



Call: AMIF-2020-AG-CALL-03

MigrantVoicesHeard

Enhancing the participation of migrants through the creation of migrant councils

Project number: 101038656
National Report Romania

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Political participation of migrants.....	6
Opportunities and obstacles for the creation of a migrants' council	9
Good practices.....	12
Conclusions	14
Bibliography	16

Executive summary

The current report is researching promising and best practice examples in Romania for the implementation of migrant councils, potentials and obstacles, as well as what are the opportunities in founding a migrant council at local level. The research is analysing the context by making a general assessment of the situation of foreign citizens and migrant policies as well as consultation processes.

Enhancing the political participation of migrants in the design and implementation of integration policies is essential for ensuring effective policies which are customised to their needs. In the Romanian context there is a need for establishing structured and formalised means for migrants' consultation and representation in the areas that concern them. The current best practice research is documenting the existence of good practice of migrant participation and ways to their establishment. The results of the research will inform the rest of the activities in the process of setting up a migrant council at local level, with the aim to enhance the migrant political participation in the design and implementation of integration policies. The report is also aimed to inspire public servants and other relevant stakeholders.

The report consists of results obtained through desk research: a literature review on migration in Romania and Cluj, migration policies, overall information on the political participation of migrants, and a collection of promising practices. The qualitative research includes consultations with experts working in NGOs, consultations with migrant communities in Cluj, guided interviews with migrants, and focus group discussions with migrants, as well as (migrant) expert interviews and focus groups. Both the literature review and the interviews/FGDs were used to find the basis of best practices as well as opportunities, challenges, and obstacles for founding a migrant council.

The results of the research show that in Romania there is no standing structure, consultative bodies or other permanent mechanisms for ensuring migrants political participation, consultation or representation in the design and implementation of integration policies that concern them. Nevertheless, there are several projects implemented by the NGOs with the aim of enhancing formal or non-formal migrants' political participation, ensuring consultations or representation at local or national level, setting up migrants' organisations or other practices identified as promising practices in setting up and functioning of a migrant council. These examples of good practices, as well as opportunities of setting up a migrant council at local level were explored and collected during consultations with representatives of NGOs active in the field of migration, TCNs and migrant communities, and they will be taken into consideration in the further steps of funding of the migrant council.

1. Introduction - country context

Brief description of the context regarding migration, overview of development

Romania is traditionally considered a country of emigration or transition. The last twenty years involved more than 3.5 million people in migration mainly towards Western Europe (Angel, 2018)¹. The proportion of migrants living in Romania increased four times during 2005-2017, from about 0.5% to 2%, 380,000 people) (IIR, 2019)². The new inflows are predicting that the number of foreigners is to increase in the following years and Romania started to be seen more often as a destination country where people are now no longer just transiting but aim to settle in.

Statistical overview of TCN in Romania

According to the data from 2020 the migration office (IGI 2020)³, Romania was hosting 87.034 TCNs and 3597 beneficiaries of international protection. Most of the TCNs come from: the Republic of Moldova, Turkey, China and Israel. In 2018, the number of TCNs from the Republic of Moldova slightly decreased and the number of those from Middle Eastern and Asian countries increased. Regarding the beneficiaries of international protection, the main destination countries are Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan.

The most important legal bases underlying the establishment in Romania in 2018 was: family reunification (36.5%), for employment (26%) or for studies (19.5%). In regard to the gender distribution, according to the latest data available, in 2020 (IGI, 2020)⁴ in Romania were 87.034 TCNs, out of which 59.235 were males and 27.799 were females.

Concerning the beneficiaries of international protection and their legal base underlying the establishment, in 2020 (IGI, 2020)⁵ 1975 people were having the refugee status and 1622 were having the subsidiary protection, out of which 2322 were males and 1275 were females.

Regional distribution of TCNs

According to the available data (IGI, 2020)⁶ most migrants are living in urban areas where they can find good living conditions and good jobs. This is a trend that can be found also among the local population. Therefore, the main areas/counties populated by migrants are:

- Ilfov
- Bucuresti
- Cluj
- Timis

Main national policies, and regional/local level policies regarding migration

¹ Anghel, Remus Gabriel and Coșciug, Anotolie, 'Introduction to the Special Issue: Debating Immigration in a Country of Emigration', *Social Change Review* (2018) ▪ Vol. 16(1-2), 3-8.

² Cosciug, Anotolie and all., Immigrant Integration Index in Romania – IIR 2019, CRCM - Romanian Migration Research Center.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338633230_INDEXUL_INTEGRARII_IMIGRANTILOR_IN_ROMANIA_2019

³ General Inspectorate for Immigration (Inspectoratul General pentru Imigrari - IGI), database received from IGI via email in 2020.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

The main legislative frame in the migration area is covered by Government Emergency Ordinance No. 194 of 12 December 2002, regarding the regime for foreigners in Romania and the Government Ordinance No. 44 of 29 January 2004 regarding the social integration of foreigners granted international protection or a right of residence in Romania, as well as the EU and EEA citizens and the citizens of the Swiss Confederation (OG, 2004)⁷.

In late 2020 the Romanian Ministry of Home Affairs proposed a new National Strategy on Immigration for 2021 – 2024. It replaces the former Strategy on Immigration for 2015 to 2018, which was debated in 2020 and 2021 and adopted in September 2021. The new strategy sets up the principles and guidelines for regulating national policies regarding admission, residence, labour immigration, combating illegal immigration, leaving the territory by foreigners, providing forms of protection to those in need and, subsequently, integrating foreigners into the Romanian society.

Concerning the local measures for integration, Cluj-Napoca is the first city in Romania that has started developing a local Integration Strategy for third country nationals. The main areas of the Strategy are the labour market and education under the umbrella of a One-stop-shop - a single desk office offline and of an online platform.

The One-stop shop is designed in the form of an integrated system in the form of a single desk or office where relevant public stakeholders collaborate for creating a user-friendly single point of contact where migrants can receive guidance, information and networking opportunities, but also have access to the immigration documents. Specifically, the OSS offline aims to facilitate access to relevant immigration information related to education, labour, and other relevant fields for TCNs, available in most frequently used foreign languages; provide access for TCNs on relevant immigration documents centralised in a single place; ease the integration of migrants integrating because the most relevant documents will be available in several languages and in a single place; provide a multicultural understanding and make them feel welcome.

The online platform aims to provide all the relevant immigration information by aiming to facilitate access to relevant immigration information related to education, labour, and other relevant fields for TCNs; make information available in most commonly used foreign languages, provide access for TCNs on relevant immigration documents centralised in a single place; decrease the time of migrants integration process because the most relevant documents will be available in relevant languages and in a single place; provide a multicultural understanding and make them feel welcome.

Actors mapping

In regards to the actors engaged in promoting migrants' rights in Romanian, in 2017 was created the Coalition for the Rights of Migrants and Refugees (CDMiR) that aims to ensure that every migrant and refugee has respected the personal, civic, economic and social rights that they have in Romania. In this regard, the CDMiR coordinates advocacy activities, monitors their effects, interacts with policy makers and influences public decision-making on migration in a transparent and equitable manner. The Coalition brings together 22 non-governmental organizations at the national level with experience in the field of migration, anti-discrimination, human rights and public policy. In addition, 5 supporters from academia and international organisations joined the initiative. To

⁷ Government Emergency Ordinance No. 194 of 12 December 2002; Law 44 of 29 January 2004 regarding the social integration of foreigners

date, it is the only entity of its kind active in the field of migration, asylum and integration in Romania.

At the local level can be found several NGOs that implement different activities and projects aiming to promote migrants' rights and access to integration services, or to provide empirical evidence regarding their integration in Cluj but also at the national level. Among these NGOs can be mentioned the following: the League for Human Rights Defence - Cluj Branch, the Romanian Center for Comparative Migration Studies and the Romanian Peace Institute-PATRIR. In addition, it can be found several informal groups migrant led that conduct activities for their communities and support their integration process (Romania-Burundi Partnership group, Association of Palestinians in Transylvania, the Initiative group of Moldavians, student groups – Arabic speakers and the group of Latin-American).

2. Political participation of migrants

Legal framework

Romanian law does not expressly regulate the formal or informal political participation of migrants. Although there is no special law in this regard, regulations can be identified in other laws. In the first place, we have analysed the regulations in the Romanian law regarding formal political participation or electoral rights, and then we focused on analysing the regulations present in the law with regards to informal political participation or civic participation.

According to the Romanian Constitution, the right to vote and to be elected is reserved only to Romanian citizens. The same law stipulates that the minimum age for exercising the right to vote is 18 years old, while in order to run for a mandate in a municipal council or in the Chamber of Deputies the minimum age is 23 years old. For the Senate elections the threshold is 33 years old and for presidential elections the minimum age being 35.

The Romanian legislation is granting full democratic rights only for Romanian citizens, or extending it in some circumstances to the citizens of other EU countries who are residing in Romania, therefore EU citizens residing in Romania have the right to vote and be elected in local elections. In consequence, the third country nationals (foreign residents who are not EU citizens) do not have electoral rights granted in Romania.

The National Strategy on Immigration for 2019 – 2022 makes no reference to the political participation of migrants other than general recognition of the importance of the participation of TCNs in all aspects of social life.

In the MIPEX 2020 political participation of migrants in Romania is ranked as unfavourable, the report is highlighting that “Romanian policies create major impediments to immigrants’ integration in terms of political participation, the lack of political rights for immigrants and support for immigrant leaders continues to prevent the political integration of immigrants. Additionally, immigrants are not structurally consulted in order to inform and improve the policies that affect them daily”.⁸

Formal political participation

⁸ Migrant Integration Policy Index 2020, Available at <https://www.mipex.eu/romania>, accessed 1st of April 2022

In its analysis of the political and civic participation of foreign citizens, the Immigrant Integration Index Romania - IIR 2017 states that it is influenced by several factors, both structural factors (the conditions under which citizens can legally participate through electoral rights, the existence of representative or advisory bodies); but also by individual factors influenced by individual resources (such as socioeconomic variables and demographic characteristics or others such as political socialisation, social capital, previous experience with a participatory political system or density of social networks) or individual factors influenced by the effectiveness of mobilising political organisations or actors among civil society.⁹

A reference guide and comprehensive tool for mapping and assessing existing integration policies in the European Union MIPEX¹⁰, assessed that political participation of immigrants is evaluated by using four dimensions that measure electoral rights, political liberties, consultative bodies and implementing policies on the basis of some fifteen policy indicators. Using these dimensions and indicators MIPEX establishes whether immigrants have the right to vote in local, regional and national elections, and can stand in local elections; they have a right to create associations, political parties and their own media; consultative bodies are set up; information campaigns exist and immigrant associations are supported. According to a study conducted by the National Romanian Council for Refugees - CNRR in 2014¹¹ Romania scores lowest on the MIPEX indicator for political participation of immigrants.

The same guide (MIPEX) issued in 2019 shows that no change or improvement has been made in Romania regarding the political participation of migrants. According to the study from 2019 *“although policies are halfway favourable overall, major obstacles emerge for immigrants in political participation and access to nationality”*.

During the focus groups and interviews conducted, most of the respondents mentioned that they haven't participated formally (did not vote or run for campaign).

Some of the participants do not see that much value in having the right to vote, at this moment (being pressed by other more urgent issues concerning their life here), however, if they had the right they would participate. In contrast, others think that it is necessary that migrants with permanent residents should have the right to vote in local elections. One of the participants has participated in the organisation of the elections, and she voted (she has Romanian citizenship).

According to the feedback received from one of the participants, many foreign citizens who would have the right to vote (EU or with citizenship) do not go to vote, because they do not have enough information about their right, where to vote, how to vote, etc.

Informal political participation

The current legislation (Law 26/2000 regarding Associations and Foundations) does not impose any conditions related to citizenship, domicile or residence or right to work, so foreign citizens and stateless persons can be founders of associations in Romania, if no special restriction has been imposed against them in this regard.

According to the Emergency Ordinance no. 194 of December 12, 2002, regarding the regime of foreigners in Romania, holders of the right of long-term residence, benefit from equal

⁹ B, M, Radu, Immigrant Integration Index in Romania – IIR 2017, CRCM - Romanian Migration Research Center, p.106.

¹⁰ Thomas, Huddleston, Jan, Niess, Migrant Integration Policy Index Romania (n.p. 2011)

¹¹ Bogdan, Ghenea, Electoral Participation of Third Country Nationals in Romania, Romanian National Council for Refugees (n.p., 2014)

treatment with Romanian citizens regarding the freedom of association, affiliation and membership of a trade union or professional organisation.

The Law 26/2000 regarding Associations and Foundations, states that individuals and legal entities that pursue the development of activities of general interest or in the interest of certain communities or, in their personal non-patrimonial interest may constitute associations or foundations under the conditions of this ordinance. Political parties, trade unions and religious denominations do not fall under the scope of this Ordinance.

Other ways of informal political participation

In the integration process, political participation is considered essential. However, in the absence of electoral rights, it is important to mention the indicators of civic participation (non-electoral/ informal ways of political participation). Other studies, like the OECD study (2015)¹² mentions membership in associations and organisations in the field of civil society (leisure associations, various forms of organisation of local communities, trade unions, etc.) and volunteering. Also, in situations where there are advisory groups available to migrants, participation in them is considered as civic participation (MIPEX 2015).¹³

The immigrant's integration Index Study – 2019¹⁴, published by the Romanian Centre for Migration Research shows that from the perspective of the membership in volunteering organisations, the situation of migrants is similar to that of the majority of the Romanian population: between 60% and 70% of respondents are not part of any organisation. The most popular organisations, in which more than 10% of the respondents are active members, are the student organisations in the first place (many respondents of the survey being students), followed by organisations in the country of origin, charitable, educational, artistic, sports, but also churches and religious associations. According to the conclusions of the study *“the lack of involvement can be a feature of the Romanian context in which volunteering is not at a high level as in other European Union countries, and characterises both the local population and the migrant community”*.

During the focus groups conducted under the current research, other opportunities for participation regarding *informal political participation were explored*. For the participants present in the focus group and interviews, the opportunities seemed to be more present in the students' organisations. Some of the participants have been involved since 2017 in informal political participation, joining student protests and participated in political debates (especially regarding discrimination against Roma communities). In this regard one participant mentioned that *“there is a violent extremism very present in Romania, but we do not talk enough about it.”*

Others have participated in protests against corruption, in a more journalistic way, redirecting funds to NGOs and other kinds of active involvement or activism. Managing a Facebook group, being vocal about fairness towards foreigners, investigating what is not fair and promoting the issue on Facebook (example: housing/ renting prices for foreigners). Other forms mentioned by the participants in the focus group were participating in protests and demonstrations, signed

¹² OECD. 2015. Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015. SETTLING IN. Disponibil la http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/indicators-of-immigrant-integration-in_9789264234024-en, accessed at 1st of April 2022.

¹³ Migrant Integration Policy Index 2015, Available at <https://www.mipex.eu/sites/default/files/downloads/files/mipex-2015-book-a5.pdf>, accessed 1st of April 2022

¹⁴ Cosciug, Anolie and all., Immigrant Integration Index in Romania – IIR 2019, CRCM - Romanian Migration Research Center, p.60 – 61.

petitions, fundraising, volunteering, participating in the strategy for youth consultations and urban planning, and voting in the process of the participatory budget at the local level.

The participants in the focus groups and interviews are also belonging to groups/ NGOs or mentioned other forms of being active, such as: managing social media group aimed to welcome foreign students in Cluj - bringing English sources of information available in several areas of interest (facilitating access to information in English); being a cultural mediator in organisations working on the field of migrants' integration.

Trust in political institutions

In 2017 The Centre for Comparative Migration Studies¹⁵ published the Migrants Integration Index including the results of a survey measuring the trust of the migrants in public institutions. The same report is mentioning that the institutional trust in Central and Eastern Europe is low compared to the consolidated democracies of Western Europe.

The same report interprets part of the MIPEX study (2015) which demonstrates a notable difference between long-term migrants integrated into local participatory structures - and those who have arrived more recently, who are less participatory.

In the study Migrants Integration Index 2017, published by the Centre for Comparative Migration Studies it is observed that the percentage of respondents who have a lot of trust in a certain institution does not exceed 10% except in the case of the Church and the Police, while in the Parliament and the political parties present the lowest percentage. The results refer to the following institutions: City Hall, President, Government, Parliament, Legal System, Army, Police, Church, Political Parties, Non-Profit Organisations

Two participants in the focus group mentioned that one barrier in formal political participation is that they do not trust the political actors and have no trust in political institutions, so the expressed feeling was that they would not go to vote, or participate in elections. Other participants correlated their lack of trust with what they saw happening to other minorities, such as Roma community. However, most of the participants consider that civic participation, empathy and being active in the community can make a difference in the community and they are more confident regarding the impact created by this kind of activities.

Consultative bodies

Consultative bodies for migrants are absent in Romania. Except for projects implemented by civil society, there are no standing consultative groups or bodies designed for migrants' consultations. Nevertheless, there are and have been in the last years, active organisations in the field of migration and integration which are implementing projects aiming to enhance the consultation, representation or participation of migrants, both political and civic. We have detailed these projects as promising practices.

3. Opportunities and obstacles for the creation of a migrants' council

Potentials of increased participation of TCNs

After analysing the Romanian context and collecting feedback from experts as well as from TCNs, there is no doubt that the funding of a migrant council would bring numerous benefits

¹⁵Cosciug, Anatolie and all., Immigrant Integration Index in Romania – IIR 2017, CRCM - Romanian Migration Research Center, p. 108 – 109.

both for the migrant communities as well as for the potential of the city and region. Nevertheless, during the consultations with experts in the field, along with the strengths identified in the potential of the project, the participants also mentioned some risks to be considered. The risks lay down not necessarily on the setting up of a Migrant Council, but it is extremely difficult to ensure its sustainability. Financial sustainability was mentioned as a main issue to be addressed.

The stakeholders consulted have also made other observations, mainly regarding the lack of annual integration report, since 2010, pointing out that *"migrants do not have mechanisms in place to make their voices heard."*

Even though in some parts of the country, like in Bacau County there is a community support team at the Prefecture level, the General Immigration Inspectorate has not been invited to participate in this group, which could bring forward the issue of representation and participation of migrants in the design and implementation of integration policies.

General hurdles for political participation

Some general hurdles mentioned during the focus group with the experts were referring to legislation that does not allow people to vote, as well as to interact with public institutions which do not allow migrants to approach them directly due to bureaucratic procedures and therefore, there is the need of key persons that have to solve different migrants' issues. Also, many migrants do not speak the language well enough to be able to have discussions with public institution's staff. In order to help migrants in need, the key persons from migrant communities need to make a notarial mandate to represent migrants in front of institutions. It was suggested that more guidance and openness is needed and hence, migrants will feel more empowered to raise their voices politically (when and if the case) and civically.

Another major hurdle in political participation is lack of usage of an international language in consultations and communications from the public institutions, as well as the lack of knowledge of international language of the personnel working in the public institutions. According to the feedback received from one of the participants, many foreigner citizens who would have the right to vote (EU citizens or with citizenship) do not go to vote, because they do not have enough information about their right, where to vote, how to vote, when are the elections organized etc.).

Concrete obstacles and challenges

Romanian legislation grants the electoral rights only to Romanian citizens, foreign citizens who have obtained the citizenship and, in some cases, (for local elections) to EU citizens. Therefore, one very important aspect which was explored during the focus groups was the knowledge of the TCNs regarding their political and electoral rights, how do they obtain the right to vote, or about the naturalisation process. The results of the focus groups were that the participants have knowledge about how to obtain citizenship, which will eventually grant electoral rights. Some of them are very informed about the process and are planning to apply for it but are highlighting the lengthy and complicated procedures. At the same time, other participants have other more pressing issues with their residence permit and cannot focus on long-term plans now, even though they would like to apply for citizenship at some point.

When exploring the specific barriers in civic participation within the focus group discussions, we have identified the following:

Language – *“there is a total lack of official communication in English, which is discriminating migrants a lot. There are public consultations organised by the local institutions, but the language is not accessible”.* Also, the most present challenge for integration is lack of multilingual speakers in the public institutions.

Lack of funds - In Romania there are scarce Government funds supporting the cause and this is a challenge to the sustainability of the initiatives. In Romania the majority of the initiatives are NGOs not Government supported.

Other participants mentioned some **prejudiced attitudes** regarding Moldavian migrants who are considered to already have privileges and therefore their requests are not taken into consideration.

Experts which were consulted consider that there is a real **fear regarding the risk of losing the right to stay in the country**, which prevents migrants from being active or politically involved. Some correlations were made with examples of foreigners who lose their jobs when they claim their rights and those of other migrants they represent.

Integration level is an important aspect of the TCNs political and civic participation. Integration seems to be understood as a long term two ways process, which involves both sides, the foreign citizen and the hosting community, it means *“feeling secure and safe”*, as well as welcomed. *“Integration means making it easy for people to stay. Access to services needs to be available, and if it is not, you feel very pushed away”.* *“Integration means to feel that you are welcomed, but also to want to feel that; it’s an effort on both sides. I felt integrated mainly because of my membership in the Moldavian student group, which helped me a lot to integrate.”* – Participants in the Focus group discussions

“It took a lot of time to feel content regarding life here and integration; the culture is different and this is a potential impediment....Integration does not mean having the papers done; when you find out that due to bureaucracy you risk your legal stay, that is not part of an integration issue, that is shock. Integration does not mean only services or knowing what the legislation or the proceedings is, it is more than that.” - Participant in the Focus group discussions

Previous and current initiatives. Ambitions, challenges and considerations

Two main aspects have been identified as prominent when analysing the challenges of previous, current and possible initiatives: people’s engagement and lack of trust in public institutions. At the same time, some participants lack trust in the public institutions, and they mentioned that they do not want to be involved in the relationship or collaboration with the authorities. Other challenges identified are related to sustainability, funding, communication and collaboration with institutions.

In the past, in the absence of existing consultation meetings between the central institutions and migrants, other organisations tried to propose parallel mechanisms of consultations with migrants, as an exercise and to demonstrate these consultations are effective.

Part of the legislation was also discussed during the consultations with the stakeholders, especially in what concerns the effective access to social rights through setting up local support teams. However, even though they are mentioned in the law, the legislation does not include representatives of migrant communities in these working groups.¹⁶ According to the

¹⁶ Law 44/2004 regarding the social integration of foreigners, Art. 14, paragraph (2) - which states that at the request of the General Immigration Inspectorate (IGI), local support teams may be set up composed of IGI

legislation, there should be local support teams at the Prefecture level which would ensure cooperation with existing communities at the county level.

All participants in the focus groups are open to contributing to the creation of the council and eager to encourage their communities to get involved in it. Along with the barriers and obstacles, also lessons and considerations have been identified for the creation of the migrant council. Regarding the composition of the migrant council, since each community has its specific needs there is not one single correct answer, but rather consider in the first place that the council should be formed by representatives from each community in order to ensure the representation of the specific needs and interests of each community. Also, it was mentioned that is very important to involve people who possess the capacity to reach out to others and to engage people, communities and sponsors/ attract funds, capable of transmitting the needs of the community to the institutions, in the right way and being vocal, know the market/ dynamics.

Other considerations in setting the council was the horizontal model structure, which ensures constantly changing the management/ leader, instead of having a permanent president, as well as the fact that the council should be both political and civic, similar to the Local Council in Cluj through which projects can be implemented and migrant communities can participate and contribute. The background of the members was also considered, highlighting the importance of involving people with experience in the NGO environment.

As part of the working groups we have identified also other challenges: financial support, lack of time for participating in the meetings (at individual level); language barrier (individual and institutional level). At institutional level: the need to have openness from the public institutions; difficult communication with local institutions; ineffective communication between institutions and NGOs. Other needs identified at the civil society level were as follows: the need of support from the local civil society; the need of initiative groups for foreign communities.

The participants identified together with the challenges, also considerations and ambitions in creating the council, at different levels: main institutions and other NGOs to be involved in the council matters; work in close collaboration with One Stop Shop; use individual experiences of migrants to improve what is not working well. Other issues identified at an institutional level that could be influenced by the creation of the council, were identified as opportunities: the creation of an information office; a friendly and useful website for main institutions. At the civil society level, the participants identified also the following opportunities: ensuring representation of diverse groups in the community.

4. Good Practices

As mentioned previously in this report, except for projects implemented by civil society there are no standing consultative groups or bodies designed for migrants' consultations or political participation. During one of the consultations with the stakeholders, we have identified examples of good practices implemented by civil society organisations in the field of migration and integration.

representatives, public authorities and other organisations. Nothing is mentioned about the involvement of migrants.

- One examples of such projects is coordinated by The Jesuit Refugee Service Bucharest: "Social inclusion of migrants through the involvement of local communities" in partnership with Save the Children, whose main component is the consultation of migrants on their needs and concrete problems, such as: living conditions, education, material support, health, market integration work, social life and leisure. The results of these consultations will be integrated into a concrete intervention plan and, subsequently, into a model of good practice. Another aim is that this project will increase the representation and involvement of migrants in drawing up policies concerning them.
- Other organisations, like The League for the Defence of Human Rights – LADO conducted consultations and other type of activities with the aim of enhancing the participation of migrants or the capacity of other organisations and institutions to ensure migrants participation. At the national level, LADO was the initiator of the national network of mediators composed of 32 migrants, funded in partnership with the Intercultural Institute Timișoara and the Center of Civic Resources Constanța. The sustainability and efficiency of this network has been achieved by LADO at the level of Region 4, with a network of 10 mediators, which is sustainable from 2013 until now. The mediators conduct dialogue and communication on needs and solutions between significant migrant communities and public institutions or other local stakeholders with responsibilities in the field of migration. Beside training mediators on civic involvement and participation in public decision-making in the field of migration, LADO has conducted the following activities, in what concerns enhancing the civic and political participation of migrants:
 - participation in the Cluj Local Civic Council.
 - participation in meetings with parliamentarians to analyse proposals for legislative improvement in the field of migration (right to work for students with 4 hours / day).
 - meetings with public institutions: Health Insurance Cluj (Casa de Asigurări de Sănătate Cluj), County Agency for Employment (AJOFM), Inspectoratul Școlar Județean Cluj (ISJ), General Inspectorate for Immigration (IGI), Territorial labor inspectorate (ITM), Cluj Agency for Payments and Social Inspections (AJPIS), etc. to analyse migrants' problems and identify solutions.
 - training of mediators on the political rights of immigrants: the right to participate in public debates, to promote their rights before local elected officials, parliamentarians).
 - 2 of the LADO mediators are part of the European advisers Network.
- The Romanian National Council for Refugees – CNRR conducted a study (2014) on the national legislation analysing the Electoral Participation of Third Country Nationals in Romania. The study was followed by a policy paper aiming for Improving the political participation of immigrants - third-country nationals (foreign residents who are not EU citizens) with the right of permanent residence to have the possibility of being active in local political life. Moreover, CNRR has another project in the works, which will issue two reports as a result of consultations with migrants from various parts of the country on their needs (the first appears in March - April).
- The Jesuit Refugee Service Timișoara – is implementing an action for the development of a local network and the establishment of partnerships with public institutions, collaboration protocols with The County Agency for Labour Force - AJOFM, The Social Protection Service - DGASPC, mayors, schools, and a cultural mediator in each centre.

- The Jesuit Refugee Service Bucharest - has supported 3 communities - Filipino, Angolan, Cameroonian - with legal counselling for setting up NGOs. Only the Filipino community went further and was registered
- The Association LOGS – Group of Social Initiative – is coordinating a group of volunteers from all over the world who offer help on providing social services to other migrants. Also, another project – Iosefim – had a lot of civic involvement, from a multicultural and multi-ethnic group of people. The project aims to reconnect the city and refugee families settled in a certain neighbourhood.

5. Conclusion

Posibilities for formal political participation of migrants in Romania seems to be very scarce due to multiple factors, such as Romanian policies which create major impediments, lack of information and access to information, especially in English, lack of trust in institutions and government, or the existence of more pressing issues related to life here and integration. In what concerns informal political participation (civic participation) there is an interest and engagement both from the migrant community and from the NGOs active in the field to support the migrant participation in civic life.

In what concerns structural means for ensuring migrants' political participation (formal or non-formal) the lack of political rights and support for immigrant leaders continues to prevent the political integration of immigrants. Besides the extremely limited electoral rights, the difficulties in the naturalisation processes, and the complete absence of consultative bodies or other structures tailored for immigrants' consultations lead to the impossibility of political participation, and moreover civic disengagement. Even though informal political participation is recognized by Romanian legislation as the right to participate in every aspect of life, it is not ensured, or present in more concrete forms, either in the National Policies or formal structures. Nevertheless, the engagement and civic participation of migrants has been supported by the organisations active in the field, along the time, and there are several projects aiming at consulting migrants and enhancing the political participation of migrants through consultations, ensuring representation and collaboration with the local authorities, as described in the previous sections of the current report.

During the Focus groups discussions, Consultations with stakeholders, as well as individual interviews, we have identified the following concrete recommendations in what regards ways forward to improve political participation of migrants and to installing a migrant council:

- The first and most prominent issues in regards formal and non-formal political participation of migrants was the lack of the use of English language in public consultations and communications, therefore the first recommendation in this section is the use of English language in public consultations and communications. These recommendations should be made to institutions, structures and substructures in the public administration.
- Granting the right to vote in local elections for third-country nationals with a permanent residence permit. Extending the right to vote for TCNs with the right of permanent residence would allow them to take part in the decision-making process and will ensure that they enjoy equal treatment in society.
- Creating migrant consultative bodies to ensure the equal and full participation of all society members in the political decision-making process.

- Close collaboration with local authorities, civil society organisations and migrant communities. (One stop Shop; Cluj Civic Council)
- Establish protocol of collaboration with relevant public authorities. (Prefecture, City Hall, The General Immigration Inspectorate, etc)
- Ensure financial sustainability and proper legal funding.
- Ensure a horizontal structure of the council. Create a clear structure of the council departments with different tasks (legal, work, education, involvement in the local overall community, etc.).

Literature

Relevant links (especially to the good practice examples; to associations and organisations mentioned, etc.)

1. Romania-Burundi Partnership group, <https://www.facebook.com/romaniaburundi/>
2. Association of Palestinians in Transylvania, <https://www.jaleya.palestina.ro>
3. The Initiative group of Moldovans, <https://www.gibcluj.ro/>
4. The Filipino Community in Romania <https://www.facebook.com/TFCR2016/>
5. Cluj Local Civic Council <http://consiliulcivicolocal.ro/despre-noi/>
6. The League for the Defence of Human Rights – LADO Cluj Branch <http://ladoxcluj.ro/>
7. Association LOGS <https://grupullogs.ro/>
8. Romanian National Council CNRR - <https://www.cnrr.ro/index.php/ro/>
9. The Coalition for the Rights of Migrants and Refugees - <https://cdmir.ro/wp/>
10. The Jesuit Refugee Service JRS Romania <https://www.jrsromania.org/>
11. Social media Group for Welcoming Foreign Students
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/103626183090227>

Bibliography

1. Anghel, Remus Gabriel and Coșciug, Anatolie, 'Introduction to the Special Issue: Debating Immigration in a Country of Emigration', *Social Change Review* (2018) ▪ Vol. 16(1-2), 3-8.
2. Bogdan, Ghenea, Electoral Participation of Third Country Nationals in Romania, Romanian National Council for Refugees (n.p., 2014)
3. B, M, Radu, Immigrant Integration Index in Romania – IIIR 2017, CRCM - Romanian Migration Research Center.
4. Cosciug, Anatolie and all., Immigrant Integration Index in Romania – IIIR 2017, CRCM - Romanian Migration Research Center.
5. Cosciug, Anatolie and all., Immigrant Integration Index in Romania – IIIR 2019, CRCM - Romanian Migration Research Center.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338633230_INDEXUL_INTEGRARII_IMIGRANTILOR_IN_ROMANIA_2019
6. Inspectoratul General pentru Imigrari (IGI), database received from IGI via email in 2020.
7. Government Emergency Ordinance no. 194/2002 on the legal status of aliens in Romania
8. Law 26/2000 regarding Associations and Foundations
9. Law 44/2004 regarding the social integration of foreigners
10. OECD. 2015. Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015. SETTLING IN. Available at
11. http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/indicators-of-immigrant-integration-2015-settling-in_9789264234024-en, accessed at 1st of April 2022.
12. The National Strategy regarding Immigration for 2019 – 2022
13. Thomas, Huddleston, Jan, Niess, Migrant Integration Policy Index Romania (n.p. 2011)
14. Romanian Constitution

15. Migrant Integration Policy Index 2015, Available at <https://www.mipex.eu/sites/default/files/downloads/files/mipex-2015-book-a5.pdf>, accessed 1st of April 2022
16. Migrant Integration Policy Index 2020, Available at <https://www.mipex.eu/romania>, accessed 1st of April 2022