Immigration - a solution to demographic challenges?

Labour mobility in the Nordic-Baltic region

Regional labour markets of Norway

Immigrants contribute to the Finnish labour market

Integration of refugees in Sweden
At the Nordregio workshop on social innovation in 2014, Anna-Karin Berglund from the Swedish Association of Local and Regional Authorities presented a graph illustrating the growing gap between the costs for care of elderly people and the municipalities’ tax income. Her interpretation of the figures that were presented is basically that my children might have to choose in the future whether to pay 80% of their income in taxes or take care of their parents by themselves.

From that perspective, today’s large number of immigrants to the Nordic countries represents an interesting potential. We can learn from our history. During the 1960s and 70s, Sweden became one of the world’s richest countries, thanks to successful export-oriented industrial production, which was dependent on labour immigrants. As shown in a Nordregio study by Timothy Heleniak and Nora Sanchez-Gassen, migration cannot stop the ageing process alone, but it can boost the labour market and slow down the ageing effects in the short term. In order to fulfil these functions, it is crucial that immigrants are integrated into societies as quickly as possible and particularly into the labour market. If newcomers remain outside paid employment, it can boost the labour market and slow down the ageing effects in the short term. In order to fulfil these functions, it is crucial that immigrants are integrated into societies as quickly as possible and particularly into the labour market. If newcomers remain outside paid employment, it can boost the labour market and slow down the ageing effects in the short term.

Full and successful integration at different levels requires more efforts in match-making between the Nordic labour market needs and the skills of the immigrants. Validation of skills seems in this regard to be especially problematic in some sectors (e.g., health). But first and foremost we need a change in atmosphere and attitudes. The inflow of immigrants and refugees should be seen more as a resource than a problem.

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Immigration to the Nordic countries has increased considerably during recent years. The settlement pattern shows a concentration to larger cities and regions where immigrants are already established, which does not always reflect future needs in regional labour markets due to demographic change. Even though there are many challenges to resolve, especially at the local level, immigration gives us a good possibility to solve the provision of labour in the future.

BY SVERKER LINDBLAD

Migration to and from the Nordic countries has a long history and varies immensely over time and between our countries and regions. The main reasons behind migration are also varied depending on the economic and political situation in Europe and globally. Even climate-related migration might be more common in the future.

Increase of immigration during recent years
According to statistics over the last ten years, immigration has increased considerably to all the Nordic countries, with the exception of Iceland, which experienced a more diverse situation with both high in and outmigration. Sweden and Norway in particular had an extensive increase in immigration during this period. In addition, last year’s increase of refugees and asylum seekers coming to the Nordics, and especially Sweden, has made the situation even more complex. At the end of 2015, around 150,000 individuals were subject to pending asylum applications in Sweden. In Finland and Norway, the figure was around 20,000, slightly less in Denmark.

Almost 15% of the Nordic population is born elsewhere than in their country of residence. The highest share of foreign-born population can be found in Southern and Mid-Sweden in larger city regions of Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö, and in larger city regions of Oslo and Bergen in Norway. On a national level Sweden and Norway have a larger share of foreign-born population than the other Nordic Countries. In Finland the share of foreign-born population is very low in some regions. In Faroe Islands and Greenland the share of foreign-born population is relatively high, but dominated by persons born in Denmark.

During the last 20 years the share of foreign born population in Nordic region has increased from 6.5% to 14.3%. On a national level the increase has been fastest in Norway followed by Sweden. At the regional level the increase has been fastest in Rogaland, Oslo and Akershus in Norway and in Reykjavik in Iceland.
From migrants to workers in the regional labour markets of Norway

Immigration to Norway has increased strongly since the turn of the millennium and especially since the eastward EU enlargement.

BY Lasse Sigbjørn Stambøl

The immigration has changed from being gender balanced during the first years of the 2000s towards a clear male dominance after 2005, mostly due to increased labour-associated immigration, but also among new refugees. There has also been a change from a dominance of refugees and their families towards labour immigrants and their families, where family reunion with labour immigrants exceeds the family reunion with refugees since 2007. Individuals with a background from Poland clearly dominate the number of immigrants. This group comprise of over twice as many individuals as the next country on the list, Lithuania. Refugees and their families show the strongest tendency to stay in Norway after immigration, while people from other Nordic countries and people that immigrate for education show less probability of staying in Norway and thus have higher emigration.

Concentration of immigrants in certain regions

Looking at the regional perspective, there is a higher concentration of foreign-born people in larger cities, especially the capital region. There are also high shares of foreign-born individuals in other regions, in many cases related to the historical needs of the labour market. There seems also to be a regional correlation between a high share of foreign-born population and an increase of foreign-born individuals. This is not surprising due to a lot of immigrants being family members or related to earlier immigrants. To settle in an area where your own population group is already established and where you can speak your native language also gives a sense of security and thereby attracts people from the same native countries.

The regional distribution of last year’s inflow of refugees might diverge a little from the picture given above, at least in the short term. Many small and medium-sized municipalities have during the last year accommodated a higher share of refugees. The ability for municipalities to offer temporary accommodation and school places to their children has been an additional factor behind the asylum seekers settlement pattern. However, in those cases, there seems also to be a specific movement to larger city regions and municipalities that already have a high share of immigrants. So far, little attention has been given to the future needs of regional labour markets in relation to demographic challenges and the correlation with immigration’s settlement patterns.

Demographic challenges and needs in regional labour markets

An underlying report to the Swedish Long Term Survey 2015 (Bilaga 7 Till Längdintärdning 2015) shows that demographic developments will lead to considerable shortages of labour in many parts of the country until the year 2040. The supply of labour will not fulfil needs due to an unbalanced age structure with too few individuals of working age. This will especially be the case in sparsely populated regions at further distance from larger cities. The national population forecast for 2040 shows that 63 percent of the population increase in the age group 16–74 will come from countries with low or medium-lower development levels according to the UN Human Development Index. Later forecasts have shown that a higher immigration might lead to lower shortages of labour, but the proportion of individuals from countries with a high or medium-high development level will increase.

Important steps to unleash the potential

This leads us to some implications and conclusions about immigration as a potential to solve future labour market needs at a regional level:

• We need to know more about who is coming, where they settle and what skills they have.
• The immigrant’s education and skills have to be validated according to national requirements and criteria.
• Informal skills and practices need to be validated.
• Complimentary education and language courses have to be provided for those not fulfilling national labour market requirements.
• Matching local with labour markets has to be analysed. Are the immigrant’s education and skills conforming to the local labour market needs?
• Affordable housing and schools have to be provided where people are needed.

All levels, from national to regional and local, have their specific roles in relation to the steps mentioned above, but the municipalities obviously have some crucial responsibilities that treated correctly can help them in solving demographic challenges and labour market needs. In the Nordic Working Group on Demography and Welfare the project “From Migrants to Workers” will analyse the situation, but also show some good examples from municipalities in the Nordic countries.

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Strong increase of labour immigrants in jobs

There has been a strong increase in the proportion of immigrants in the labour market. Immigration might lead to lower shortages of labour, but the proportion of individuals from countries with a high or medium-high development level will increase.

Labour participation varies by the reason for immigration

Immigrants that have migrated due to labour and education and Nordic immigrants show generally the highest labour participation rate, while the lowest work participation is to be found among refugees. This is also observed in the region of Oslo has reduced its share of new immigrants to Norway from about a third to nearly a quarter during this period.

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Domain relocation increases transitions both to and from jobs among immigrants with a family as the main reason for immigration and among refugees. We can see that the main trend is a clearly increasing participation rate among immigrants with increasing duration of residence in Norway. Labour immigrants and Nordic immigrants have a relatively high labour participation rate outside the first three years as residents, while refugees and family immigrants show a very low labour participation rate during the first three years after immigration. The same is the situation for education immigrants since they are mainly in education. However, refugees, family and education immigrants increase their labour participation over the following three years of residence.

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Immigrants contribute to the Finnish labour market

Finland has traditionally been a country of emigration. People have left for other Western countries to find better job opportunities and have especially preferred Sweden. Finland became a country of immigration in the beginning of the 1980s when the balance of international migration switched to positive. The most noticeable wave of immigration occurred in the 1990s when Ingrain Finns received returnee-status. The reception of refugees, for example, Somalis during the first half of the 1990s, has further increased the flow of immigration to Finland.

By ELLI HEIKKIÄ

From an emigration to an immigration country

The year 2015 represents a remarkable immigration year as Finland received a total of 32 476 asylum seekers. This was ten times higher than the previous year of 3 651 asylum seekers. Reception centres have been established all over the country for these newly arrived asylum seekers. There were 28 refugee reception centres functioning in 2014 and 212 centres in 2015.

The number of those born abroad was 337 162 individuals in 2015. This represents six percent of the total population. In Finland, the proportion of immigrants is, however, small compared to other European countries, but it is expected to grow further in the future. The prevalent countries of birth have been Russia, Estonia, Sweden, Somalia and Iraq.

The most common motive for moving to Finland is connected to family reasons, for example finding a Finnish spouse and facing marriage migration. International students and labour migrants also form important immigrant groups, as well as humanitarian migrants and return migrants.

Unemployment rate still high among immigrants

The position in the labour market is a central indicator of the social status of immigrants and ethnic groups and employment is thus the foundation for the successful integration of immigrants. Both in Finland and in other industrialized countries, it is more difficult for immigrants to find work than for the native population. The result is that the former often have several times higher unemployment rates than the latter.

The employment rate for immigrants has improved with the economic cycle in Finland. For example, during the deep economic downturn in 1994 the unemployment rate for foreigners was 53 percent and for the total population it was 17 percent, i.e. the rate was three times higher for the former. The unemployment rates in 2014 were 27 percent for foreign citizens and 13 percent for Finnish citizens. There are huge differences in unemployment rates by citizenship: the unemployment rate for Estonians has been 17 percent, for Russians 41 percent and for Somalis as high as 73 percent in 2014.

The number of employed foreign citizens was 82 188 individuals in 2014. This represented 3.6 percent of all employed. Immigrants tend to be concentrated in certain branches of activity and immigrant employment sectors showed some gender differences in the 2000s and the 2010s. Trade has been the most important sector to employ both immigrant men and women. The finance, insurance, real estate and business activity sectors have especially employed men. For women, education and research have been important, and also employment in health and social work. Transport, communication and construction sectors have been important for immigrant men. Industry has employed many men, and the manufacture of electrical machinery has been especially important. It is clear that the proportion of the employed has grown with better education among both males and females. When looking at entrepreneurship, 11 percent of employed Finns have been entrepreneurs in 2014 but among Turks, it is very common: 37 percent of employed Turks have been entrepreneurs.

Immigrants are sometimes ready to take a job not corresponding to their education just to get on the first step of the labour market and through this integrate into society. Another problem for immigrant job-seekers is that foreign degrees are not valued by employers, despite the fact that they are officially recognised. Also, learning the Finnish or Swedish language is an essential key factor for successful entry into the labour market.
In Punkalaidun, local agricultural businesses and small companies require seasonal labour. Moreover, the local population is both decreasing and ageing – this worked as a good motivation to keep the immigrants. The town is also able to offer suitable housing and public services (schools, health services, etc.) for the newcomers.

The project hired an immigration co-ordinator, Maarit Tiittanen, to solve basic problems and build bridges between the newcomers and Punkalaidun residents, and she has played a key role in establishing mutual trust and respect. The personal skills and qualities of the co-ordinator are the main factor behind the success of the Punkalaidun integration project. Maarit Tiittanen not only works in this position, she dedicates herself wholeheartedly to the task, 24/7.

In 2012–2015, the integration project was assisted and supported by the Joutsentenreitti ry LAG (LEADER Local Action Group, funded by the European Union) in the municipality of Punkalaidun. The LEADER group can provide financial resources as well as promote international good practice and networks to support Tiittanen’s challenging role, explains Petri Rinne, the director of Joutsentenreitti ry.

In accordance with a strategy that seeks to provide education for all, the municipality has organized education for preschool and school-aged children. The Western Finland Sastamala College and the Education Centre in Satakunta provide educational services for adult asylum seekers. Training begins while the asylum application process is ongoing.

Since the project is a Leader-funded non-profit development project, private funding was needed. Private funding covered 20% of the financing of the plan and some work was also provided free of charge through voluntary work, this often entailed unpaid work by volunteers, for example in organizing events such as Christmas parties and family gatherings, and football coaching, homework support, etc.

There is even a football team, FC Vartiola, which is led by a 71-year-old Italian football coach.

The project aims to promote employment opportunities for immigrants on farms, in small businesses and in the third sector. Petri Rinne comments:

- We need better matchmaking and knowledge of the newcomers’ backgrounds. With quota refugees in Punkalaidun, it has been easy to integrate people who were born, lived and worked in rural areas of Myanmar or Syria. Newcomers from Bagdad tend to move to cities, which is only natural. Entering a training institution or the labour market as early as possible is also crucial.

The Immigrant Villages Project consciously promotes the integration of immigrants into Finnish society through flexible and practical measures. Effective integration of immigrants provides a future for immigrants to stay in the community for a number of years. There were once 24 immigrants housed locally, and now there are over 120. This increased interaction at the same time supports the vitality of the villages, the potential of the business sector and the uptake of leisure activities. Co-operation with local business has helped increase rural employment.

Petri Rinne finds this model very functional:

- We strongly recommend this model to other Nordic municipalities. The immigration co-ordinator is the key to a smooth integration experience – in terms of both social and economic aspects. The co-ordinator knows the backgrounds of the newcomers, and can help meet their needs with the local services, as well as match their skills with the local labour market. There is a strong need for more projects that share good practice at both a national and a European level. The European Commission, for example, has given widespread publicity to the Punkalaidun project. The Village Action Association of Finland has implemented projects on a national level with the aim of disseminating good practice.
The labour market integration of refugees in Sweden

Sweden is one of the few countries in Europe to provide protection to a large number of refugees fleeing war and conflict zones in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. Despite its relatively small population of about 10 million, it had the highest number per capita of individuals seeking asylum (163,000) in 2015.

The large number of refugees and their families who were granted residency in Sweden over the last few years constitutes a major challenge to Swedish society and, in particular, to the labour market. According to a recent report from the OECD, only 22 per cent of newly arrived males had employment after one or two years of introductory programmes. For women, this percentage was as low as 8 per cent (OECD, 2016). However, the long-term employment rates of previously arrived refugees in Sweden are more favourable and lead us to believe that the numbers presented above will grow within the next few years. As reported by the Swedish Migration Delegation (DEMLI), only 30 per cent of refugees who arrived between 1997 and 2009 were employed after two years of residency in Sweden, whereas this number increased to about 65 per cent after 10 years in the country. Despite the fact that this data is still below the Swedish average employment rate of about 80 per cent (including both males and females), it is illustrative of the gradual (slow) growth in employment rates experienced by refugees, as found in the literature.

According to Eurostat, the number of first-time asylum applicants in Europe over the last quarter of 2015 reached 3.3 million, over three times more than in 2013. However, the number of first-time asylum seekers dropped by 33 per cent during this period.

The current inflow to Sweden has put extra pressure on local labour markets. Integration policies should address the specific knowledge gaps of the current flow in relation to the labour market. As a result, the resettlement policy needs to be adapted and revised so that the refugee experience is ameliorated. Specific policy initiatives to speed up the labour market integration of newly arrived refugees, such as using alternative criteria, faster skill-level evaluation and improved language courses, would be beneficial, not only for refugees but also for the whole of Swedish society.

A number of factors are cited in the literature regarding this question. One of the reasons for this slower adaptation process is the depreciation of human capital, skills and credentials due to the asylum and skill accreditation processes. Another reason discussed in the literature is the negative selection of refugees. In other words, refugees – unlike labour migrants – are not selected primarily on the basis of their labour market skills and, therefore, it will take longer for them to match the demand in the host labour market. Moreover, there is reason to believe that refugees are treated less favourably than labour migrants or family reunion migrants by their host countries. The reasons behind such differences need to be further investigated.

While current figures on asylum seekers and refugees seem to indicate that this is not the first time in history that Sweden has received asylum seekers and tried to incorporate them into the labour market. During the Second World War and directly after, Sweden accepted about 200,000 refugees from Poland, Finland and the Baltic states as well as Jewish refugees from the neighbouring countries of Denmark and Norway. The Swedish policy at that time was to integrate these refugees as soon as possible into the labour market and resettle them in those parts of the country where there was a high labour demand. Another account of the importance of the labour market integration of refugees in earlier days is that of the integration of Hungarian refugees in Sweden in the 1950s.

Since then, and especially over the last three decades, Swedish integration policies on refugees have gradually continued developing to become more encompassing and ambitious than ever before. The current policy was adopted in 2010 and it focuses on the first two years after gaining a residence permit. Refugees are subject to an introduction programme that includes basic Swedish language training and access to labour market services. Furthermore, the ministry states that “all steps in the refugee settlement process shall be aimed at finding employment.”

Despite these efforts, the labour market integration of asylum seekers who receive residence permits and of those deemed quota or resettled refugees in particular, has been characterized by having a slower pace, compared with that of family reunion migrants and labour migrants. The reasons behind such differences need to be further investigated.

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The Cool Embrace: Recent Migration Trends into the Nordic Region

In recent years, migration flows into the Nordic countries have been at historically high levels, with many of the recent arrivals coming as refugees or asylum seekers. This has challenged the well-established integration programs that the countries have in place.

**BY TIMOTHY HELENIAK**

**Immigration into the Nordic countries reaches historical heights**

Over the twenty-six-year period from 1990 to 2016, the population of the Nordic countries has grown by 15 percent from a combination of both natural increase (more births than deaths) and positive net immigration (more immigrants than emigrants). Over this period, net immigration has accounted for about two-thirds of total population increase and natural increase one-third. Since 2007, net migration has increased considerably in Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark and has become the major source of population increase, far exceeding that of natural increase. Thus, since 2007 in the four Nordic countries making up the bulk of the population, adding new people through immigration has been the primary source of population increase thus contributing to increasingly diverse populations.

Unlike the other Nordic countries, Iceland has vacillated between being a country of net emigration and net immigration since 1960. From 1980-1996, there was a net emigration of 9,000 persons. During the boom years of 1997-2008, there was a huge net inflow of 20,000 followed by a net outflow of 6,000 during 2009-2014 following the banking crisis. In the early 1990s, the volume of new people coming to the country only amounted to just over 1 percent of the total population. This small inflow had minimal impact on the economy and society. At the peak of immigration in 2007, this inflow represented over 4 percent of the Icelandic population.

The population of foreign origin in the Nordic region

The Nordic countries define and tabulate data on the immigrant or foreign-origin populations differently. However, the data reveal a trend of rapid increases in the foreign-origin populations in all of the Nordic countries. Iceland collects quite detailed data on the population of foreign origin. People are divided into those with no foreign background, those born abroad with an Icelandic background and immi grants, which are further divided into first and second generation immigrants.

In 2015, the sum of those with no foreign background and those born abroad with an Icelandic background had declined to 85 percent of the total population and immigrants had increased to 9 percent. Thus, the total share of the population with some foreign background is now 15 percent of the Icelandic population, a significant increase from twenty years previous when it was just 5 percent.

For Finland, data are collected on persons with Finnish background and persons with foreign background. These are disaggregated into those born in Finland and those born abroad. Finland has had less immigration than the other Nordic countries and thus has a smaller foreign-origin population. However, there has still been a considerable increase in the foreign-origin population within the country since 1990.

Norway has the most detailed data on the foreign-origin population. Statistics Norway collects and compiles data on the place of birth of all people, their parents, and their grandparents. This results in thirty different categories of foreign-born based on three generations.

In 1990, the immigrant population made up 7.1 percent of the population, half of which were first generation immigrants without Norwegian background. Most of the rest were persons born in Norway with at least one foreign-born parent – second generation immigrants. The immigrant population has grown steadily so that in 2016, it made up 22.4 percent of the population. Of the total population, 13.4 percent were first-generation immigrants.

**“SINCE 2007, NET MIGRATION HAS INCREASED CONSIDERABLY IN NORWAY, SWEDEN, FINLAND, AND DENMARK AND HAS BECOME THE MAJOR SOURCE OF POPULATION INCREASE, FAR EXCEEDING THAT OF NATURAL INCREASE.”**
Mind the data gap: which groups of people are measured when measuring different types of migration?

BY LISBETH GREVE HARBO

When assessing migration trends from register data, the definition of how a migrant is categorised becomes crucial in the understanding of which types of flows and migrants are actually measured.

An overall distinction is made between international migrants and domestic migrants. Crudely speaking, this distinction is related to the type of border the migrants move across rather than a characteristic of the migrants themselves. In other words, if the movement happens across a national border, this is termed internal international migration, while migration across regional or municipal borders within the same country are domestic migrants. Thus the term international migration is not necessarily as closely linked to nationality as the name may seem to imply. This depends on whether the international migrants are determined by last point of residence, by birthplace or perhaps by nationality (-ies). In practice, this means that the flow of people from, for example the UK to Sweden, if measured by last point of residence, contains also the return migration of Swedish nationals. If the same UK to Sweden flow is measured by either place of birth or nationality, it will be possible to distinguish the share that Swedish nationals constitute of these UK-SF flows, as well as any other nationalities that move to Sweden while the nationalities become a fixed variable, and is the most relevant characteristic to measure as people may change their citizenship during their lifetime while place of birth is a fixed variable. If all types of variables are available for the migration flow, one would like to measure, the selection of data comes down to a question of what we want to measure: is it the sum of flows of people between two countries, the flow of certain nationalities between two countries, or is it the composition of this flow with regard to nationality and/or birth place that is interesting?

Another aspect is the birthplace versus nationality issue that is also countries change. One important example is the breakup of the Soviet Union whereby migrants that had left during the Soviet times, would have been registered with ‘Soviet Union’ as their place of birth, while they may actually have been born, for example, present-day Estonia. Some national statistical offices have chosen to correct these Soviet migrants’ place of birth in retrospect but not all, so this is an important issue to be aware of.

Yet another aspect is the situation where there is no distinction in nationality between two countries/regions. One Nordic example is the flows between Greenland and Denmark, where all have Danish nationality but place of birth registration makes it possible to distinguish between people born in Denmark and people born in Greenland. However, due to the special administrative division between Denmark and Greenland, the Nordic statistical offices registers are not in union about how to publish data on the Greenlandic population. For example, Statistics Norway separates Denmark, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, while Statistics Sweden does not.

One desire that often arises for those concerned with measuring migration flows is even more detailed socio-economic information on the migrants as well as the motivations behind the migration decisions. Some attempts are made in the Nordic countries where immigrants by surveys are asked to characterise themselves (e.g. by education level) and/or their motivations for migration (e.g. asylunm, work, study, family) but this is not systematic nor practised across time, countries and regions. Another weakness of this type of registration is that such characterisations are not fixed, education levels change shortly after the migrants’ arrival, just as it can be difficult to validate their selected motivation category. For example, while the initial motivation for immigration - and more importantly the permit for entry - may be study and/or work, the underlying motivation for applying to a specific country could rather be a desire to move to the country of a significant other. Thus, the primary reason for the individual may more appropriately be termed ‘family reasons’ and the study/work just the tool that made such a unification possible, and in general the motivations behind migration are often more blurred than a simple reply to such a survey question would imply.

Domestic migration is mainly assessed as flows across regional and/or municipal borders, in other words permanent moves between local administrations within the country. As the aim is often to assess the stock of population and the population development in these administrative regions, accounts of net-migration are often insufficient. However, this does not reveal anything about the composition of the people moving between regions/municipalities, and therefore inquiries into age or gender compositions can in most Nordic countries be assessed on rather detailed level while inquiries into these domestic migrant’s nationality and/or place of birth are not nearly as readily available.
Labour mobility in the Nordic-Baltic region

The Nordic and Baltic countries share many similarities when it comes to negative demographic tendencies, particularly in the rural areas, as consequences of population ageing, lowering of birth rates, gender imbalance and outmigration. These challenges are highly complex in nature and difficult to mitigate and adapt to, and call for concerted actions at the national and local levels.

BY LISBETH GREVE HARBO & ANNA BERLINA

Given the geographical proximity and the close historical ties between the Nordic and Baltic countries, the Nordic Council of Ministers’ Offices in the Baltic States have taken an interest in labour mobility issues and conducted a demographic vulnerability assessment in the Nordic-Baltic region. The project “Enhanced Nordic-Baltic co-operation on challenges of labour mobility in the Nordic-Baltic region 2014–2015” (BLAM) was realized in co-operation with the Nordic Council of Ministers’ Offices in the Baltic States and Nordregio.

One of the outcomes of the BLAM project has been the visualization of the complexity of the demographic dynamics at the municipal level in the Nordic-Baltic region. The Baltic countries have experienced significant outmigration in the last decades (see map illustrating only the migration indicator out of the 10 vulnerability indicators, the whole vulnerability map can be found on the project website).

This demographic vulnerability assessment map shows that the majority of municipalities in both Nordic and Baltic countries are experiencing negative demographic tendencies. At the same time, more positive demographic tendencies can also be observed within the countries, primarily in the capital areas and the more dynamic, growing city-regions. The map helps to identify municipalities that share common demographic development opportunities, as well as the complexity of specific challenges for each municipality.

The remaining parts of the project have focused on migration, given that it is one of the most significant factors influencing the demographic structure in the Nordic-Baltic region. While migration in the Nordic countries has exceeded the natural population increase as the most prominent driver of population growth, the Baltic countries have experienced significant outmigration in the last decades. In the context of the Nordic-Baltic region, migration is primarily understood as a cross-border labour movement; the current refugee issues have consequently been outside the scope of this project.

Some of the key policy findings of the project are as follows.
• Despite the fact that the Baltic States share many similarities related to outmigration, the focus of migration policies is quite different among them when it comes to the target groups and measures implemented. While all three Baltic countries are interested in encouraging return migration, there is a strong focus on strengthening ties and developing social and economic co-operation with the diaspora from Latvia and Lithuania, while Estonian politicians are primarily focusing on (re-)attracting a highly skilled labour force and thus branding Estonia internationally as a desirable place to work and study.
• The Nordic and Baltic countries have different approaches to their work with labour migration issues. While labour migration is largely a municipal task in the Nordic countries, migration policy in the Baltic States is controlled and formulated by the central governments with limited involvement of the local governments in the process. As long as the responses to coping with the demographic and labour-related challenges vary across the municipalities due to different place-based characteristics, it might be beneficial to increase the involvement of local and regional actors in migration policy in the Baltic States and encourage the local level to develop its own agendas.
• There is significant potential for the Baltic and Nordic countries to exchange experiences and good practices on how to address both demographic challenges and labour mobility issues.

For more information on this project, and to access the project publications and maps, visit www.nordregio.se/BLAM.
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