforts are being made to decentralise national integration policies and to promote bottom-up approaches.

He then presented the mission of his organisation, the [Diair](#), which strives to improve the integration of beneficiaries of international protection and well as their distribution within the territory. 45% of refugees in France live in Ile-de-France region, only 5% in rural territories, which is why, he stressed, it is vital to **make rural territories more attractive** and to offer quality services.

The Diair also supports localities in their reception and integration efforts through a **framework** ("[Contrats Territoriaux d'Accueil et d'intégration des Réfugiés](#)") between State and local authorities, as well as civil society. To date, 19 large cities have subscribed to them, and the Diair will look at adapting this tool to the specificities of medium/small cities and rural territories. The Diair has also released a [study](#) about the challenges and opportunities for integration in rural areas.

[Isabel Bombal](#), Director General for Rural Development, Innovation and Agri-Food Training, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Spain on the mainstreaming approach of inclusion and local development.

Ms. Bombal started with a concise overview of the situation of rural areas in Spain, a country that is particularly struggling with **depopulation**. For this reason, national and regional rural development programmes seek to address the demographic and environmental challenges via comprehensive funding mechanisms.

She shared that Spain has recently approved its [CAP Strategic Plan for 2023-2027](#) which displays 3 strategic priorities: a) guarantee food security; b) agriculture as part of social development; c) consolidation of the social fabric in rural areas by supporting vulnerable groups and minorities (young people, women, migrants etc), as well as diversification, digitalisation and social innovation. Social inclusion will also be addressed in the new CAP through a **new social conditionality** clause, which includes stricter and mandatory checks of labour laws, and sanctions in case these are not fulfilled.

[Marion Eckhardt](#), President of the European LEADER Association for Rural Development & Manager of Local Action Group, Sweden.

The speaker explained the basic principles of the [LEADER approach](#) and the functioning of a Local Action Group (LAG), which is made up civil society, private sector and local authorities. LAGs define objectives and design a local development strategy, allowing for bottom-up initiatives tailored to the needs of a territory. These are a **key tool for rural development** and can be supported by different EU funds.

Although LAGs operate in different ways and have different thematic focus, many have been developing integration programmes, first in 2015 and now with Ukraine. Ms. Eckhardt presented the initiatives implemented by the LAG she presides in Sweden, and the actions delivered in her municipality, the first one in her country to welcome Syrian refugees in 2015. She recalled that it is **people and community-led initiatives**, not only

instruments and mechanisms, that **welcome newcomers**. She stressed though that labour insertion is a key driver of inclusion.

**Ewa Kacak-Niemczuk**, President of the Piaseczno Women's Council, Poland.

Ms. Kacak-Niemczuk introduced her work as a volunteer and President of the Women's Council in Piaseczno, which is a city of 90.000 inhabitants close to Warsaw. She described the response to the arrivals of displaced people from Ukraine, highlighting one of its main successes: **multi-stakeholder collaboration**. Public authorities, NGOs and individuals came together to provide support and assistance to Ukrainian refugees, who initially stayed at the border and arrived in Warsaw, and then spread throughout the country. The municipality organised an information and support centre and volunteers were mobilised to distribute food and goods. NGOs organised shelters for thousands of local families. Most significantly, the **Ukrainian diaspora in Piaseczno** was actively involved in supporting newly arrived refugees. They were able to draw on their prior experience as newcomers and knowledge to better understand needs and offer more personalised support.

#### Key takeaways from the opening panel:

- The current reception crisis, accentuated by increased arrivals of displaced persons from Ukraine, calls for **engagement of rural territories in order to decongest** large cities;
- There are opportunities for rural territories to contribute **solutions** (such as affordable housing) and to be at the **forefront** of the migration debate, but **structural challenges** must be addressed. It is essential to invest in making those territories more attractive for newcomers to stay and ensure main services (schools, hospitals, mobility options, etc).
- Social inclusion in rural areas can be pursued through different policy areas and therefore it is essential to ensure **policy coherence among those** (rural development, agriculture, reception, employment, housing, etc).
- **Participatory approaches** are necessary to guide **local action**;

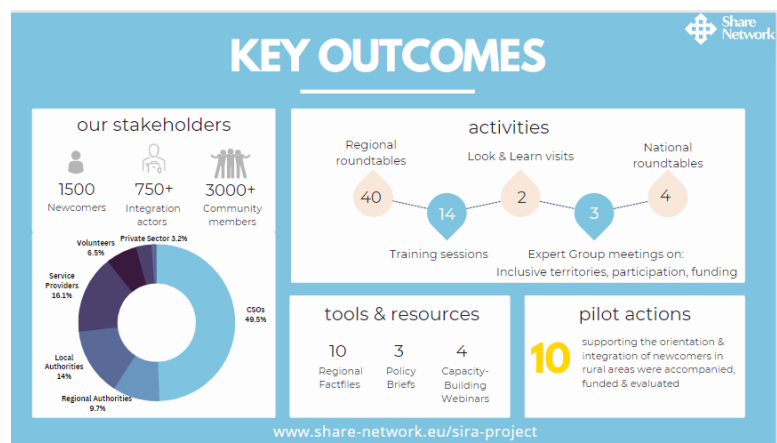
- Small and rural areas are fostering **community engagement and welcome**, serving as **integration labs** and inspiring others;
- The example of medium-sized **Polish cities** mobilised in responding to the needs of displaced people from Ukraine illustrates in particular the benefits of **multi-stakeholder cooperation** between local authorities, civil society and diaspora groups.

## Presentation of the Share SIRA project, outcomes and lessons learned (11h30-13h)



The [SIRA project](#) was presented by the SIRA consortium. The two-year project has involved a partnership at EU and national levels (France, Greece, Poland, Spain).

*You can access the full Share SIRA project presentation and overview of the deliverables [here](#).*



First, **Andrea Soler**, Senior Policy and Project Officer, ICMC Europe, presented the project in a glimpse and its main outcomes.

She also introduced the [Share's policy brief 'Building inclusive rural territories'](#):



**Eleni Bletsas**, Officer, Project's and Programme's Implementation Department, Regional Development Agency of Karditsa & **Anna Szlezinger**, Senior Programme Associate - Labour Migration and Social Inclusion Unit, IOM Poland highlighted the benefits of using a **multi-stakeholder approach to integration** and presented how this approach has been mainstreamed in all Share SIRA activities (eg. regional multistakeholder platforms, pilot actions, national roundtables etc.).

They highlighted some lessons learned as follows:

- Integration is a multi-faceted process that requires the **cooperation of many stakeholders** which each have their role to play;
- Multistakeholder engagement is a **long-term process** that requires time, trust, methods, resources in order to ensure commitment and a shared vision. Migrant and refugee communities need to be part of this process;
- Conducting a thorough **mapping** of actors, needs, synergies, challenges and opportunities is key to the successful creation of multi-stakeholder cooperation schemes;
- It is vital to be **flexible to adapt and respond** to unforeseen situations (Afghanistan, Ukraine), to the specificities of the local context, as well as to the needs of newcomers and the host community.

**Isabelle Mestre**, Director of the Innovation, Development and Coordination Department, **Entraide Pierre Valdo** presented the lessons learned from the Share SIRA's seed funding. Over 10 months, Share SIRA piloted and evaluated 10 place-based integration actions (one per region), addressing common integration challenges in small and rural areas. These actions promoted social orientation and integration of newcomers, and involved the host community as well as migrants and refugees.

The aim of selecting and supporting bottom-up pilot actions was to **incubate social innovation**, explore new integration approaches for scaling up and **facilitate access to EU funding for grassroots organisations** (up to 12,000 euros per action) in rural areas.

One of the main positive outcomes has been the **"domino effect"**: the pilot actions have led to **new partnerships and ideas** for future projects. Implementing organizations have been able to find **alternative sources of funding** to continue their action. In addition, flexible funding enabled them to adapt to emergencies such as **increased arrivals from Ukraine**.

*Find out more about the SIRA pilot actions [here](#).*

**Maria Jouve**, Focal point Share Sira -Labour Mobility and Social Inclusion (LMI) Unit at IOM Spain & **Irene Almazan**, European Projects Officer - Area of Rural Development and Demographic Challenge Cepaim Foundation presented activities focused on the **exchange of good practices, peer learning and capacity building** of local actors at the forefront of integration efforts in rural areas. These included regional training sessions, webinars and two Look & Learn visits, one in Spain focusing on the nexus between migration and rural revitalization and one in France, focused on innovation and synergies between urban and rural territories.

*Find out more about these activities [here](#).*

**Key takeaways from the SIRA presentation:**

The concrete policy recommendations drawn from the implementation of the Share SIRA project were as follows:

- 1) Settlement in rural areas should remain an informed choice: prior information should be provided to manage expectations. Appropriate matching of skills, talents and potential to territorial characteristics must be ensured;
- 2) Synergies between migration and rural development policies, frameworks and funds need to be strengthened;
- 3) Meaningful participation of both newcomers and local communities in policy & programme design must be enhanced;
- 4) To foster innovation, a variety of local integration actors and partnerships must be involved, supported and funded;
- 5) Bottom-up and grassroots approaches must be piloted, evaluated and shared to scale them up.

## Afternoon sessions

*Building inclusive rural territories: exploring the conditions for long-term social and economic inclusion of newcomers in rural areas (14h-16h15)*

### **Session 1: Mayors in the Spotlight: Developing bottom-up strategies for rural revitalization.**



The first session was moderated by **Adolfo Patón Monge**, Regional coordinator & coordinator of European projects, *Fundación Cepaim*, who opened the debate by questioning the idea that rural areas

lack opportunities and talent and urging to **change the often negative narratives about rurality**. For example, he suggested dropping the term "empty Spain" ('España vaciada' in Spanish) which is used to refer to the depopulated rural areas in the country.

The three speakers of the sessions then shared their experiences of successfully attracting and retaining migrants in their small rural towns, and the positive impact this offered in terms of **boosting the local economy and services**.

**Vicente Gonzalvo**, former Mayor of *Camañas, Teruel, Spain* recounted how when he took office as mayor 25 years ago, his village was in a critical situation with the school about to close. He decided to launch a campaign to attract immigrant families. At first, many came from South America and, with the help of the NGO *Cepaim*, they were well received and some found work on a local farm. Since then, other families arrived, some have stayed and some have not, but the village has been able to keep its school open. Mr. Gonzalvo stressed that good integration requires **equal opportunities** and **adequate access to services** (housing, work, childcare, education) for all rural residents. He pointed out that- contrary to what is commonly thought- Spanish rural territories often lack adequate, affordable and available housing. Most of the empty housing stock is in inadequate conditions, are owned without being used, or are secondary residences and therefore unusable. He called for a **national rural housing plan** to make rural houses available to newcomers.

**Alex Brichet-Billet**, Mayor of *Notre-Dame de l'Oisier, Isère, France* & **Adeline Rony**, co-founder of *Tero Loko* presented the [case of Notre-Dame de l'Oisier](#), which has been hosting a socio-professional integration project run by the organisation **Tero Loko** since 2016. This project offers labour insertion activities to both refugees and local residents (16 in total), enabling them to participate in the development of their locality. The project has reaped many positive benefits, such as the revitalisation of the local weekly market, and has inspired other neighbouring villages. One of the key features of the project is its inclusive character, benefiting from the support of the local authorities from the outset. In addition to the difficulties in

rehabilitating and upgrading the housing stock, they highlighted mobility as one of the main challenges in settling in rural areas. For example, many of the project beneficiaries live in the city of Grenoble and commute daily to Notre-Dame de l'Oisier, so the organisation had to set up a system of shuttle buses to pick up the beneficiaries. These examples show the need to **apply specific tools and approaches for rural territories**, and not simply try to replicate tools designed for large cities.

### Key takeaways from the session:

- Migration to rural areas can be a **win-win situation**: migrants bring talent and contribute to the demographic and economic revitalization of these areas, while small and rural cities can provide a soft landing and close networks;
- Offering **equal opportunities to all rural residents** (in terms of housing, employment, access to childcare, salaries...) is a necessary condition for people to stay, especially young people.
- Living in rural territories must remain an **informed choice**;
- Co-creation and **community-led approaches** to integration and local development must be further promoted and supported;
- Contrary to common ideas, the **availability of housing** in rural areas remains a challenge, and **long-term planning and investment in housing (and labour insertion programmes)** is essential;
- Forward-looking policy is critical: rural dwellers are “environmental workers without a salary” and ensuring their resilience to cope with the green transition is key.

### Session 2: Promoting communities of practice, networking and peer learning for rural integration.



The second session was moderated by **Andrea Soler**, Senior Policy and Project Officer, ICMC Europe and focused on local cooperation and participatory approaches for the integration of newcomers. Panellists discussed effective multi-stakeholder and peer learning partnerships, as well as strategies to enhance the participation of newcomers in local integration decision-making.

**Andrea Pettrachin**, Responsible for the scientific coordination of **Whole-Comm** (Horizon2020 project), Collegio Carlo Alberto in Italy, provided an academic perspective and presented some initial findings of **Whole-Comm**, a Horizon 2020 project studying integration policies in 49 small and medium localities in Europe (between 5,000 and 130,000 inhabitants). 800 interviews were conducted to study the interaction patterns of migrant integration, the frequency with which actors talk to each other and the degree of conflict in interactions. Results showed that the **dynamics of local party politics** play a key role in influencing the dynamics of interactions between NGOs and local governments. For instance, the frequency of exchanges decreased where far right parties are more present in local governments.

Another key finding was **small and rural localities tend to be isolated** and rarely participate in city networks and transnational events. They also get most information from the regular media. The **transferability of practices** between small localities is thus hampered by a context of isolation and increasing politicisation of migration combined with reduced **access to specialized sources of information**. Specific recommendations include



informing local policymakers about opportunities available, inviting them to events where there is space to reflect upon these issues, and ultimately conveying the idea that these local governments are responsible for integration.

**Léa Enon-Baron**, Co-Director of the ANVITA Network & Head of Network, Practices and International Development, presented [ANVITA](#), a network of 72 local communities in France (among which 20% are considered small towns). The network fosters **horizontal peer to peer collaboration**, involving sharing information, knowledge and best practices through thematic meetings, working groups, and formal and informal information exchanges. ANVITA is focusing on **adapting to the needs of all territories** and encouraging peer to peer learning and urban-rural synergies to bridge for the lack of resources and capacities of small towns.

**Christos Lazaridis**, Communication Officer and Head of Strategy at the Greek Forum of Refugees, Greece presented the [Forum](#), a refugee-led association that aims to promote the **participation of refugees in local decision-making**. It is part of a large international coalition to promote migrant and refugee dialogue across the world fostering participation and participative democracies. It strives to **give migrant communities a voice** to advocate for themselves. One of the main activities of the Greek Forum of Refugees is the creation of **Integration Councils** at municipal level, which are consultative rather than executive bodies. They map the problems and challenges facing integration, support the formulation of recommendations by refugees and raise public awareness. He underlined that the fact that migrants and refugees are unable to participate fully in their host societies (both politically and sometimes economically) hampers their integration and makes them less willing to stay. He called for meaningful participation to be encouraged at all stages through a strong framework and, if necessary, legislative changes.

**Johannes Lanser**, Head of Citizen's Office of Tittmonig, a small locality in Bavaria (Germany), described how his rural municipality has

increasingly developed services to support newcomers, which attracted the employment opportunities from local companies. Currently, 10% of the town residents have a migrant origin and there are now about 60 Ukrainian people living in the village who have no plans to return. Local authorities, with the help of volunteers, have put in place language classes, accommodation support, adapting to any type of needs. He stressed that one of the main lessons learned is the need to offer **individual solutions**: personal connections and providing a sense of coherence, community and control encourage people to stay and help them regain their own agency.

#### Key takeaways from the session:

- Politics have a significant influence on **interactions** between local governments and non-governmental actors; there is scope for improving interactions among different stakeholders within and between rural areas and other levels of government;
- It is vital to **inform local policymakers**, to ensure they have access to adequate funding, provide them with space to **express their views**, as they are leading for migrant integration. It is key to reconceptualize existing **funding schemes** and support structures to adapt them to small and rural towns;
- Ultimately, there is a strong need for **peer learning among small and medium-sized towns**, but their isolation from subnational and European networks hinders transferability of practices;
- Integration in rural territories requires individual solutions and a **people-centred approach**. Providing a sense of worth, coherence, belonging, and listening to the needs, is key.

## High-level Panel Discussion

*Enhancing policy coherence and responsive funding mechanisms for integration in rural areas (16h30-17h30)*



Moderated by [Paola Alvarez](#), Senior Thematic Specialist Labour Mobility and Social Inclusion, IOM Brussels regional Office for the EEA, EU and NATO, focused on ways to facilitate rural territories' access to funding and promote innovative funding mechanisms for integration in rural areas.

The Share Network has conducted research on this topic and organised a SIRA Expert Group Meeting on the subject in March 2022.

**You can access the Share SIRA policy brief on funding [here](#) and the report about the Expert Group meeting [here](#).**

[Katerina Dimitrakopoulou](#), Head of Sector Integration, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission explained how rural areas are addressed in various initiatives developed by the European Commission on integration:

- I. The [Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion](#) acknowledges that rural areas face specific challenges and the benefits of a whole-of-society approach, and calls for the creation of **rural partnerships**;
- II. The [Safe Homes initiative](#) to guide Member States hosting displaced persons from Ukraine evokes the **strategic role of smaller cities** in providing accommodation for refugees from Ukraine, as a way of decongesting cities.

In terms of funding, local municipalities and grassroots actors can access AMIF through their

Member States (the of the Fund is administered at national level) or through the Thematic Facility that is directly managed by the Commission. Through the **partnership principle**, embedded in several funds (including AMIF) and requiring Member States to consult with civil society in the design, implementation and evaluation of their funding programmes, rural actors can also voice their needs and specificities. She then underlined the opportunities set out in the **[new Work Programme for the Asylum Migration & Integration Fund \(AMIF\) for 2023-2025](#)**.

[Mátyás Szabó](#), Policy Officer – Social Inclusion, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, European Commission highlighted that social inclusion can be addressed through different policy areas and funds.

He emphasised that one of the Commission's objectives is to **strengthen synergies and complementarities** between funds. He referred to **community-led development approaches** as a key tool to address complex issues such as the inclusion of migrants, which can now be financed through different cohesion and agricultural funds (EAFRD, ESF, etc.). Ms. Szabó also illustrated how different **Cohesion Funds** (ERDF, ESF) can help to address some of the challenges for migrant inclusion in rural areas mentioned in the previous panels such as **housing**. Most of these funds are managed directly by the Member States but there is scope for influence for local and rural actors, as these funds are also concerned by the partnership principle. He recalled that the review of the implementation of the EU [Rural Pact](#) will take place in 2024.

[Georgios Boukis](#), President of the Cooperative Bank of Karditsa, member of the European Federation of Ethical and Alternative Banks and Finances ([FEBEA](#)), stressed that the **private sector can and must contribute to the social inclusion** of refugees and migrants. He presented some of the initiatives developed by the Bank of Karditsa (including one of the [Share SIRA pilot actions](#)) to facilitate migrants' access to banking services and opening an account, a model that could be adopted in other areas. However, he insisted that the private sector should go further by offering jobs and support for entrepreneurship.

### Key takeaways from the panel:

- Migrant/refugee integration is increasingly mainstreamed in different EU policies and funds but **synergies and complementarities** could be further exploited;
- There is a need for the EC, national authorities and local authorities to **share responsibility** and **engage further** with local actors;
- The **partnership principle** and other initiatives such as the EU **Rural Pact** offer opportunities for engagement from civil society and rural stakeholders;
- The private sector can complement to create a **whole-of-society approach** and create the possibility for people to stay in rural areas. **Public-private partnerships** will be particularly needed to address some complex integration challenges such as access to decent housing.

### Conclusions (17h30-17h45)

**Petra Hueck & Paola Alvarez** summarized the main conclusions of the conference. They thanked all the panelists and the audience for their insightful interventions and enriching discussions and invited participants to stay for the reception.

## Annex 1. Agenda

8.45 – 9.45	<i>Registration &amp; Welcome Coffee</i>
9.45 – 10.00	<p><b><u>Opening Remarks</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Petra Hueck</b>, Director, International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) Europe/Share Network</li> <li>• <b>Antje Grotheer</b>, Vice-President of Bremen State Parliament and Member of the CIVEX, Committee of the Regions</li> <li>• <b>Paola Alvarez</b>, Senior Thematic Specialist Labour Mobility and Social Inclusion, International Organization for Migration (IOM) Brussels Regional Office for the European Economic Area, European Union and NATO</li> </ul>
10.00 – 11.15	<p><b><u>High-level Panel Discussion – Setting the scene: Promoting the inclusion of newcomers in rural areas in a changing EU migration landscape</u></b></p> <p><i>Chair:</i> <b>Petra Hueck</b>, Director, ICMC Europe/Share Network</p> <p><i>Speakers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Giulio Di Blasi</b>, Member of the Cabinet of Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson, European Commission</li> <li>• <b>Alain Régnier</b>, Prefect and Interministerial Delegate for the Reception and Integration of Refugees, France</li> <li>• <b>Isabel Bombal</b>, Director General for Rural Development, Innovation and Agri-Food Training, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Spain</li> <li>• <b>Marion Eckhardt</b>, President of the European LEADER Association for Rural Development &amp; Manager of Local Action Group, Sweden</li> <li>• <b>Ewa Kacak-Niemczuk</b>, President of the Piaseczno Women's Council, Poland</li> </ul> <p><b>Q&amp;A Session</b></p>
11.15 – 11.30	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11.30 – 13.00	<p><b><u>Presentation of the Share SIRA project outcomes and lessons learned</u></b></p> <p><i>Chair:</i> <b>Valon Halimi</b>, Chief of Mission, IOM Poland</p> <p><i>Speakers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Share SIRA project in a glimpse:</i> <b>Andrea Soler</b>, Senior Project &amp; Policy Officer, ICMC Europe/Share Network</li> <li>• <i>Strengthening regional multi-stakeholder dialogue &amp; coordination for orientation &amp; integration:</i> <b>Eleni Bletsas</b>, Officer at Project's and Programme's Implementation Department, Regional Development Agency of Karditsa &amp; <b>Anna Szlezinger</b>, Senior Programme Associate - Labour Migration and Social Inclusion Unit, IOM Poland</li> <li>• <i>Enhancing knowledge and capacities of local integration actors through targeted training, peer learning and transnational best practice sharing:</i> <b>Maria Jouve</b>, Focal point Share Sira -Labour Mobility and Social Inclusion (LMI) Unit at IOM Spain &amp; <b>Irene Almazan</b>, European Projects Officer - Area of Rural Development and Demographic Challenge Cepaim Foundation</li> <li>• <i>Piloting and evaluating bottom-up approaches for orientation and integration in rural areas:</i> <b>Isabelle Mestre</b>, Director of the Innovation, Development and Coordination Department, Entraide Pierre Valdo</li> </ul> <p><b>Q&amp;A Session</b></p>
13.00 - 14.00	<i>Lunch</i>

<p><b>14:00 - 16:10</b></p>	<p><i>Afternoon sessions – Building inclusive rural territories: exploring the conditions for long-term social and economic inclusion of newcomers in rural areas</i></p> <p><b><u>14h-14h50- Mayors in the Spotlight: Developing bottom-up strategies for rural revitalization</u></b></p> <p><b>Chair:</b> <b>Adolfo Paton Monge</b>, Regional Coordinator &amp; Coordinator of European projects, Fundación Cepaim</p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Alex Brichet-Billet</b>, Mayor of Notre-Dame de l’Oisier, Isère, France</li> <li>• <b>Vicente Gonzalvo</b>, former Mayor of Camañas, Teruel, Spain</li> </ul> <p><b>Q&amp;A Session</b></p> <p><b><u>14h50-16h10 – Panel Discussion Promoting communities of practice, networking and peer learning for rural integration</u></b></p> <p><b>Chair:</b> <b>Andrea Soler</b>, Senior Policy &amp; Project Officer, ICMC Europe/Share Network</p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Andrea Pettrachin</b>, Responsible for the scientific coordination of Whole-Comm (Horizon2020 project), Collegio Carlo Alberto, Italy</li> <li>• <b>Léa Enon-Baron</b>, Co-Director of the ANVITA Network &amp; Head of Network, Practices and International Development, France</li> <li>• <b>Christos Lazaridis</b>, Communication Officer and Head of Strategy at the Greek Forum of Refugees, Greece</li> <li>• <b>Johannes Lanser</b>, Head of the citizen service and asylum office of the city of Tittmonig, Germany</li> </ul> <p><b>Q&amp;A Session</b></p>
<p><b>16.10 – 16.30</b></p>	<p><i>Coffee Break</i></p>
<p><b>16.30 – 17.30</b></p>	<p><b><u>Panel Discussion: Enhancing policy coherence and responsive funding mechanisms for integration in rural areas</u></b></p> <p><b>Chair:</b> <b>Paola Alvarez</b>, Senior Thematic Specialist Labour Mobility and Social Inclusion, IOM Brussels Regional Office</p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Katerina Dimitrakopoulou</b>, Head of Sector Integration, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission</li> <li>• <b>Mátyás Szabó</b>, Policy Officer – Social Inclusion, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, European Commission</li> <li>• <b>Georgios Boukis</b>, President of the Cooperative Bank of Karditsa, Greece</li> </ul> <p><b>Q&amp;A Session</b></p>
<p><b>17.30 – 17.45</b></p>	<p><b><u>Concluding Remarks</u></b></p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Petra Hueck</b>, Director, ICMC Europe/Share Network</li> <li>• <b>Paola Alvarez</b>, Senior Thematic Specialist Labour Mobility and Social Inclusion, IOM Brussels Regional Office for the European Economic Area, European Union and NATO</li> </ul>
<p><b>17.45 – 19.30</b></p>	<p><i>Reception</i></p>