

Maastricht University

HIGHLY EDUCATED MIGRANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE EUREGIONAL WELCOME CULTURE

*DEMAND AND TARGET GROUP ANALYSIS ACCOMPANYING THE
YOUREGION PROJECT*

March 2021

Julia Reinold

ITEM is an initiative of Maastricht University (UM), the Dutch Centre of Expertise on Demographic Changes (NEIMED), Zuyd University of Applied Sciences, the City of Maastricht, the Euregio Meuse-Rhine (EMR), and the Dutch Province of Limburg.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	3
LIST OF FIGURES	3
LIST OF TABLES	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	3
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	4
1. INTRODUCTION	7
2. KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS	10
3. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND: TOWARDS A EUREGIONAL WELCOME CULTURE	11
4. DATA AND METHODOLOGY	14
5. DEMAND AND TARGET GROUP ANALYSIS: FEELING WELCOME IN THE EMR?	17
5.1 ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS.....	17
5.2 FEELING WELCOME.....	18
5.3 THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE	22
5.4 CHALLENGES REGARDING LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION	25
5.5 INTERNATIONALS' PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICES	26
5.6 ADDITIONAL NEEDS AND CHALLENGES	27
5.7 TARGET GROUP ANALYSIS	31
5.8 EUREGIONAL MINDSET.....	35
6. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION: TOWARDS A EUREGIONAL WELCOME CULTURE	37
REFERENCES	41
ANNEX 1: <i>youREGION</i> EVENTS ORGANISED UNDER WP5 & WP6.....	43
ANNEX 2: SUMMARIES OF EVENT OBSERVATIONS	44
ANNEX 3: CLARIFICATIONS ON WP5, DELIVERABLE 1: NETWORKING OF EXISTING OFFER STRUCTURES	47
ANNEX 4: INTERVIEWEE CHARACTERISTICS.....	48

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DCS	Dual career service
ECMR	Expat Centre Maastricht Region
EMR	Euregio Meuse-Rhine
EUN	European Union Citizen
FGD	Focus group discussion
GIP	Grenzinfopunkt
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
POM Limburg	Provinciale Ontwikkelingsmaatschappij Limburg (B)
RWTH	Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule Aachen
TCN	Third Country National
WI, WII	Wave one/two of interviews
WP	Work package

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Defining a political, societal and ideal welcome culture	12
Figure 2: Survey respondents feeling welcome upon arrival.....	18
Figure 3: Factors making survey respondents feel welcome	19
Figure 4: Factors making survey respondents feel unwelcome.....	20
Figure 5: Information sources consulted pre-arrival.....	22
Figure 6: Language proficiency of survey respondents	24
Figure 7: Proficiency in the official language of other EMR sub-regions.....	24
Figure 8: Reasons for consulting available services.....	27
Figure 9: Survey respondents' demand for services considering length of stay	31

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Key concepts and definitions	10
Table 2: Overview of migrant data per EMR sub-region	15
Table 3: youRegion partners and their involvement in WP5 and WP6.....	16
Table 4: Need for additional services based on survey and interview findings.....	30
Table 5: Demand for services depending on migration channel.....	32
Table 6: Demand for services depending on reason for migration.....	32

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report would not have been possible without the support of the youRegion WP5 and WP6 project partners and the migrants who participated in the interviews and the survey. The author is thankful to Vera Ronda for her invaluable research assistance in preparation of this report. This gratitude is extended to the student assistants and interns at ITEM and UNU-MERIT/MGSoG, who supported the event observations, and to Nina Büttgen and Martin Unfried for their guidance and support throughout the research process.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report informs the activities carried out under work packages (WPs) 5 and 6 of the INTERREG-V-A project *youRegion* (2018-2022) to establish a euregional welcome culture by answering the following **research questions**:

1. *How can a Euregional welcome culture be defined and what contributes to international highly educated migrants feeling welcome in the EMR?*
2. *To what extent do the activities carried out under WP5 and WP6 lead to achieving the project goals and completing the respective deliverables? What can be done to align the activities more with the needs of the target group?*

The term welcome culture stems from the relatively new German word **Willkommenskultur** for which a clear conceptualisation is missing. Depending on the context, it can be defined in a political, societal and academic way. As a working definition, this report argues that a **Euregional welcome culture** can be created through the cross-border cooperation of political or societal institutions located in different sub-regions of the EMR, which organise activities targeted towards (international) newcomers living and working in the region.

The report is based on various **data sources**. A comprehensive **online survey** and two rounds of in-depth **interviews** were conducted with international highly educated migrants living (and working) in the EMR. It should be noted that the data is not representative. In addition, observations from *youRegion* events were included. Moreover, a **focus group discussion** and survey among the partners of WP5 and 6 were implemented to assess the quality of collaboration and ways to improve it. All data sources were analysed by means of content analysis to answer the research questions.

The report finds that the **majority** of survey respondents and interviewees **feels welcome** in the EMR. In all EMR's sub-regions it is especially the locals' attitudes and behaviour and the availability of information in foreign languages that makes newcomers feel welcome. Survey results also indicate that both the political and societal sphere are important to make the migrants feel welcome in the EMR.

Additionally, the results indicate that **language is key** in establishing a **welcome culture** and in furthering **social and economic integration** of migrants. Many migrants face challenges related to bureaucratic communication, and voice a demand for English-speaking staff in institutions. The importance of general information provision in English is underlined by the fact that 44 per cent of the survey respondents have no or limited knowledge of the host country language. At the same time, migrants' own language skills also influence the extent to which they feel welcome, and

language also seems to be key to economic and social integration. Most interviewees perceive language as more important regarding the social aspect, however, command of the local language also plays a crucial role in finding employment in the region.

Labour market integration seems to be challenging for highly educated migrants. Most interviewees state that it is very **difficult to find employment** in the EMR based on their own, their partner's or other network's experiences. This is mainly due to **language barriers** and problems with the **recognition of diplomas**, which caused difficulties in finding work, and sometimes they had to accept a job they were overqualified for, or in a different field. In the survey, 141 respondents perceive living in a border region as an advantage because of an **increased range of employment opportunities** in neighbouring countries. At the same time, problems related to their or their partner's employment are identified as the **most important border barrier** by 52 individuals. Additionally, survey respondents frequently mention a need for career- or work-related advice.

Internationals who have used **available services** seem mostly satisfied, however, many are not aware of them. Those who used the services, mostly did so for "legal, administrative or bureaucratic issues", and "immigration issues and support settling in". Furthermore, respondents explained that they used the services for networking and establishing contacts. More than half of the respondents indicated that **additional services** to facilitate the entry and stay of internationals in the region are needed, mainly to deal with bureaucratic and administrative issues, housing, and establishing social contacts.

For the target group analysis, interviewees were asked to define a migrant, a highly skilled migrant and an expat and their **self-identification**, i.e. whether they identify with any of the three. Most identify as highly skilled migrants, followed by identifying with all three groups. Five interviewees each, stated that they identify as a migrant or as none of the groups. Only few interviewees identify as expats, who are often regarded as more privileged and temporary migrant workers.

The demand and target group analysis has shown that the **activities carried out under the youRegion project are largely in line with the needs of highly educated migrants** in the EMR. Nevertheless, some **recommendations** based on the experiences of highly educated migrants living and working in the EMR can be formulated in order to align the services provided even more with the demands of the target group:

WP 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise more awareness for available services, using for example companies, higher education institutions, municipalities and immigration desks as multipliers • Provide information in English (and possibly other foreign languages)
WP 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a broad definition of the target group, including internationals who have been living in the region for longer • Provide information in English (and possibly other foreign languages) • Continue virtual events • Organise events where migrants can bring their children • Organise and intercultural training • Create a mentor system between locals and newcomers to learn the Euregional languages

1. INTRODUCTION

Established in 1976, the Euregio Meuse-Rhine (EMR) is one of the oldest and most diverse euroregions, which is characterized by the many different languages and cultures (Euregio Meuse-Rhine, n.d., 2013; Perkmann, 2003). The EMR promotes, coordinates and enhances the cross-border collaboration between its five partner regions, with the goal of creating a 'balanced and sustainable territorial development without internal borders' (Euregio Meuse-Rhine, n.d.; European Committee of the Regions, n.d.). The partner regions include Region Aachen-Zweckverband in Germany, the South of the Province of Limburg in the Netherlands, the German-speaking community in Belgium, and the Provinces of Limburg and Liège in Belgium (European Committee of the Regions, n.d.). Within the EMR, there are five universities, several universities of applied science, 300 research institutes, and around 250,000 companies, which include larger companies as well as small- and medium sized enterprises (Reinold & Unfried, 2019; youRegion, n.d.). The EMR wants to actively engage in cross-border coordination of education and training, and the improvement of euregional information, multilingualism and counselling. This way, new talent can be attracted across borders, while domestic talent and knowledge can be further supported (Euregio Meuse-Rhine, 2013). Demographic trends such as population decline and an ageing population are also a challenge for the EMR, attracting and retaining highly skilled workers from outside the EMR could be a way to alleviate these challenges (Reinold & Unfried, 2019).

The **INTERREG-V-A project youRegion (2018-2022)** pursues two overarching objectives: to promote the **cross-border labour market** in the EMR by centrally coordinating and linking the advisory and placement services and to establish a **Euregional welcome culture** for newcomers, employees and companies in the region. The youRegion project aims at increasing cross-border cooperation of already existing services. Thereby, it seeks to attract and retain newcomers and to integrate them into the (Euregional) labour market, and to improve cross-border information services for frontier workers, including those in atypical employment relationships. The project intends to consolidate the Euregional labour market and effectively mitigate (upcoming) shortages of skilled workers in the region. It contributes to establishing the EMR as an attractive place to work and live, with excellent research and employment opportunities, in order to retain people in the region for the long term. These factors will also make the Euregional market more attractive for companies to invest and grow in, while ensuring their enduring and social value in the Euregional communities.

A **Euregional welcome culture** can be created through the cross-border cooperation of **political or societal institutions** located in different sub-regions of the EMR, which organise activities targeted towards (international) newcomers living and working in the region. Reinold and

Unfried (2019) prepared an “Inventory of Services and Activities for Newcomers in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine” in preparation of the youRegion project. They found that cross-border cooperation between relevant actors usually does not go beyond sporadic exchanges of information. The youRegion project is the only exception to this, which highlights its uniqueness and potential for the region.

The following **research questions** are the focus of this report:

3. *How can a Euregional welcome culture be defined and what contributes to international highly educated migrants feeling welcome in the EMR?*
4. *Demand and target group analysis: To what extent do the activities carried out under WP5 and WP6 lead to achieving the project goals and completing the respective deliverables? What can be done to align the activities more with the needs of the target group?*

The purpose of this report is to **inform the activities carried out under work packages (WPs) 5 and 6**, intended to establish a Euregional welcome culture. Specifically, it examines the needs and experiences of highly educated migrants living in the region in order to align the project partners’ activities with the target group’s needs and enhance the service provision offered to serve the transfer into sustainable structures.

This report is one of two informing the work of the project partners involved in WPs 5 and 6. The second one is an adequacy and sustainability assessment, focussing on the quality of collaboration between the project partners thus far. Conducting such an assessment during the project duration with an eye to continued collaboration post-INTERREG has been shown to increase the functioning and sustainability of collaboration between different institutions (Brown, Feinberg & Greenberg, 2012).

The two reports are based on the **content analysis** of a variety of **data** including a survey and interviews with international highly educated migrants in the EMR, observations of events organised under the framework of the youRegion project, and a focus group discussion and survey among the partners of WPs 5 and 6.

This report **finds** that most survey respondents and interviewees feel welcome in the EMR and that political and societal factors contribute to that. Language seems to be the most important explanatory factor, including information provision in English, locals’ willingness to communicate in foreign languages and internationals themselves learning the official language of the host country. Many survey respondents express a need for more services, giving concrete examples, which suggests a lack of awareness of what is already offered. The activities carried out under

WP5 and 6 are in line with highly skilled migrants demands and appreciated by most individuals who participated in the events so far. It is recommended that the target group is defined in broad terms as a need for services persists also years after arrival in the EMR. In addition, many interviewees do not strictly identify as expats or highly skilled migrants, suggesting that many highly educated migrants in the region are not reached if the target group is defined too narrowly.

Following from this introduction, Chapter 2 defines key concepts underlying this report. Chapter 3 conceptualises the term “welcome culture” based on a brief literature review and develops a working definition of the concept of Euregional welcome culture as the project specific objective underlying the activities carried out under WPs 5 and 6. Chapter 4 then outlines data and methodology. Chapter 5 focuses on the demand and target group analysis to inform the activities carried out under WPs 5 and 6, respectively. By bringing in the views of the target group, the chapter contributes to realising the project goals and completing the deliverables. Chapter 6 discusses the main findings and their implications for the establishment of a Euregional welcome culture. Conclusions and recommendations for the implementation of the *youRegion* project are outlined in the final chapter.

2. KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

The table below defines key concepts used throughout the report. Other concepts that are crucial to achieving the project goals and completing the deliverables of WPs 5 and 6 are discussed in the relevant chapters later in this report (see for example Chapter 4 for a definition of Euregional welcome culture).

Table 1: Key concepts and definitions

Migration	Migration involves “the movement of a person or a group of persons either across an international border, or within a state. It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people whatever its length, composition or causes” (IOM, 2015, n.d.).
Internal migration	Internal migration is a “movement of people [...] within their country of origin (e.g. rural to urban migration)” (IOM, 2015, n.d.).
International migration	International migration is a movement “across international borders for a purpose other than short-term visits” (IOM, 2015, n.d.).
Newcomer	Newcomers are individuals who recently moved to the EMR from outside the region, including both internal and international migrants. Individuals who moved within the region (e.g. from Aachen to Maastricht) are not included. In the academic literature, the term newcomer is often used to describe all types of immigrants in the host country (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019; Joppke, 2007; Miller, 2008; Suvarierol, 2015).
Highly skilled migrant	Highly skilled migration is a term that remains contested. Highly skilled migrants are often defined in terms of education, profession or income. They bring certain knowledge and/or skills that are “wanted”.
Highly educated migrant	A highly educated migrant is a migrant with a higher education degree. In line with the draft communication work plan of WP5 and 6, this definition is expanded to also include students who are currently enrolled at higher education institutions as potential source of labour upon graduation.
Expat	An expat is someone who has ‘taken up residence in a foreign country, such as employees of multinational companies or international civil servants’, in some cases, it is defined as ‘a person who voluntarily renounces his or her nationality’ (IOM, 2019).
Talent	Talent is often used to describe highly skilled or educated migrants in a migration context (Galstyan, 2020; Kerr et al., 2016), it is an umbrella term for all groups of migrants defined above (highly skilled, highly educated, expats).
Integration	Integration is ‘the two-way process of mutual adaptation between migrants and [host] societies [...], whereby migrants are incorporated into the social, economic, cultural and political life of the [host] community’ (IOM, 2019, p. 106). Integration is characterized by both groups, migrant and host communities, maintaining (some degree of) cultural integrity, while equally participating in the larger society (Berry, 2011). One model of integration policies is multiculturalism. It “welcomes the preservation, expression and sometimes even the celebration of cultural diversity” (IOM, 2019, p.124). In contrast, assimilation is a ‘one-directional policy approach to integration’ in which a social or ethnic group ‘adopts the culture practices of another, usually that of the major ethnic of social group’, including adopting language, values and traditions from the host society, through which the minority group becomes ‘less socially distinguishable from other members of the receiving society (IOM, 2019, p.12)
Inclusion	Social inclusion is ‘the process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of people disadvantaged on the basis of their identity, to take part in society’ (IOM, 2019, p. 201). Social inclusion refers to ‘migrants’ inclusion and full economic, social, cultural, and political participation into host communities’ (Migration Data Portal, n.d.). Inclusion requires migrants to adapt less than integration

3. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND: TOWARDS A EUREGIONAL WELCOME CULTURE

This section explores possible definitions of a cross-border (or Euregional) welcome culture. Establishing such a welcome culture is one of the specific objectives of the *youRegion* project, in particular of WPs 5 and 6:

“The establishment of a cross-border welcome culture will contribute to establishing the EMR as an attractive place to work and live with excellent research and employment opportunities and to keeping people in the region for the long term. This will also combat the negative influence of demographic change. These two factors make the Euregional market more attractive for employers and companies and facilitate the sustainable settlement in the EMR” (*youRegion* EMR73, project summary).

While the term is used frequently throughout the project plan, including in deliverables and communication surrounding the project activities, a **clear definition is lacking**. This – moreover – is also true for the concept in general, which is why critics warn that it is used just as an empty phrase in an inflationary way (Kösemen, 2017; Heckmann, 2012).

The term welcome culture (or ‘welcoming culture’, ‘culture of welcome’, ‘culture of hospitality’) stems from the relatively new German word *Willkommenskultur*. Depending on the context (political, societal or academic) it can be **defined in three different ways**:

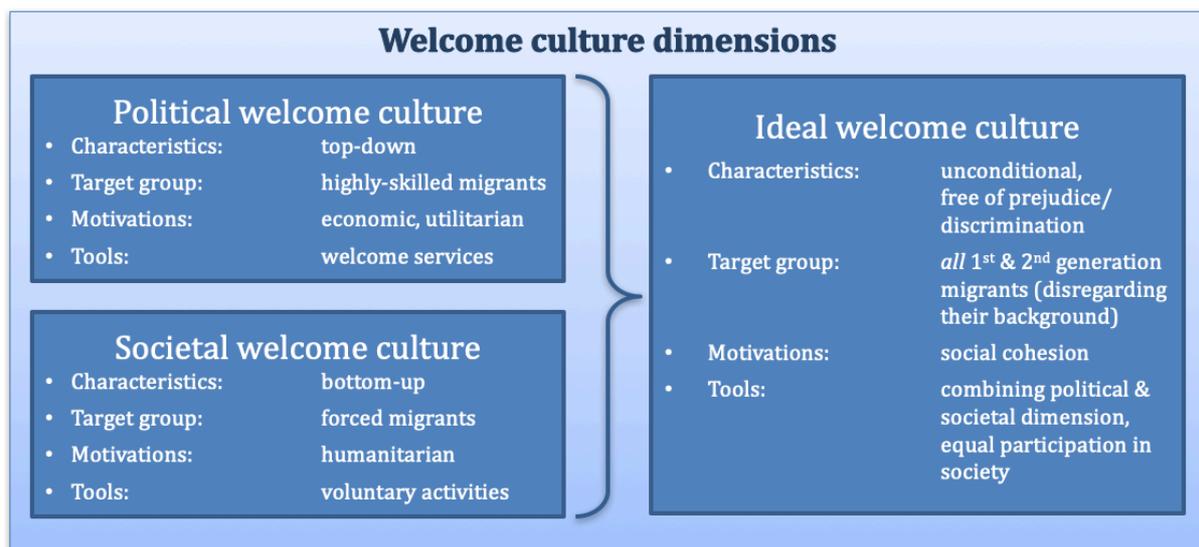
- The term was first introduced in the **political sphere**, where it is preferred over translations of the English terms “multiculturalism” or “(cultural) pluralism” due to negative connotations resulting from heated debates surrounding the terms in the past (Kösemen, 2017; Hamann & Karakayali, 2016; Windel, Balaram & Perkins, 2020). It aims to encourage the German people to **be more open and tolerant towards migrants using a top-down approach**. To achieve this, a growing number of (local) services supporting migrants settling in the host country have been established. Such services are usually targeting the highly skilled as a source of labour. Establishing a welcome culture in the political sense is thus motivated primarily by **economic/ utilitarian factors**, to attract and retain skilled labour to mitigate skills shortages, remain competitive and foster innovation (Kösemen, 2017; Hamann & Karakayali, 2016; Imani, Otto & Wiegandt, 2015; Föbker, Temme & Wiegandt, 2013).
- At the same time, *Willkommenskultur* also refers to (voluntary) **societal activities** organized by locals and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to **welcome migrants and to support them in their everyday life and integration in the host society** (e.g. through sharing information, support with administrative and bureaucratic issues, support with learning the local language, intercultural and other leisure activities) (Kösemen, 2017; BAMF, n.d.). These

bottom-up activities are often targeted at refugees and asylum seekers and are hence **motivated by humanitarian factors**, which became most apparent in 2015 when forced migration¹ to Europe reached a peak (Kösemen, 2017).

- The **academic definition** refers to an **unconditional** welcome culture as a general open and tolerant attitude towards the first- and second-generation of **all migrant groups** (i.e. disregarding their socioeconomic status, educational level and skills, reason for migration, origin, religion, ethnicity and gender) on the micro-, meso- and macro-level. The aim of this version of a welcome culture is **social cohesion** through migrants' inclusion and equal participation in the host society (Heckmann 2012; Kösemen, 2017). It is thus not motivated by economic, humanitarian or other reasons. This ideal welcome culture is free from discrimination and prejudices against migrants (Heckmann, 2012; Kösemen, 2017).

So far, there is no conceptual link between the different dimensions of a welcome culture. The figure below visualizes how connecting the political and societal sphere could culminate in an ideal, unconditional welcome culture more in line with the academic definition out forward by Heckmann (2012) and Kösemen (2017). One should note, however, that combining both spheres is not sufficient to create this ideal welcome since they are not considering all migrant groups and are not free from prejudice and conditions (Hamann & Karakayali, 2016).

Figure 1: Defining a political, societal and ideal welcome culture



Source: developed by the author based on the available literature

It follows, as a working definition, that a **Euregional welcome culture** is created through the cross-border cooperation of **political or societal institutions** located in different sub-regions of

¹ Migration which, although the drivers are diverse, involves force, compulsion or coercion (i.e. human trafficking) (IOM, 2019, p. 77).

the EMR, which organise activities targeted towards (international) newcomers living and working in the whole region.

It is noteworthy that all three definitions are exclusively based on the viewpoint and motivations of the host country and **fail to bring in the migrants' perspective** and needs. In creating effective and sustainable services and activities for welcoming migrants, disregarding whether it is at the political or societal level, it is crucial to better understand what contributes to making them feel welcome and what their needs are when arriving, settling and living in a new place. While welcome cultures have been studied from the perspectives of public institutions (Föbker, et al, 2013; Imani et al, 2015), volunteers (Hamann & Karakayali, 2016) and native-born German citizens (Windel et al, 2020), the perspective of the migrants has not been analysed thus far. Finding out what constitutes a welcome culture for the target group, highly skilled migrants in the EMR, is the focus of chapter 5.

4. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

For this report, data was collected using a variety of methods². To better understand the needs and experiences of newcomers, a comprehensive online survey and two rounds of in-depth interviews were conducted with international highly educated migrants living (and working) in the EMR. Furthermore, observations from events organised under the *youRegion* framework are included to find out if they met the participants' needs and expectations. In addition, a focus group discussion and survey among the partners involved in WPs 5 and 6 were implemented to assess the quality of collaboration and identify ways to further improve it. All data sources were analysed by means of **content analysis** to answer the research questions.

Data on the migrants' perspective

- A structured **online survey among international highly educated migrants** living and/or working in the EMR was implemented between September 2017 and November 2020 using convenience sampling³ to gather quantitative data on the determinants of individuals' migration decisions and intentions and to better understand their experiences living and working in the EMR. The survey includes sections dedicated to the welcome culture and the use of available services in the EMR. In total, **657 individuals from all parts of the EMR⁴ took the survey**. Some answered the survey only partially, which is why the sample size varies depending on the question discussed in the following sections of this report. Convenience sampling comes with a variety of shortcomings since the sample is unlikely to be representative of the target population due to selection and self-selection bias which can influence the results and affects the validity of the research (Smith, 2012). Throughout the report references to the survey among migrants are made either by stating it explicitly in the text or by referring to the survey in brackets, e.g. (migrant survey).
- Two rounds of **semi-structured interviews with international highly educated migrants in the EMR** were conducted to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the individuals' migration trajectories, their experiences living in the EMR and their future migration intentions. During the first wave (WI) between February and July 2019, a total of 75 interviews was conducted. In the second wave (WII) between June and November 2020, 47 of the interviewees from WI were re-interviewed to find out if and how their experiences, perceptions and migration intentions change over time. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. They were anonymised and numbered randomly. Throughout the report

² All questionnaires can be obtained upon request as they are too long to attach to this document.

³ The survey was distributed through social media, networks of the *youRegion* partners and snowballing.

⁴ This includes highly educated migrants living in the Belgian Province of Liège. While this sub-region of the EMR is not represented among the partners of the *youRegion* project, we deliberately choose to include them in this study to arrive at a more comprehensive picture of the experiences and needs of the target group in all parts of the EMR.

references to interviews are made either by stating it explicitly in the text or by referring to the interview number(s) in brackets, e.g. (Interview 1) or (Interviews 2.; 3 & 17). References do not distinguish wave 1 and 2.

Table 2: Overview of migrant data per EMR sub-region

Subregion	Survey		Interview WI		Interview WII	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
South Limburg (NL)	297	51	45	59	29	64
Region Aachen (DE)	176	30	16	21	8	18
Province of Limburg (BE)	29	5	9	12	5	11
Province of Liège (BE)	79	14	6	8	3	7
DG (BE)	3	<1	0	0	0	0
Total	581	100	76	100	45	100

Event observations

- Additional data has been collected through observation of and participation in in-person and virtual events organised for newcomers in the EMR under the framework of the *youRegion* project. This method allows for a first-hand involvement of the researcher in events to hear what other participants have to say (e.g. in Q&A sessions or informal conversational interviews and chats (in the case of virtual meetings)) and to get a sense of the general atmosphere during events (e.g. do participants generally seem satisfied with what is being offered during the event?). For this report, an unstructured observations approach has been used, which is “an open and free manner in a sense that there would be no pre-determined variables or objectives” (Research Methodology, n.d.). In doing so, the researcher remains open to different kinds of information and unexpected turns during the event is not limited to specific variables. Throughout the report references to event observations are made by referring to the explicit event in text or brackets. A list of events organised as part of the *youRegion* project thus far can be found in Annex 1 More detailed summaries of three event observations can be found in Annex 2.

Data on the project partners’ perspective

- A **focus group discussion (FGD)** with the partners of WPs 5 and 6 was conducted in September 2020 with the aim to better understand what partners want to achieve within the *youRegion* project and how to further improve collaboration, through identifying and addressing possible shortcomings. Accordingly, topics of discussion included definitions of the project goals and deliverables as well as the quality of collaboration thus far. During the FGD, participants were rather cautious and reserved with formulating criticism.

- Therefore, a confidential **survey among the partners** was implemented as a follow-up to give partners a platform where they could share their experiences as part of the consortium more openly reducing the risk of conflict between the individual project partners. Throughout the report references to the FGD and survey among project partners are made either by stating it explicitly in the text or by referring to the FGD or survey in brackets, e.g. (FGD) or (partner survey).

Table 3: youRegion partners and their involvement in WP5 and WP6

Partner		Involved in
POM Limburg	Provincie B-Limburg	WPs5 (lead) &6
Newcomer Service Aachen	Stadt Aachen	WPs5&6 (lead)
EVTZ Euregio Maas-Rhine (EMR)	Region Aachen Zweckverband Ostbelgien Provincie Limburg (NL) Provincie Limburg (BE) Province de Liège	WPs5&6
Expat Centre Maastricht Region (ECMR)	Gemeente Maastricht	WPs5&6
Dual Career Service (DCS)	RWTH Aachen University	WP6
Grenzinfopunkt (GIP) Aachen/Eurode	Region Aachen-Zweckverband	WP6

5. DEMAND AND TARGET GROUP ANALYSIS: FEELING WELCOME IN THE EMR?

The focus of this chapter is on the first sub-question. It analyses the needs and experiences of highly educated migrants in the EMR (“demand and target group analysis”) to establish whether the activities carried out under WP5 and WP6 meet the target groups’ needs and lead to achieving the project goals and completing the deliverables. The first part of this chapter analyses to what extent highly educated migrants feel welcome in the EMR and the factors contributing to this. The second part provides insights on the experiences of the target group living and working in the EMR, by zooming into their specific needs and challenges. The last part of this chapter analyses the target group. In doing so, this chapter aims to establish whether the activities carried out WPs 5 and 6 are adequate (i.e. necessary, appropriate and effective).

5.1 ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

Migrant survey respondents

This report is based on a subsample of 657 respondents. Most respondents live in South-Limburg in the Netherlands ($n^5=309$; 52%), followed by the Aachen region ($n=172$; 29%) and Liège ($n=78$; 13%). Only a small share lives in Belgian Limburg ($n=28$; 5%) and only three respondents (<1%) indicated living in the German-speaking Community of Belgium. 53 per cent of the respondents is female. The average age of respondents is 34, ranging from 18 to 66. Survey respondents come from all five continents and the share of EU and non-EU citizens seems roughly equal (47 vs. 53 % respectively). Respondents living in Aachen are relatively more often from outside the EU (62%). Of all non-EU citizens, one third comes from Asian countries (33%), 19 per cent from North America, 17 per cent from other European countries, 15 per cent from South America, 15 per cent from South America, 11 per cent from Africa and 7 per cent from Australia. All respondents are highly skilled meaning that they completed tertiary education. The majority holds a Master’s degree (51%), followed by a doctoral and Bachelor’s degree (21% each) and 6 per cent were enrolled in a Bachelor’s programme at the time they took the survey.

Migrant interviewees

The report is based on interviews with 76 highly educated migrants living (and working/studying) in four of the five sub-regions of the EMR. 47 interviewees are women (62%). Interviewees include different age groups (from 19 to 64, average: 36) and occupations to

⁵ n refers to the sample size, i.e. the number of survey respondents who gave a certain answer

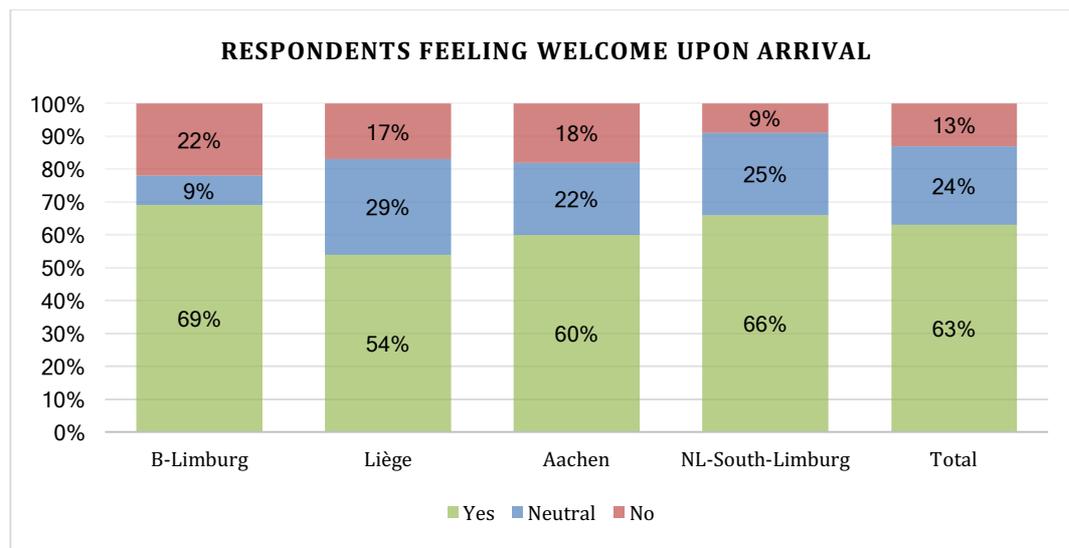
account for diverse experiences and needs. Also, their reasons for coming to the EMR are diverse and cover, for example, higher education, work or following their partner. Annex 4 provides an overview of key characteristics of the migrant interviewees.

5.2 FEELING WELCOME

Majority feels welcome

Most highly educated migrants who participated in the survey (63%) and in interviews (n=67; 88%) reported **feeling welcome upon arrival**. 24 per cent of survey respondents neither felt welcome nor unwelcome and 13 per cent did not feel welcome. It is striking that comparatively fewer of the respondents living in NL-South-Limburg indicated not having felt welcome upon arrival (9% compared to 22, 17 and 18% living in B-Limburg, Liège or Aachen respectively). In addition, respondents from Liège indicated comparatively less often to have felt welcome (54% compared to 69% in B-Limburg, 60% in Aachen and 66% in NL-South-Limburg).

Figure 2: Survey respondents feeling welcome upon arrival

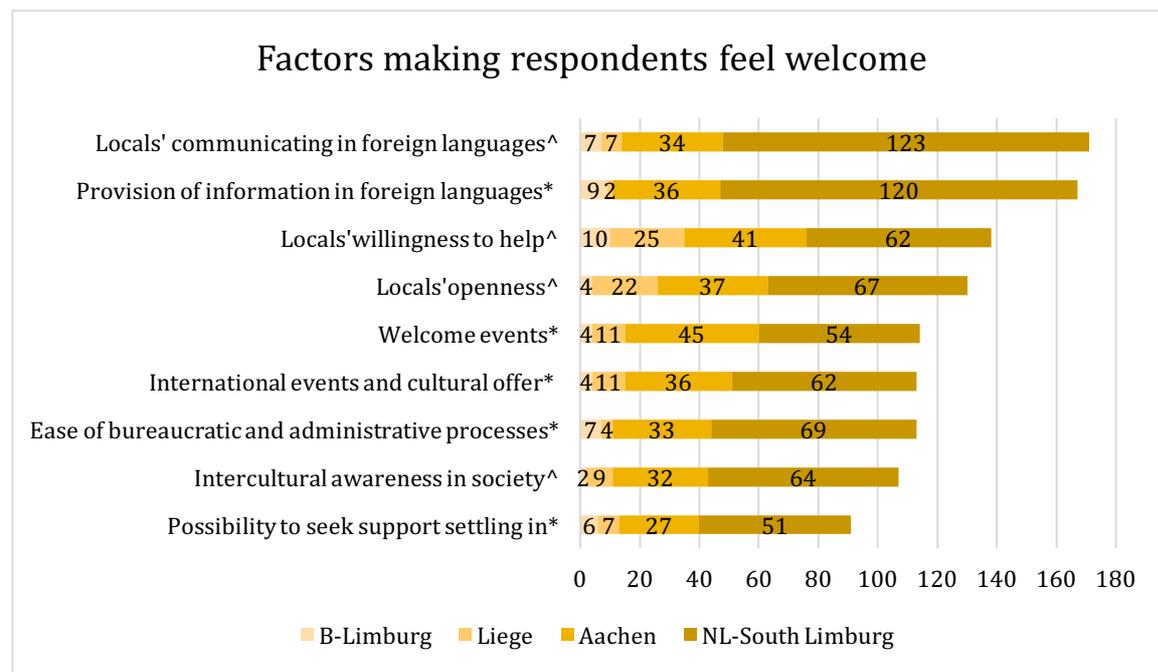


Survey respondents were asked to indicate **what exactly made them feel welcome**. They were able to select multiple answers. Looking at the full sample, most respondents (n=189) chose “locals’ willingness to communicate in foreign languages” as a factor that contributes to making them feel welcome in the region. This is followed by “provision of information in foreign languages” (n=186), “locals’ willingness to help” (n=153), “locals’ openness” (n=145). “International events and cultural offer” (n=128), “welcome events” (n=130), “ease of bureaucratic and administrative processes” (n=126) and “intercultural awareness in society” (n=116) were also selected relatively often. This looks very similar in the sub-regions of the EMR: **it is especially locals’ attitudes and behaviour and the availability of information in foreign languages that makes newcomers feel welcome**. The results are largely influenced by the

respondents from NL-South-Limburg who selected factors related to language relatively more often compared to respondents from other sub-regions. This is probably because the Dutch are known for their excellent English language skills, which is also supported by the interview findings. What is striking is that in the case of Aachen, most respondents (n=45) indicated that welcome events make them feel welcome. This has also been confirmed by the event observations: participants usually appreciate the organisation of welcome events as part of the *youRegion* project and are satisfied with what is being offered. A young woman, who came to Aachen for her doctorate, mentioned during the interview that the welcome events organised by the international office at the university were very helpful with “sorting out your papers and figuring out what to do”, but less so on a human level (Interview 11).

The bar chart below visualises which factors were most important to respondents living in different sub-regions of the EMR.

Figure 3: Factors making survey respondents feel welcome

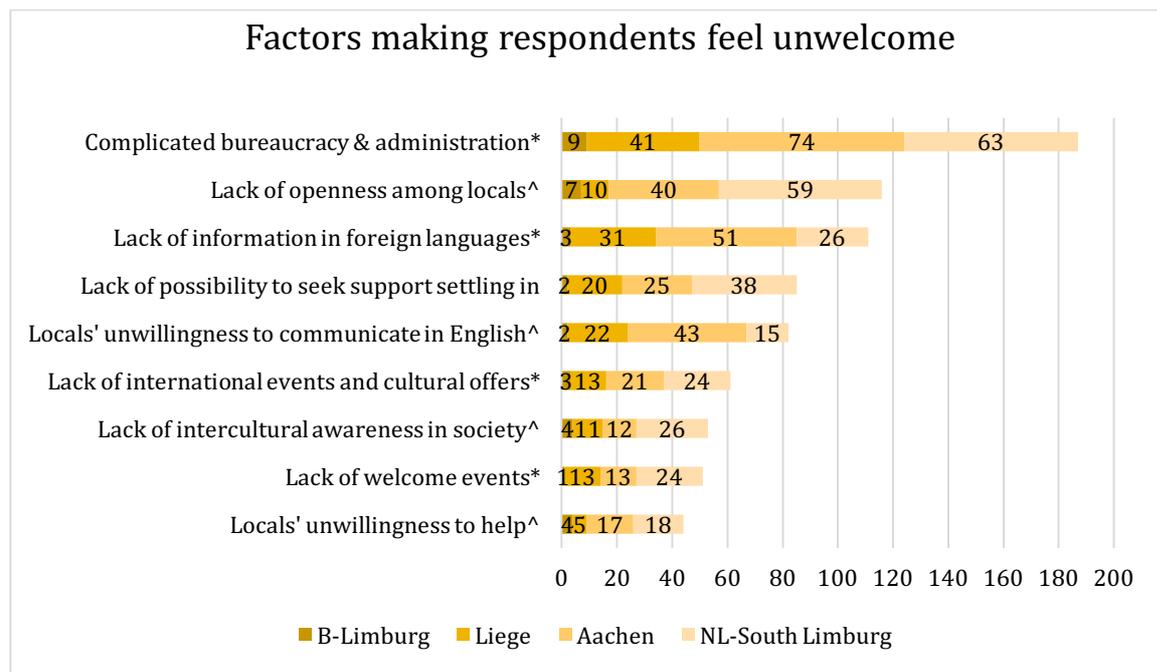


Notes: factors marked with * are more likely part or outcome of a political welcome culture, factors marked with ^ are more likely part or outcome of a societal welcome culture.

The factors can be assigned to the different welcome culture spheres defined in the previous chapter. Those marked with an asterisk (*) are more likely part or outcome of a political welcome culture and those marked with head (^) are more likely part or outcome of a societal welcome culture. Based on the survey findings, **both the political and societal sphere are important to make highly educated migrants in the EMR feel welcome.**

Survey respondents were also asked to indicate **who contributed most to making them feel welcome** in the EMR. For most respondents, these were “fellow internationals“ (n=162; 31%) followed by “colleagues“ (n=120; 23%), and “friends, relatives and other existing networks” (n=113; 21%). There are no meaningful differences between the individual sub-regions of the EMR. This is confirmed by the interviews (Interview 6, 55, 58). Interviewees point out that they appreciate the support of locals very much as well, but often they are difficult to connect to (Interview 43, 55). Sometimes **small gestures from neighbours and colleagues** that contribute to making people feel more welcome (e.g. simply saying ‘hello’, a welcome note from the neighbours, or small gifts like used toys they do not need anymore) (Interview 13, 35, 43). One respondent mentioned the close relationship between his son and his neighbour “who is almost like a grandmother for [him]” and also helps them get to know the German culture better (e.g. celebrating Easter) (Interview 35). Newcomers seem to really appreciate it if neighbours, other parents and school or kindergarten are friendly and helpful (Interview 13, 35, 43).

Figure 4: Factors making survey respondents feel unwelcome



Notes: factors marked with * are more likely part or outcome of a political welcome culture, factors marked with ^ are more likely part or outcome of a societal welcome culture.

Survey respondents were furthermore asked about **factors making them feel unwelcome**, which can again be attributed to a **mix of political and societal factors** (see Figure4). For the full sample as well as across all sub-regions, “complicated bureaucratic and administrative processes” were mentioned most often. In addition, while positive attitudes and behaviour of locals are valued a lot, a lack thereof (e.g. “a lack of openness among locals”, “locals not being willing to communicate in other languages”) makes newcomers feel unwelcome. In addition, a

“lack of information in foreign languages” is among the three most important factors and seems to be more of a problem for respondents from Aachen and Liège compared to those from B- and NL-Limburg.

Five interviewees did not feel particularly welcome upon arrival in the region. A female interviewee living in B-Limburg (Interview 67), said she did not feel a sense of belonging to the region and that the conservative residents of her place of residence make her feel unwelcome at times. She reported to feel welcome across the border in Maastricht though, where she spends most of her free time as it is very close to her place of residence in B-Limburg. A male interviewee living in Liège explained that he felt like locals expected newcomers to know how everything works which does not contribute to a feeling welcome (Interview 27). One woman mentioned that the missing link to the locals is really “what stops [her] from feeling at home” (Interview 43). Other interviewees living in NL-South-Limburg experienced challenges related to **intercultural differences**. For example, they struggled with the “Dutch directness” (Interview 54, 58) and working culture (Interview 54). Although most interviewees feel welcome in the region, a few of them mention that it **took them some time** to get used to the way things work (Interview 10, 11, 19, 20, 33, 34, 40, 54, 57, 74).

Implications for the *youRegion* activities under WP5 & WP6

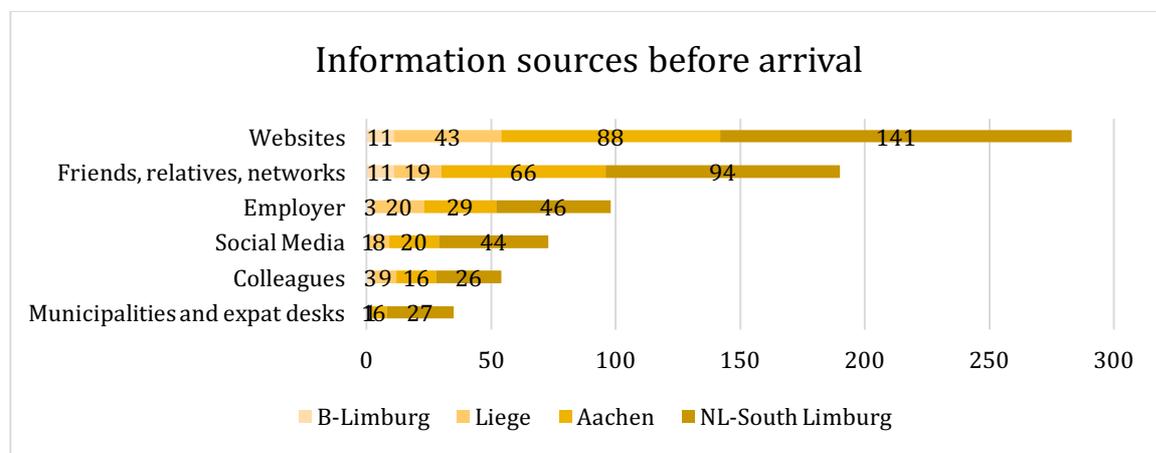
- **Welcome events** are appreciated and **contribute to migrants feeling welcome**, especially if they have a social component
- **Intercultural trainings** could be a valuable addition to joint welcome events as they are relevant for the target group and it is reasonable to organise them Euregionally
- **Provision of information in English** and other foreign languages is key, highlighting the demand for a **brochure and website** in English
- **Political and social dimensions** of a welcome culture seem **equally important**: possibilities to involve locals in welcome events and mentoring should be explored

5.3 THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE

The survey results emphasise the importance of language **in creating a political and social welcome culture** (i.e. provision of information and locals' command of foreign languages). Some interviewees from Aachen expressed a need for some sort of welcome guide in English (Interview 20, 21). "Yeah, I think it should be kind of a list of things that you need to do first when you arrive for the first one to three months and like guide because all information you need to search can be... It's all the time difficult" (Interview 21).

Before arrival, the majority of survey respondents (n=283) **consulted websites to receive information about the EMR**. The second most important information source are friends, relatives and other networks (n=190) and the third one is employers (n=98). Only few survey respondents (n=35) found information about the region via municipality services or expat desks. This underlines the importance of the website developed as a deliverable of WP6 to reach and inform the target group, and to create awareness about the available services. It is crucial to ensure that the target group finds the website on google or other search engines. It could be useful to involve employers and higher education institutions as multipliers for that.

Figure 5: Information sources consulted pre-arrival



Upon arrival, many face challenges related to bureaucratic communication and voice a demand for **English-speaking staff** in bureaucratic institutions, and the availability of official forms in English. For them it is a serious problem that employees at local government offices are usually not allowed to communicate in English (Interview 4, 25, 29, 44) for legal reasons. This is in line with experiences of interviewees, especially in the Aachen region. For example, one woman from Brazil reported that employees at the immigration office did not attend her and her partner because they were not able to speak German (Interview 44). A lack of information about bureaucratic and administrative issues can lead to problems with visa, taxes or health insurance (Interview 21, 70).

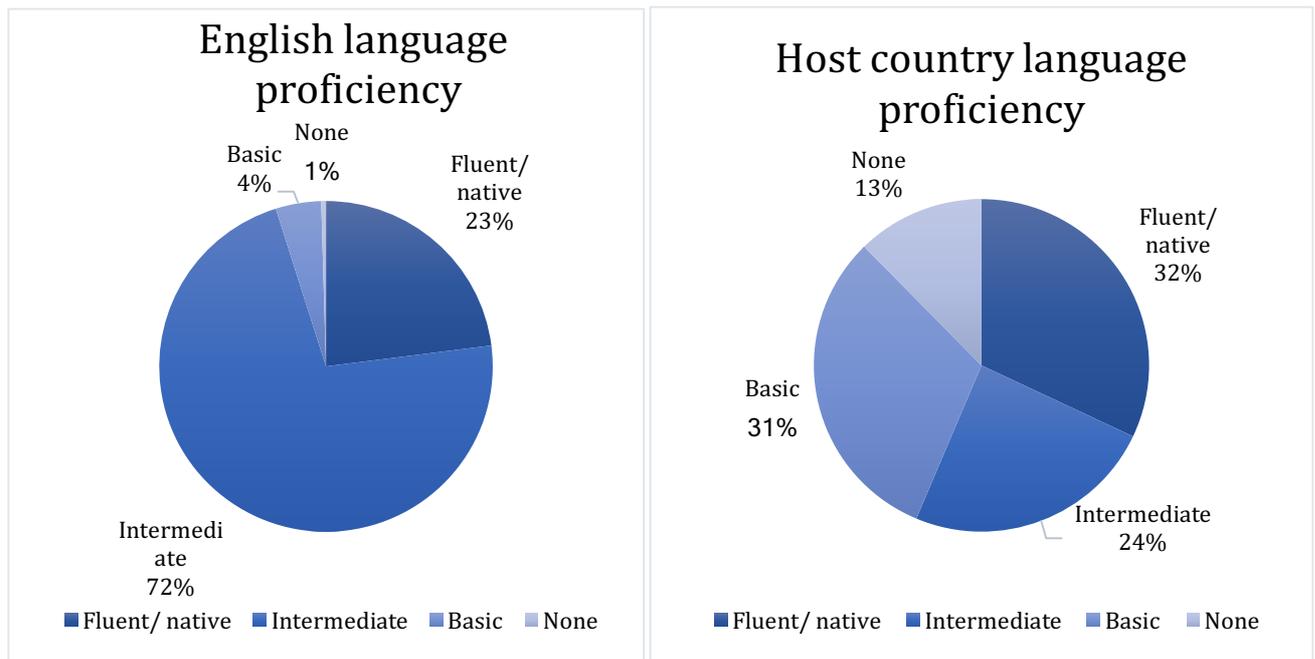
At the same time, **migrants' own language skills influence the extent to which they feel welcome** or not they (Interview 1, 3, 10, 22, 24,33, 55, 64, 71). Furthermore, interview findings suggest that language **is key to the economic and social integration** of highly educated migrants in the EMR. It is perceived as more important regarding the social than the economic aspect, even though command of the local language plays a crucial role in being able to find employment especially outside academia (Interview 3, 12, 13, 14, 19, 35, 39, 71). One interviewee living in Aachen, for example, had a hard time finding a job, which did not require them to speak German: "I can do many, many things; but since I haven't had a proper job since 2013, and I don't speak German, it's pretty much impossible, in Aachen" (Interview 14). Survey respondents also voiced a demand for more job opportunities in English.

Learning the local language next to a full-time job can be a real problem for migrants who often complain that **language courses are expensive and at inconvenient times**, which is confirmed by interviews and survey.

Not only highly educated migrants themselves struggle with language, but it is also a challenge for their (teenage) **children**, who sometimes have to go to **local schools** without any structures in place to learn the official language and which can affect their chances to attend higher education later in life (Interview 39, 43, 55). There is no international school in Aachen and sending their children to the United World College across the border can be a "real headache" (Interview 43) and was a reason for one interviewee and her family to move from Aachen to Maastricht (Interview 55).

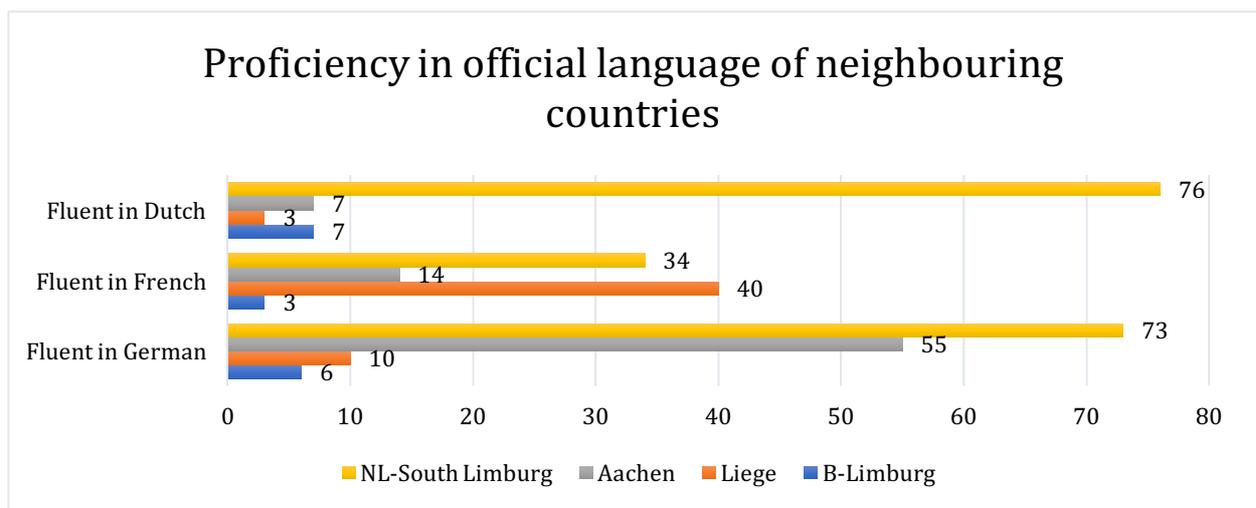
The survey also includes information regarding respondents' language skills. Figure 6 below visualise respondents' **proficiency in English and the official language of the EMR sub-region**, where they are living. It is striking that 13 and 31 per cent of the respondents have no or only basic knowledge of the official host country language respectively. In contrast, only 1 and 4 per cent have no or basic English skills. This again highlights the importance of information provision in English, which could make highly educated migrants' everyday life significantly easier. This is especially true for the first months after arrival during which international newcomers can hardly be expected to speak the official language of the host country well, in particular if their job or study programme does not require it. Results regarding highly educated migrants' (limited) proficiency in the host country language are in line with the common assumption that due to the often temporary stay in the host country this group of migrants does not invest too much in language acquisition. In addition, learning the local language might not be necessary if migrants speak English at work or university (Tarp, 2020).

Figure 6: Language proficiency of survey respondents



Considering that respondents live in a cross-border region and that other sub-regions of the EMR may also provide opportunities for their social and economic integration, it is furthermore interesting to look at respondents' proficiency in the official language of the neighbouring country (see figure 7). In NL-South-Limburg, many respondents are native or fluent in German or French. Language diversity is among the factors survey respondents appreciate most about living in a cross-border region (n=253).

Figure 7: Proficiency in the official language of other EMR sub-regions



Implications for the *youRegion* activities under WP5 & WP6

- Need for **information and welcome guide in English**, underlining the relevance for a brochure and website in English
- **Professional and social mentoring programme** could include **language exchange** and support with locals and migrants who have been living in the region for longer
 - Language exchange with locals could facilitate **integration into the local society**
 - Language is often a prerequisite for **economic integration**
 - Language courses are expensive and at inconvenient times
 - Mentors could support newcomers dealing with bureaucracy
- **Euregional DCS** relevant for migrants as it increases the opportunity to **find a job in another language**

5.4 CHALLENGES REGARDING LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION

Most interviewees agree that it is very difficult to find a job in sub-regions of the EMR. This is mainly due to the **language barriers**, which seem to be most problematic for internationals in Aachen, Liège and B-Limburg (Interview 12, 14, 19, 35, 41, 44, 55, 61). Three interviewees living in Aachen and B-Limburg also mentioned they had experienced problems with the **recognition of their diplomas** (Interview 19, 35, 60). For these reasons, it took many of their partners several months or years to find a job, and some did not find one at all (Interview 15, 63). Some interviewees also mention that they or their partner had to accept a job that they were overqualified for (**underemployment**), or that was in a **different field** than their studies (Interview 15, 62). One interviewee from Liège also says it is difficult for her partner to find a **study programme in English**, since he wants to switch careers (Interview 29).

Although a lot of people had difficulties finding work, some interviewees say that it was very easy for their partner to find work. However, interviewees who say this usually have a partner that either works in academia or IT/engineering, which might not have the same language barriers (Interview 3, 53). A few of the partners also started teaching English or translating (Interview 10, 41, 43). A Canadian woman living in NL-South-Limburg had no problems finding employment in Liège as a native French and English speaker (Interview 7). 141 survey respondents perceive living in a cross-border region as an advantage because of an **increased range of employment opportunities**. At the same time, problems related to their or their partner's employment (e.g. difficulties getting work permits for neighbouring countries, difficulties finding employment) are identified as the most important **border barriers** by 52 survey respondents.

In the survey, respondents frequently mentioned a **need for career- or work-related advice**, including on how to find employment opportunities in English, and how to obtain a work permit or scholarship. In addition, they would like to receive advice related to communication with employers and job interviews. This is in line with observations made during *youRegion* events (e.g. Start your career in youRegion).

Implications for the *youRegion* activities under WP5 & WP6

- **Euregional DCS** needed for migrants and their partners to **find a job in their field, at their level and in the language they speak**
- Events focusing on **starting a career in the EMR** meet demands
- Importance of **language** as a prerequisite for labour market integration confirmed again
- **Need for information regarding:**
 - Work permits
 - Recognition of diplomas
 - Where to find employment and how to apply
 - Scholarships
 - Education or further training in English
- Organising an **intercultural training** could be useful to prepare for a career in the EMR

5.5 INTERNATIONALS' PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICES

In the survey, respondents were asked to indicate if they had made use of any services since they moved to the region. Multiple answers were possible. The majority of respondents (n=224) indicated that they had **not used any services** for newcomers. This includes 108 respondents from South-Limburg in the Netherlands, 58 respondents in Aachen, 39 respondents in Liège, and 18 respondents in B-Limburg. One of the interviewees mentioned that the services should be easier to find or offered to people when they arrive, so they know where to look (Interview 13). The website developed under WP6 could help increase the visibility of available services. In addition, employers, higher education institutions and municipalities/ immigration services could be used as multipliers if they direct newcomers towards the website/ *youRegion* partners.

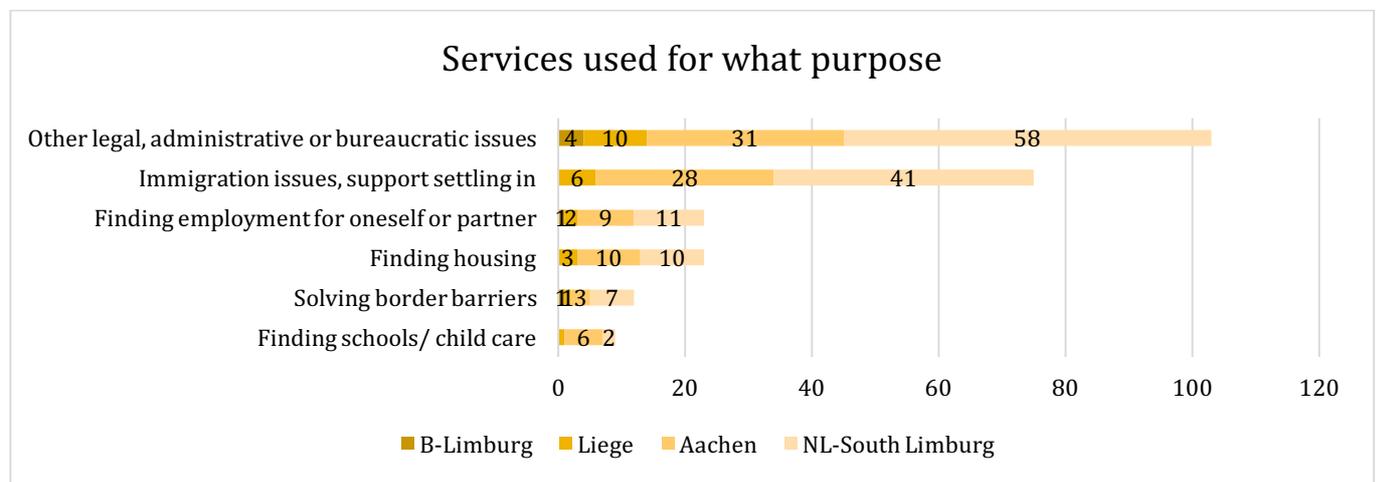
In South-Limburg (NL), 74 respondents had used the services of the Expat Centre Maastricht Region (previously Holland Expat Centre South). It is remarkable that almost one third of survey respondents from NL-South-Limburg were not aware of the existence of the Expat Centre. In contrast, most interviewees in the Netherlands (n=29) are aware of the Expat Centre (Interview 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 15, 16, 17, 18, 24, 23, 25, 33, 39, 45, 49, 50, 54, 55, 57, 61, 68, 69, 72, 75). That does not mean, however, that they have used its services. Interviewees who are aware of the services but have not used them report that there is no need for that because they receive support from employer, colleagues and friends (Interview 4, 38, 46, 47, 50, 75). Additionally, employees at Maastricht University all seem to be familiar with the Knowledge Centre for International Staff (KCIS) (Interview 3, 5, 6, 25, 33, 45, 53, 57, 69), which has also been consulted by 24 survey respondents.

In Aachen, 30 survey respondents had used the services of the Newcomer Service Aachen, which is also the service that interviewees from that sub-region of the EMR are most aware of (Interview

10, 11, 44). Furthermore, 55 respondents had used the services being offered by international offices at higher education institutions like the Welcome Centre for International Researchers (n=51) and the DCS (n=4) at RWTH Aachen University. In Liège, interviewees are mostly familiar with support or services from the university and no other services were mentioned (Interview 29, 31, 32), which is in line with Reinold & Unfried (2019).

Services were mostly used by survey respondents for “**legal, administrative or bureaucratic issues**” (n=103) and „**immigration issues and support settling in**“ (n=75) (see figure 5). Furthermore, many respondents explained in an open question that they used the available services for **networking and establishing social contacts**.

Figure 8: Reasons for consulting available services



The majority of respondents who had indeed used the services, seemed to be satisfied with them. 77 per cent (n=165) rated the services received as “(very) good“, 16 per cent rated them as “neither good nor bad“ (n=35) and 6 per cent (n=13) made “(very) bad“ experiences. Most of the interviewees from Maastricht who made use of the services mentioned the ECMR meetings (e.g. Let’s Catch Up, End-of-the-year-party), which they really enjoyed (Interview 15, 16. 17). Participants at events are usually satisfied with the services offered. They appreciate in-person as well as virtual events. The latter are especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic as they are often the only way for migrants in the EMR to interact with other people in the region (event observations).

5.6 ADDITIONAL NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

More than half of the respondents (n=233) indicated that in their view **additional services to facilitate the entry and stay of internationals in the region are needed**. Among respondents from Liège the share is particularly high (64% compared to 59%, 53% and 57% in Belgian

Limburg, Aachen and NL-South-Limburg respectively). Most survey respondents also made concrete suggestions for additional services that they perceive as needed (see table 4 below). Besides the demands discussed in previous sections of this report, survey respondents most frequently mentioned room for improvement regarding **bureaucratic or administrative issues** (n=57). Examples range from a lack of available information concerning taxes, immigration procedures, legal rights, insurances, to practical support with filling out forms. This does not only come from a lack of services as such, but seems to be more related to **a lack of awareness of available services** since many of these aspects are covered by the *youRegion* partners. Furthermore, 13 survey respondents expressed a need for more information in general and another 13 survey respondents suggested an overarching support service centre which helps them with all sorts of issues. One of these respondents explained that organisations were likely to constantly refer them to other organisations. This person would like to see a **one-stop shop** with all relevant information for newcomers.

Moreover, 28 survey respondents suggested to improve **services providing support with finding housing**. One respondent felt exploited by local landlords because the rent was higher for expats compared to locals. Other newcomers already faced difficulties earlier in the process, namely with finding a place to live (from abroad). For instance, they had not yet built a social network of local people who could suggest available housing options. As one of the interviewed newcomers suggested: “If the university or the employer could at least help out with finding something for employees, that would be a really, really good start. I find that the toughest thing, because moving to a new country, I don’t know what sites to look at or which agencies to look at or which agencies are actually good or bad. There are some agencies here that are actually quite terrible” (Interview 54).

Other difficulties were encountered during the **social integration** processes as reported by 39 survey respondents and several interviewees. Suggestions to improve support services in this regard varied: some would like to interact more with locals, others would like to receive more information about the local culture. Interviewees usually find and integrate into the international community without much difficulty, even though this can also be a challenge for those who are unemployed and have limited networks, for example migrant women who migrated for their partner’s job and are responsible for household and child rearing (Interview 2, 69). For these women, **spouse networks** or international women clubs can be key to integration.

Other newcomers were concerned with their families and/or **children**. Various comments were made in the survey on the unavailability of international schools, lack of support for partners, or

difficulties in accessing child support services (e.g. kindergarten). Interviewees with children often say that they have issues with school, mainly concerning the language (Interview 25, 29, 39, 43, 55). It might be useful to offer services to help newcomers get to know the local education system and **find a suitable school** for their children, since this seems to be a recurring issue for migrants with children. Another possibility would be to prepare an overview of schools or childcare institutions that offer special support to international children or offer education in different languages (e.g. United World College Maastricht, Euregio Schools). This could be an addition to the *youRegion* website for internationals currently under construction. Some interviewees also mention that they were not able to join some of the welcome events because they could not bring their children as timing and location was not suitable for that (Interview 25).

Implications for the *youRegion* activities under WP5 & WP6

- Creating a **website as a one-stop shop** summarising important information and providing directions meets demands and could increase awareness
- **Raise awareness** for services, potentially **involving multipliers** like employers, municipalities and immigration desks, and higher education institutions
- **Need for information**, which could be covered by the website:
 - Bureaucracy and administration
 - Housing
 - Social networks, e.g. spouse network
 - Schools and child care facilities

Table 4: Need for additional services based on survey and interview findings

Theme	Freq.	Insights from migrant survey	Insights from migrant interviews
Bureaucratic, administrative, procedural, or legal advice	58	Suggestions included available support in English, and information on taxes, social security, immigration procedures, registration of all kinds and laws. Moreover, some participants would like to receive practical help with filling out forms.	Need for English-speaking staff in bureaucratic institutions, and official forms in English; lack thereof can lead to problems related to visa, taxes and social security
Social integration support	39	Examples range from interacting with locals and understanding the culture, to information about local events.	Difficulties to connect to locals very prevalent
Work- and career-related advice	33	Some would like to receive help with job interviews, communication with employers, work permits, networking, and scholarships. Others would like to know about job opportunities for English-speaking people.	Intercultural training could be useful
Language support	32	Services should be offered in English, as well as a driver's license test, and websites. Some expressed a need for free language courses.	Language skills key in feeling welcome as well as to economic and social integration
Transparency	13	The organisation should be more visible.	
Guidance in general	13	One participant mentioned a need for region-specific instead of country-specific information.	
Support for children and family	10	Suggestions include: international schools, kindergarten, partner support, and family leisure activities.	Additional suggestions: language support for children at local schools
Interaction with the international community	8		Interviewees usually find and integrate into the international community without much difficulty

5.7 TARGET GROUP ANALYSIS

Survey respondents arrived in the region between one and 39 years ago. On average, respondents were living in the EMR for seven years when filling in the online survey. **Figure 6 shows that an increased length of stay in the region does not reduce an additional need for services.** The clustered columns show how many respondents voiced a demand for additional services (red columns) or not (green columns). The grey line visualises the share of respondents with a demand for additional services, which is the highest for respondents who arrived in the region 10 years ago. Hence, services and activities to increase the Euregional welcome culture should not only target newcomers, but also more established internationals. One explanation for the continued demand is that **needs may change over time.** Even though internationals live in the region for longer, they might appreciate support, for example in the event of political changes (e.g Brexit) or major life course events (e.g. buying a house, child birth, unemployment, etc.) disregarding their duration of stay. Moreover, migration trajectories are not linear and mobility intentions may change over time. Adjusting to the new situation, e.g. when deciding to remain living in the region longer than expected and to apply for permanent residence or citizenship, could trigger a new demand for services.

Figure 9: Survey respondents' demand for services considering length of stay

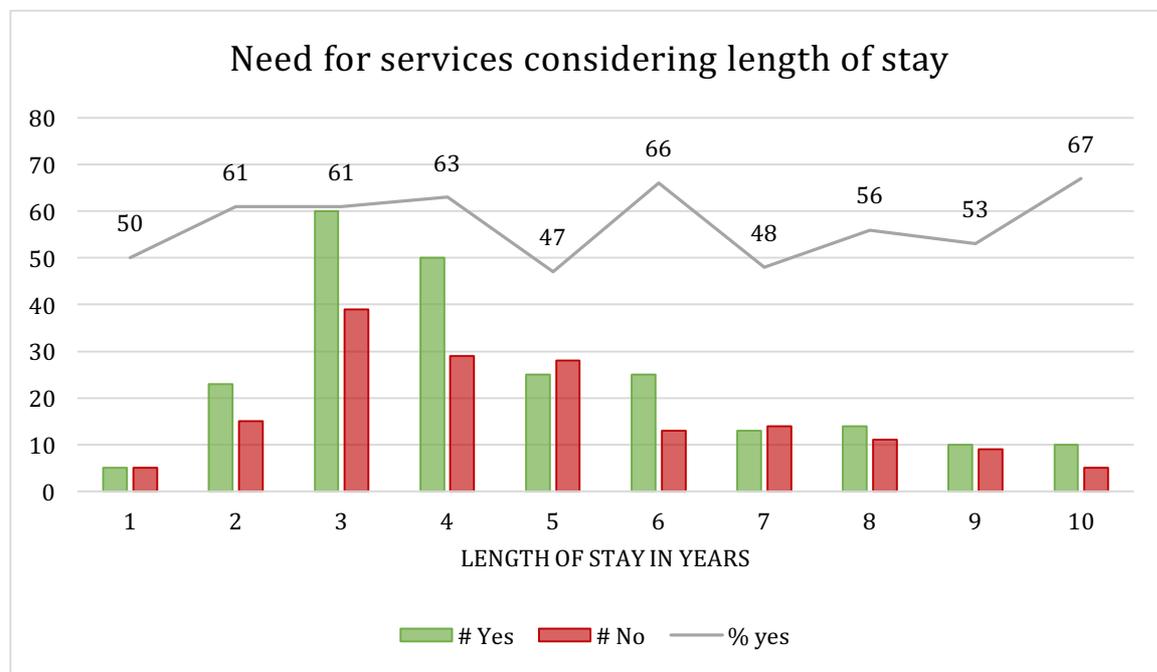


Table 5: Demand for services depending on migration channel

Migration Channel	Demand for additional services		No demand for additional services	
	#	%	#	%
EU citizens	102	59	71	41
Family migration	9	50	9	50
Highly skilled migration	61	69	27	31
Student migration	69	51	65	49
Labour migration	8	57	6	43

Taking into account respondents' most important **reasons for moving to the EMR** and the policy framework under which they migrated, one can see that there is a **demand for services across the board** (see table 5 and table 6).

Table 6: Demand for services depending on reason for migration

Reason for migration	Demand for additional services		No demand for additional services	
	#	%	#	%
I was sent here by my employer.	9	45	11	55
I found a job here on my own.	66	67	33	33
I was recruited by a company in the region.	26	60	17	40
I moved here for education (initially).	74	51	71	49
I moved here for my partner's job or education.	36	77	11	23
I moved here for love.	22	59	15	41
I moved for family reasons.	5	50	5	50
I was looking for a better quality of life.	9	47	10	53
I was looking for an adventure/ personal challenge	3	23	10	77

Interviewees definitions of migrants, highly skilled migrants and expats

Interviewees were asked to define a migrant, a highly skilled migrant and an expat. The definitions that were given for **migrant** are all very similar, with twelve interviewees stating that a migrant is someone who moved from one country to another. Eight people stated that it is someone moving from one place to another, either within a country or internationally (Interview 2, 3, 5, 22, 31, 33, 51, 76). One interviewee refused to define the term, because she thought the word should not be used to describe people (Interview 69), and one interviewee made the difference between economic and political migrants (Interview 72). Finally, two interviewees said that the definition of migrant had more to do with cultural ties and integration (Interview 48), or distance from country of origin (Interview 6). It is noteworthy that both interviewees moved from Belgium to the Netherlands and do not identify as migrants, since the countries are so close to each other and very similar, which is why their definitions differ.

When asked about a **highly skilled migrant**, most interviewees (n=14) defined this as someone who has a certain set of skills and moves to a different country. Furthermore, nine interviewees defined a highly skilled migrant as someone with tertiary education. Finally, one interviewee stated it is just “someone with a fancy job” (Interview 3), and one interviewee stated that officially, a highly skilled migrant is defined by education and income (Interview 8).

Finally, the interviewees were asked to **define an expat**. This term seemed to be less clearly defined than the other two. Ten interviewees said an expat is someone who moves to a different country, regardless of the intention to stay temporarily or permanently (Interview 5, 7, 8, 22, 31, 44, 54, 64, 74, 76). Furthermore, five interviewees described an expat as someone who does not intend to stay permanently in the host country (Interview 3, 33, 48, 69, 73). Five interviewees mentioned that a migrant or highly skilled migrant and an expat have the same definition, but that expat just has a different connotation, with people usually using the term expat to refer to **more privileged migrants** (Interview 4, 23, 29, 73, 76). Four interviewees said it was someone who moved for education or someone with a higher education level (Interview 8, 32, 51, 72). Additionally, one interviewee said they had never heard the word before (Interview 59), and one said it was a European term, and they had not heard it before moving to the region (Interview 75).

Interviewees self-identification

For the organisation of *youRegion* events and communication purposes and to make sure that the target group feels invited, it is important to understand how highly educated migrants self-identify. Six interviewees mentioned that they identified with all three definitions (Interviews 5, 23, 31, 43, 54, 76). Five stated that they identified as a migrant (Interviews 2, 3, 4, 8, 64). One

interviewee said she felt like a migrant as opposed to an expat because she does not work, which is why she never considered using the services of the *expat* centre in Maastricht (Interview 2). One of the interviewees said that although officially he is a highly skilled migrant, he identifies more with a migrant (Interview 8).

Seven interviewees said they **identify as a highly skilled migrant** (Interviews 7, 19, 24, 29, 32, 53, 64). Most these interviewees said they identify as being a highly skilled migrant because of their educational level (Interviews 7, 30, 59, 73), two interviewees said they identified with the term because it is their official status (Interviews 32, 51), and finally, one interviewee said they felt like a highly skilled migrant because they did not flee from their home country but came to offer skills (Interview 22).

Four interviewees **identify as an expat** (Interviews 7, 72, 74, 75). One of the interviewees said she felt like an expat because she neither feels like a resident of her home country, nor the host country (Interview 7). One interviewee said he identified as an expat despite not knowing the term before moving to the EMR only because the term was used so often in his environment (Interview 75). Finally, one interviewee said she felt like an expat because she did not have a job, after having defined that a migrant and highly skilled migrant usually work, and an expat does not necessarily have a job (Interview 74).

There are also five interviewees who **do not identify with any of the three groups** (Interviews 6, 33, 48, 64, 69). Two interviewees said they do not identify with any of the terms because they are from places that are very close to the EMR, so they felt like their current place of residence was too similar and close to home to call themselves migrants (Interviews 6, 48), out of these two, one said that another factor was that they have the Dutch nationality and have lived in the Netherlands for a long time (Interview 48). Similarly, one interviewee said she has lived in the EMR for such a long time, and felt like her migrant status is over, and identified as a 'former migrant' (Interview 33). One interviewee said she did not feel like a migrant, but more as someone on a short-term stay, despite living in the region for a long time already (Interview 64), and finally, one interviewee said that she can identify with anyone, and does not want to restrict herself by belonging to one group (Interview 69).

Implications for the *youRegion* activities under WP5 & WP6

- **Target group** should be **defined broadly** for the organisation and communication of events and services **to reach larger number of potential participants**
- Using a more **neutral term** that more individuals **identify** with is recommended (e.g. **internationals** rather than expat or highly skilled migrants)
- **Demands for services** do not diminish **over time**, which is why events and services should not only target **newcomers**, but also more **established internationals**

5.8 EUREGIONAL MINDSET

This last section of this chapter explores the perceptions of highly educated migrants towards living in a border region as WP5 aims to establish a “Euregional mindset through the welcome culture [to promote] the EMR as a uniform area worth living in” (*youRegion* EMR73, project summary).

The majority of survey respondents (82%) **perceives living in a border region as an advantage**. Similarly, most the interviewees (79%) said that living in a border region is an advantage. Most interviewees appreciate living in a border region because it is easy to **travel to the other countries** (Interview 11, 12, 17, 19, 25, 26, 32, 35, 37, 54, 60, 71) and because of the possibility to **experience other cultures** so close to home (Interview 7, 10, 11, 12, 22, 34, 39, 40, 58, 62, 69). Furthermore, interviewees also say that it is easy for them to go **shopping** in the other countries, for example if they need something they cannot get at their place of residence, if the products are cheaper in the other countries, or if shops have differing opening hours (Interview 2, 24, 30, 43, 46 52, 63, 64, 65, 66, 74, 76). Finally, interviewees also mention **diversity** as an asset to the region (Interview 3, 33, 52).

Nine of the interviewees felt **neutral** about the border region, the reasons for this were that the borders are open because of Schengen anyway, and because you cannot feel the borders, so it does not make that much of a difference (Interview 27). Others mention that it does not have much of an impact on daily life (Interview 8, 38, 45, 48). One interviewee said he felt neutral about the border region because although travelling cross-border is easier, travelling nationally is not as easy, because Maastricht is so far away from the Randstad (Interview 51).

Finally, only three interviewees experienced living in a border region as a **disadvantage**. All three interviewees mentioned **public transport and connectivity** as one of the main disadvantages (Interview 35, 53, 73). One of the interviewees is a cross-border worker and said she had also

experienced some challenges with documentation and paperwork (Interview 35). Very few interviewees spoke about any big challenges concerning the border region except for cross-border public transport as a challenge (Interview 3, 5, 6, 7, 15, 35, 38, 40, 53, 56, 68, 73).

All interviewees say that **crossing the borders in general feels natural** to them. The number of times people cross the borders varies from once a month to multiple times a week. The interviewees mostly mention leisure and shopping as their main reasons to cross the borders.

6. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION: TOWARDS A EUREGIONAL WELCOME CULTURE

Applying the different definitions to the *youRegion* project, the activities carried out under WP 5 and 6 are best captured by the **political, top-down definition of a welcome culture**: The partners are public service providers welcoming migrants, **especially the highly skilled**, to the region. This is motivated by the associated **economic benefits** of attracting and retaining international talent, for example mitigating the effects of demographic change and upcoming skills shortages (*Fachkräftemangel*) as well as contributing to economic development through increased competitiveness and innovation. This is not only apparent in the *youRegion* project documents, but also when looking at the institutional background of the *youRegion* partners: the Newcomer Service Aachen, for example, is part of the “Department of Economy, Science and Europe in the Division for Structural Development” at the City of Aachen, ECMR belongs to the “Department Economy and Culture” at the Municipality of Maastricht, and the newly established Expat Centre in B-Limburg is part of POM Limburg, the Provincial Development Agency (*Provinciale Ontwikkelingsmaatschappij*).

Hence, a **Euregional welcome culture in the political sense** is created through the collaboration of public welcome services located in different sub-regions of the EMR, specifically the *youRegion* partners, across borders. Through joining forces in welcoming newcomers and co-organising events for migrants in the EMR, partners aim to raise awareness for what the EMR has to offer. Through highlighting the benefits of living (and working) in a cross-border region, they aim to increase the regions’ attractiveness for highly skilled migrants. In addition, they can exchange knowledge regarding the services provided also in areas where cooperation is less appropriate (e.g. advice regarding administrative and bureaucratic issues which vary between the sub-regions).

It is important to emphasise that beyond *youRegion* there are also activities that can be labelled as contributing to the welcome culture in line with the more **societal, bottom-up approach**. Reinold and Unfried (2019) identified 155 services and activities working towards attracting, integrating and retaining migrants, including the highly skilled, in the EMR (76 in Aachen, 26 in South Limburg, 19 in the German-speaking Community and Province of Liège each, and 15 in Belgian Limburg). This includes more formal service providers like the *youRegion* project partners, as well as less formal societal activities organised by locals and NGOs. The mapping showed that most of the activities are targeted at migrants in general, not highly skilled migrants specifically. Those targeting the latter group are located in South Limburg, the region of Aachen and B-Limburg.

A **Euregional welcome culture in the societal sense** would be achieved through the expansion of voluntary work across different sub-regions of the EMR as well as cross-border cooperation of NGOs and other less formal organisations at the grassroots level focusing on welcoming and supporting migrants in the EMR. According to Reinold and Unfried (2019) there is little structural cross-border cooperation between the identified bottom-up activities in the individual sub-regions of the EMR, except for some sporadic exchange of information. Promoting cooperation outside the non-governmental level, however, lies outside the scope of the *youRegion* project. The empirical results in this study instead show that both political as well as societal/ social dimensions of a welcome culture play a role in making highly educated migrants feel welcome. Therefore, it is recommended to consider linking the activities of the *youRegion* partners involved in WP5 and 6 with less formal local initiatives or NGOs in the future.

The demand and target group analysis has shown that the **activities carried out under the *youRegion* project are largely in line with the needs of highly educated migrants in the EMR**. Nevertheless, some recommendations based on the experiences of highly educated migrants living and working in the EMR can be formulated in order to align the services provided even more with the demands of the target group.

The table below summarises the goals/deliverables of WPs 5 and 6 as defined in the *youRegion* project documents and provides recommendations to align them with the needs of highly educated migrants in the EMR based on the demand and target group analysis.

Finally, it is important to **define the target group broadly**, including newcomers and more established migrants because all of them have a demand for support. The broad definition should also be reflected in the wording as interviewees do not always identify as expats or highly-skilled migrants. To reach more potential participants a more **neutral term like “internationals”** is recommended over “expats” or “highly-skilled migrants”.

WP and deliverable	Description of the deliverable	Recommendation and <i>rational</i>
WP5: Networking of existing offer structures⁶	“The goal is the sustainable establishment of a network between the structurally and contentwise different partner structures for the exploitation of synergy effects and the establishment of coordinated offers with the aim of a common welcome culture for the EMR. A coordinated, transparent range of services will be set up for citizens, enabling them to make use of services in a wide variety of situations. By establishing a "Euregional mindset" through the welcome culture, the perception of the EMR as a uniform area worth living in is to be promoted”	Raise awareness for available services potentially using multipliers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lack of awareness of services</i>
WP5: Establishment of welcome centre B-Limburg	“Following the models of the city of Aachen and the ExpatCenter Maastricht, a contact point in B-Limburg is also to be set up, which will take on the same tasks for the region there. A coordinated, transparent range of services will be set up for citizens, enabling them to make use of services in a wide variety of situations. With the coordination and harmonisation of the respective services and performances that took place in the activity, the establishment of a "Euregional mindset" through the welcome culture is to promote the perception of the EMR as a uniform area worth living in”	
WP6: Joint communication contact point	“In order to offer newcomers and citizens practical and barrier-free bundled contact points, a structured overview in digital and brochure form of the respective local services is to be given. The digital contact point was to serve as a central hub for the comprehensive and coordinated services of the partners, as well as to perceive the EMR as a common living space and to make the cultural and socio-economic living space of the EMR a sustainable experience. The possibility should also be created to coordinate events with the newcomers via this instrument”	Provide information in English (and possibly other foreign languages) Answer FAQs
WP6: Joint welcome events	“Events that appeal to newcomers and present the EMR as a welcome region are an essential element of the targeted welcome culture. Therefore, joint event formats should be created to bring together newcomers from the EMR and to present the EMR living space as a cultural and social enrichment. In addition to these (major) events, a regularly recurring low-threshold offer is to be created in the respective regions for newcomers, e.g. regular "regulars' tables". This ensures an increased visibility of the participating partners among newcomers in the entire Euregio and generates a recognition value”	Organise events where migrants can bring their children Continue virtual events Organise intercultural training
WP6: Development of Euregional (dual)-career-service (DCS)	“(D)CS are an important factor in the competition for top scientists at universities and non-university research institutions (AUF). These services actively help guest researchers, master's and doctoral students and postdocs in the subsequent planning of their career paths within and outside the academic world. The dual career services also actively help partners in dual career pairs to find an adequate position. The cross-border labour market of the EMR offers great potential to realise the professional opportunities of top scientists (CS) and couples with dual careers (DCS), as this target group often has international professional experience. Through the creation of a Euregional network involving the largest universities, AUF as well as companies”	Envisioned activities are in line with research informants' demands <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Finding employment challenging</i> • <i>Accompanying partners bring valuable skills as well</i> • <i>Exploit language proficiency across the border</i>

⁶ During the FGD, the partners of WPs 5 & 6 acknowledged that especially the first deliverable of WP 5 is described in a very abstract way. Annex 3 provides an attempt to define the terms that are especially vague based on the FGD.

WP6: Establish DCS mentoring programme	<p>“Building on Action 3, a mentoring programme for individual support is to be established by the partners networked there. As in WP4/Action 3, the (D)CS target group should be able to perceive the advantages of the Euregional labour market from a single source by establishing individual contacts and referring them to the project's advisory institutions. With company representatives as mentors and junior scientists as mentees, career networks can be established in the EMR. This is to be achieved in particular through job expeditions and similar instruments.”</p>	<p>Mentor system between locals and newcomers to learn the Euregional languages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Learning the local language most important challenge faced by newcomers</i> • <i>Language prerequisite for economic and social integration (and retention)</i> • <i>Bridge political and social dimensions of a welcome culture</i> • <i>Language training most frequent form of volunteering</i>
WP 6: Target group expansion of the Newcomer Service	<p>“The Euregio is developing into a high-tech location: at the RWTH Aachen Campus, for example, some 250 national and international companies are already making use of local research expertise. For this, highly qualified workers are needed and increasingly sought after, often in the form of expats. Suitable offers will be developed for this target group, which will act as a support instrument for companies and research institutes as early as the recruitment phase and which will specifically address the needs of this target group (e.g. housing, educational opportunities for the family, leisure planning).”</p>	<p>Use broad definition of target group, including internationals who have been living in the region for longer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Established migrants also have a demand for support</i> • <i>Migrants often do not identify as expats or highly-skilled migrants</i>

REFERENCES

- Glencar, A., & Tsagakroni, V. (2019). Prospects of refugee integration in the Netherlands: Social capital, information practices and digital media. *Media and Communication*, 7(2 Refugee Crises Disclosed), 184–194. <https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v7i2.1955>
- BAMF (n.d.), Willkommenskultur. Retrieved November 2020 from <https://www.bamf.de/DE/Themen/Integration/AkteureEhrenamtlicheInteressierte/EhrenamtlichesEngagement/Willkommenskultur/willkommenskulturnode.html;jsessionid=861C9B8D584201BB99A8B41F1EED425E.internet532>
- Berry, J. W. (2011). Integration and Multiculturalism: Ways towards Social Solidarity. *Papers on Social Representations*, 20, 2.1-2.21.
- Brown, L. D., Feinberg, M. E., & Greenberg, M. T. (2012). Measuring coalition functioning: refining constructs through factor analysis. *Health Education & Behavior* : *The Official Publication of the Society for Public Health Education*, 39(4), 486–97. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1090198111419655>
- Euregio Meuse-Rhine. (n.d.). Geschiedenis en identiteit. Retrieved November 2020 from <https://euregio-mr.info/nl/ueber-uns/geschichte/>
- Euregio Meuse-Rhine. (2013). Een Toekomststrategie voor de Euregio Maas-Rijn. Retrieved November 2020 from https://euregio-mr.info/euregio-mr-wAssets/docs/strategie-nl/EMR-2020_plan_NL_eBook.pdf?viewmode=blank
- European Committee of the Regions. (n.d.). Euregio Maas-Rhein – Euregio Maas-Rijn – Euregio Meuse-Rhin. Retrieved November 2020 from <https://portal.cor.europa.eu/egtc/CoRActivities/Pages/egtc-EMR.aspx>
- Föbker, S., Temme, D., & Wiegandt, C. (2014). A warm welcome to highly skilled migrants: How can municipal administrations play their part? *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie*, 105(5), 542–557. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tesg.12112>
- Galstyan, A. (2020). International migration of highly skilled workers to the EU countries. *The EURASEANS: Journal on Global Socio-Economic Dynamics*, 4(23), 399–412.
- Hamann, U., & Karakayali, S. (2016). Practicing willkommenskultur: migration and solidarity in Germany. *Intersections*, 2(4). <https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v2i4.296>
- Heckmann, F. (2012). Willkommenskultur was ist das, und wie kann sie entstehen und entwickelt werden? *Efms Paper 2012-7*, 1–12. http://www.efms.uni-bamberg.de/pdf/efms_paper_2012_7.pdf
- Imani, D., Otto, M., & Wiegandt, C. C. (2015). Kommunale Willkommenskultur für hochqualifizierte Migranten: Was können die Städte leisten? *Standort*, 39(1), 17–21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00548-015-0363-3>
- IOM. (2019). Glossary on Migration No. 34. International Migration Law, 234. Retrieved November 2020 from <http://medcontent.metapress.com/index/A65RM03P4874243N.pdf%5Cnhttp://www.epim.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/iom.pdf>
- Joppke, C. (2007). Beyond national models: Civic integration policies for immigrants in Western Europe. *West European Politics*, 30(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402380601019613>
- Kerr, S. P., Kerr, W., Ozden, C., & Parsons, C. (2016). Global talent flows. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 30(4), 83–106. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.30.4.83>
- Kösemen, O. (2017). Willkommenskultur in Deutschland - Mehr als nur ein Modewort? *Bertelsmann Stiftung*.

https://www.bertelsmannstiftung.de/fileadmin/files/Projekte/Migration_fair_gestalten/IB_PolicyBrief_2017_12_Willkommenskultur.pdf

Migration Data Portal. (n.d.). Migrant integration. Migration and Vulnerability. Retrieved November 2020 <https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/migrant-integration>

Miller, D. (2008). Irregular Migrants: An Alternative Perspective. *Ethics and International Affairs*, 22(2), 193–197. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7093.2008.00143.x>

Perkmann, M. (2003). Cross-Border Regions in Europe: Significance and Drivers of Regional Cross-Border Co-Operation. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 10(2), 153–171.

Reinold, J., & Unfried, M. (2019). Inventory of Services and Activities for Newcomers in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine. *Institute for Transnational and Euregional cross border cooperation and Mobility*. Retrieved November 2020 from <https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/nl/file/itemmappingnewcomerfinal07012019pdf>

Research Methodology. (n.d.). Observation. Retrieved November 2020 from <https://research-methodology.net/research-methods/qualitative-research/observation/>

Sapeha, H. (2017). Migrants' intention to move or stay in their initial destination. *International Migration*, 55(3), 5-19. doi:10.1111/imig.12304

Schuh, G., Riesener, M., Mattern, C., Linnartz, M., & Basse, F. (2018). Evaluating collaboration productivity in interdisciplinary product development. *Procedia CIRP*, 70, 211–216. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procir.2018.02.024>

Suvarierol, S. (2015). Creating Citizen-Workers through Civic Integration. *Journal of Social Policy*, 44(4), 707–727. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279415000203>

Tarp, G. (2020). Intercultural encounters and their influence on willingness to communicate in a second language other than English. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 20:3, 270-283, DOI: 10.1080/14708477.2020.1741602

Windel, F., Balaram, A., & Perkins, K. M. (2020). Discourses of the Willkommenskultur (Welcoming culture) in Germany. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 0(0), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2020.1839921>

youRegion. (n.d.). Euregio Meuse-Rhine. Retrieved November 2020 from <https://youregion.eu/euregio-meuse-rhine/>

ANNEX 1: *youRegion* EVENTS ORGANISED UNDER WP5 & WP6

Status December 2020, events marked with an * were attended for observations

Date	Name	Place	Organised by
10 Sep. 2018	Euregional Summer School	Hasselt / EMR	POM + Region Aachen
11 Sep. 2018	Euregional Summer School	Liège	Region Aachen
12 Sep. 2018	Euregional Summer School	Maastricht	ECMR + Region Aachen
13 Sep. 2018	Euregional Summer School	Aachen	Stadt Aachen + Region Aachen
7 Dec. 2018	Welcome Event Maastricht	Maastricht	ECMR + Stadt Aachen
22 March 2019	Welcome Event Kerkrade	Kerkrade (Cube design museum)	Stadt Aachen
18 April 2019	Welcome Event Maastricht*	Maastricht	ECMR + Stadt Aachen
15 June 2019	Kimiko Festival*	Aachen	Stadt Aachen + Region Aachen + EMR + ECMR
9 Sep. 2019	Euregional Summer School	Hasselt (Corda Campus)	POM + Region Aachen
11 Sep. 2019	Euregional Summer School	Aachen	Stadt Aachen + Region Aachen
12 Sep. 2019	Euregional Summer School	Maastricht	ECMR+ Region Aachen
13 Sep. 2019	Euregional Summer School	Hasselt	POM + Region Aachen
17 Oct. 2019	Spouse Café	Aachen	Stadt Aachen + RWTH
7 Nov. 2019	Spouse Café	Aachen	Stadt Aachen + RWTH
21 Nov. 2019	Spouse Café	Aachen	Stadt Aachen + RWTH
5 Dec. 2019	Spouse Café	Aachen	Stadt Aachen + RWTH
19 Dec. 2019	Spouse Café	Aachen	Stadt Aachen + RWTH
10 Jan. 2020	Spouse Café	Aachen	Stadt Aachen + RWTH
6 Feb. 2020	Spouse Café	Maastricht (Museum aan het Vrijthof)	EMCR + Stadt Aachen
12 Nov. 2019	Let's Catch Up: Taiat Dansa	Maastricht (Theater aan het Vrijthof)	EMCR + Stadt Aachen
1 Feb. 2020	Ladies in Black	Aachen	Stadt Aachen
The COVID-19 related lockdowns meant that we had put the events on hold for a long time and look for digital alternatives → digital events (Zoom)			
8 Oct. 2020	Digital kick-off Spouse Network	Zoom	Stadt Aachen + POM
27 Oct. 2020	Spouse Network Meeting with Tanya Arler*	Zoom	POM + Stadt Aachen
4 Nov. 2020	Discover Limburg*	Zoom / Hasselt (Japanese Garden)	POM
20 Nov. 2020	International Meetup with brainstorming	Zoom	Stadt Aachen + POM
18 Dec. 2020	Interactive digital End of Year Party	Zoom	POM + ECMR + Stadt Aachen

The following events were held with regard to the development of a Euregional Dual Career Service (DCS):

Date	Name	Place	Organised by
28 Jan. 2020	Meeting with representatives of universities and <i>youRegion</i> partners for the establishment of the Euregional DCS	Maastricht	RWTH Aachen
17 Sep. 2020	Meeting with representatives of universities and <i>youRegion</i> partners for the establishment of the Euregional DCS	Virtual	RWTH Aachen
12 Nov. 2020	Start your Career in <i>youRegion</i> *	Virtual	Stadt Aachen (together with the other project partners) with Talent Interlock
23 Nov. – 2 Dec.	Prepare for your Career in <i>youRegion</i> workshop series	Virtual	Stadt Aachen with Talent Interlock

ANNEX 2: SUMMARIES OF EVENT OBSERVATIONS

youRegion @KIMIKO

Aachen, 15 June 2019

On 15 June 2019, the Newcomerservice Aachen organised a youRegion event for newcomers from different parts of the Euregio Meuse-Rhine (EMR) as part of the KIMIKO festival in Aachen. Approximately 120 (international) newcomers, mainly from Aachen and Maastricht, had signed up to join the event.

Programme

14:30-15:30	Stephan Schäfer: Welcome address and short presentation of youRegion Randall Birnberg: How cultural differences shape your happiness Stephan Schäfer & Julia Reinold: Your view on youRegion – open dialogue
15:30-16:15	Chat to a local expert (EMR Connect, GIP,...)
17:15-18:15	Euregional Poetry Slam

During the youRegion @KIMIKO event, we aimed at finding out about (international) newcomers' experiences and needs through three main channels: 1. open dialogue with visitors; 2. blackboard to collect questions and feedback; 3. short interviews with visitors (short video clip for promotional purpose).

During the open dialogue with the audience (see first part of the programme) the following things came up: Talking about the differences between Aachen and Maastricht, visitors had the impression that people in Maastricht are a little friendlier and more open-minded than people in Aachen, mainly because they seem to be more talkative. Another visitor shared her experiences living in the region and the impact the weather used to have on her life. In her first year in the EMR, she cancelled her plans if it was raining, but over time, she realised that she cannot go on like that. Slowly, she started to implement her plans also when the weather was bad. Now she is used to it. She is even able to enjoy the rain, which also helped her to appreciate the sun more.

The following items were written down on the blackboard:

1. (Affordable) housing;
2. Affordable and more understandable public transport, especially across borders (e.g. a student studying in Maastricht, but living in Aachen has to pay for the bus to Maastricht herself, while German students living and studying in Aachen can travel at a reduced rate; the train between Maastricht and Aachen is perceived as very expensive);
3. Experiences with unfriendly staff at the town hall or immigration service in Aachen, oftentimes people with few German skills have worse experience; other visitors think that the governance system in Germany needs to be modernised so that some administrative issues can be handled online;
4. Language can be a challenge in general;
5. Cycling in Aachen: people do not feel safe; better network and signage of cycling routes; better cycling facilities in general (experiences depend on where people are from: e.g. another visitor from Chicago felt very safe cycling in Aachen compared to Chicago);
6. People are generally happy with the geographic location of the EMR and the access to many airports;
7. Someone asked for more events for children;
8. Someone else asked for more vegan restaurants in Aachen;
9. Finally, there were several remarks on the blackboard about how happy they are with the diversity and international atmosphere in Aachen/ the EMR: "great place, fun people";
10. A Dutch couple living in Aachen emphasised that they find it really nice that there are special events for newcomers, which also makes them feel more welcome. In addition to that, they would like to see more low-threshold meetings for newcomers, which require less organisational effort, but still give newcomers an opportunity to meet and socialise. They suggested to have regular meetings, e.g. every first Friday of the month in a certain place (pub) where it is clear that newcomers can meet others there.

Overall, the comments and feedback we received during the event are in line with information from the online survey and interviews with newcomers in the region.

Second youRegion Spouse Network Virtual Meeting 27 October 2020, 15:00-17:00, Zoom

On 27 October 2020, the second virtual meeting of the youRegion Spouse Network took place from 15:00-17:00hrs. It was organised and hosted by the Expat Centre Limburg/ POM Limburg. 20 people including partners from the youRegion project had signed up for the event. Unfortunately, not everyone who had signed up participated eventually. Participants were international men and women living in the Aachen Region, in South-Limburg in the Netherlands and Belgian Limburg.

Programme

Welcome & Introduction
Tanya Arler's presentation: UNPACK – A guide to life as an expat spouse
Interactive Q&A session with participants and advice from Tanya on questions/ frustrations

The guest speaker of this event, Tanya Arler, is a seasoned expat spouse, having orchestrated seven international moves for herself and her family. She is a Mindset Coach, Speaker and Author of the book "UNPACK – A guide to life as an expat spouse". Drawing on her over 15 years as a Mindset Coach, Tanya has founded "A Happy Expat" which is dedicated to helping expat spouses find their footing in their crazy new world. Tanya has lived in the United States, Belgium, Italy, Japan and Sweden and is currently located in Singapore. During her talk, Tanya reminded the participants that one does not need to be a perpetual cheerleader, explained how one's unmet expectations cause frustration and offered valuable insights into how to successfully look for one's new identity in a new country, emphasising that spouses are not alone and there are others in the exact same situation.

Interreg
Euregio Meuse-Rhine

27th October, 3-5pm

Please register via nina.bos@pomlimburg.be or www.expattcentrelimburg.com/spouse-network

youregion Spouse Network
Your Empowering Network

brainstorm.
network.
initiate.
youregion

Zoom
with Tanya Arler
"A happy expat"
inspirational speaker and author of the book
UNPACK- a guide to life as an expat spouse

Stadt Aachen
RWTH AACHEN
UNIVERSITY
EXPAT CENTRE
MAASTRICHT REGION
pom
Limburg

The youRegion project is made possible with the support of the European Fund for Regional Development

provincie limburg
Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Innovation,
Digitalisierung und Energie
des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen

emr

With the agreement of the organisers, participants were approached via the private chat function towards the end of the virtual meeting to ask if the event met their expectations and if they would like more events of this kind to be organised. The feedback provided by the international participants was very positive. They enjoyed hearing from people in a similar situation and could identify with what Tanya Arler had said during her presentation. One participant emphasised that in times of COVID-19, she especially appreciates such virtual meetings where you can see other (international) people because it creates a feeling of not being lost. Participants would also be interested in a variety of events being organised, for example to get to know different cultures, about how to find a job in the region, and more interactive workshops to facilitate social integration between internationals. One participant mentioned connection issues and therefore it might be an idea to record virtual events, at least the more formal presentations, and to make the accessible on the youRegion website (Euregional welcome centre).

Start your career in youRegion 12 November 2020, 10:00-12:00, Zoom

On 12 November 2020, the Start your career in youRegion event took place from 10:00 to 12:00. The event was organized & hosted by the Newcomer Service Aachen. Not everyone who signed up joined the event.

Programme

Word of welcome
Lea Suhr's presentation: Start your Career in youRegion
Heike Xhonneux & Irene Vehring's presentation: Working cross-border
Q&A

The first speaker of the event, Lea Suhr, moved from Germany to Leuven for her husband's work. When she just arrived, she was looking for support services for internationals, only to realise that she could not find any. For this reason, she set up one of these services herself: Talent Interlock. During her talk, Lea gave the participants information on many aspects of finding a career in the Euregio. She spoke about learning the local language, where to look for work, she explained how work permits and contracts work in all three countries, as well as where to find employment agencies in the region. She also touched upon the recognition of international degrees, and gave some tips on further education opportunities, volunteering and self-employment.

The second speakers, Heike Xhonneux and Irene Vehring from Grenzinfpunkt, spoke about working cross-border. They provided information about living in one country and working in another, the difference between EU and non-EU citizens, and remote work.

Interreg Euregio Meuse-Rhine **youregion** | Dual Career Services

12th November, 10-12 am - ZOOM
Start your career in youRegion!

Are you ready to approach your career in the Euregio but need some ideas where to start? Join this English-speaking information event hosted by Talent Interlock to get an overview on where and how to start looking for career perspectives.

Looking for more extensive advice? Apply for the career workshop series focusing on CV writing, networking, personal branding and job interview training for spouses in the Euregio, starting soon.

Please register at newcomerservice@mail.aachen.de

The youRegion project is made possible with the support of the European Fund for Regional Development

By registering for this event, you agree to the following: Inclusion of your details on participant list, receipt of invitations for further events of the project partners, publication of photographs and film recordings. Your consent can be revoked at any time with effect for the future.

When given the opportunity to ask questions, one of the participants asked whether there are free language courses available. There are no free language courses, but there are some available that are not very expensive. Additionally, one participant said it might be useful to have a list of international companies in the region. Another participant said that it would be useful to have a website that lists jobs that require French in Belgium. Finally, participants and Lea mentioned that it can be hard to find volunteering positions in English, but the Newcomer Service would possibly be able to find or arrange positions in English.

Participants were asked to fill in a poll asking about their opinion on the event and whether this met their expectations after the presentations. 43% of participants said the event definitely met their expectations, 50% said it pretty much met their expectations, and 7% said it partially met their expectations. None of the participants felt like the event did not meet their expectations at all or were unsure about it. Furthermore, 93% of participants also filled in that they would like to attend more career-related events in the future. Several participants already left the event before they had the chance to fill in the poll, all of these participants left a message in the Zoom chat saying that the event had been very useful.

ANNEX 3: CLARIFICATIONS ON WP5, DELIVERABLE 1: NETWORKING OF EXISTING OFFER STRUCTURES

“The goal is the **sustainable** establishment of a **network** between the structurally and contentwise different partner structures for the exploitation of **synergy effects** and the **establishment of coordinated offers** with the aim of a common welcome culture for the EMR. A coordinated, transparent range of services will be set up for citizens, enabling them to make use of services in a wide variety of situations. By establishing a "**Euregional mindset**" through the welcome culture, the perception of the EMR as a uniform area worth living in is to be promoted” (youRegion EMR73, project summary).

It is noticeable that this first deliverable is very vague and abstract, which was also acknowledged by the partners of WP5 during the FGD. During the FGD, partners attempted to define the terms that are especially unclear:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable [...] network 	is stable and “built to last” beyond the project duration. Starting from personal contacts to share expertise across borders, the network is gradually institutionalized (i.e. “depth”), with the ultimate aim to receive structural funding (i.e. “length”) (FGD).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synergy effects 	refer to a need for and added value of collaboration in terms of financial and non-financial aspects, measured both quantitatively and qualitatively (FGD).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated offers 	are used synonymous with coherent offers, leaving room for the partners to learning from each other. Harmonisation is not always possible because different services are needed in the individual sub-regions and due to different legal contexts (FGD; partner survey).

ANNEX 4: INTERVIEWEE CHARACTERISTICS

#	Age (WI)	Gender (m/f)	EUN or TCN (exact nationality not displayed to protect anonymity)	Year of arrival in EMR	Living in EMR sub-Region (WI)	Main reason for migration	Working/ studying/ unemployed? (WI & II)	Migration intention (WI)
1	26	F	EUN	2015	South Limburg (NL)	Higher education	WI: Working WII: Working	Stay until the end of the contract (Nov 2020)
2	60	F	TCN/ EUN	1988	South Limburg (NL)	Partner's work	WI: Unemployed WII: Unemployed	Stay, dependent on partner's job
3	35	F	TCN/ EUN	2007	South Limburg (NL)	Higher education	WI: Working WII: Working	Leave
4	19	F	EUN	2017	South Limburg (NL)	Higher education	WI: Studying WII: Studying	Stay, at least until studies are finished
5	36	F	EUN	2012	South Limburg (NL)	Work	WI: Working WII: Working	Unsure, depending on whether she/her partner got a good job offer somewhere else
6	29	F	EUN	2016	South Limburg (NL)	Work	WI: Working WII: Working	Stay, finish tenure track
7	33	F	TCN/EUN	2012	South Limburg (NL)	Partner's work	WI: Working WII: Working	Stay
8	28	M	TCN	2015	South Limburg (NL)	Entrepreneurship	WI: Working WII: Working	Stay
9	30	M	TCN	2015	South Limburg (NL)	Entrepreneurship	WI: Working WII: -	Stay
10	57	M	TCN	1999	Aachen (DE)	Family	WI: Working WII: -	Stay
11	29	F	TCN	2018	Aachen (DE)	Work	WI: Working WII: Working	Stay until the PhD is finished
12	37	M	TCN	2015	Aachen (DE)	Family	WI: Working	Stay
13	38	M	TCN	2014	Aachen (DE)	Work	WI: Unemployed WII: -	Unsure because of having a non-EU passport, hoping to stay in the region
14	33	M	TCN/EUN	2013	Aachen (DE)	Partner's higher education	WI: Unemployed WII: Working	Stay until his girlfriend finishes her studies, maybe

									move to an English-speaking country
15	35	M	EUN	2016	South Limburg (NL)	Partner's work	WI: Working WII: Working	Stay until his daughter finishes school	
16	35	F	EUN	2009	South Limburg (NL)	Work	WI: Working WII: -	Leave	
17	34	M	TCN	2015	South Limburg (NL)	Dutch partner	WI: Working WII: Working	Unsure, no real plans to leave	
18	42	F	EUN/TCN	2018	South Limburg (NL)	Partner's work, living in Europe	WI: Unemployed	Stay for the foreseeable future	
19	28	F	TCN	2017	Aachen (DE)	Partner's work	WI: Unemployed	Stay dependent on partner's work	
20	36	F	EUN	2012	Aachen (DE)	Work	WI: Working	Stay for the foreseeable future, move away later in life	
21	31	F	TCN	2018	Aachen (DE)	Work	WI: Working	Stay until the contract is finished in 3 years, after that it depends on the economic situation	
22	43	F	TCN	2014	South Limburg (NL)	Work	WI: Working WII: Working	Stay for as long as possible	
23	31	F	TCN	2017	South Limburg (NL)	Higher education	WI: Working WII: Working	Stay in the Netherlands	
24	28	M	EUN	2016	South Limburg (NL)	Higher education	WI: Working WII: Working	Stay	
25		M	EUN	2013	South Limburg (NL)	Work and financial reasons	WI: Working WII: Working	Leave	
26	37	F	TCN	2017	Liège (BE)	Belgian partner, work	WI: Working WII: -	Stay, but dependent on her job	
27	38	M	EUN	2009	Liège (BE)	Work	WI: Working WII: -	Uncertain because of work, if he doesn't get the permanent position he applied for, leave	
28	36	F	EUN	2006	Liège (BE)	Work	WI: Working WII: -	Uncertain because of work	
29	30	F	TCN	2017	Liège (BE)	Work	WI: Working WII: Working	Stay if she gets a more permanent position	
30	45	M	TCN	2014	Liège (BE)	Work	WI: Working WII: Working	Stay, dependent on his work	

31	28	F	TCN	2016	Liège (BE)	Work	WI: Working WII: Working	Leave Liège after PhD
32	29	M	TCN	2015	Liège (BE)	Work	WI: Working WII: Working	Uncertain, depends on the company
33	29	M	EUN	2012	South Limburg (NL)	Higher education	WI: Working WII: Working	Stay
34	42	F	EUN	2004	South Limburg (NL)	Higher education	WI: Working WII: -	Probably stay, not entirely sure
35	34	M	TCN	2012	Aachen (DE)	Intra-company transfer	WI: Working WII: -	Stay
36	35	F	EUN	2014	Aachen (DE)	Work	WI: Working	Leave
37	27	M	TCN	2014	Aachen (DE)	Higher education	WI: Working WII: Working	Unsure
38	27	F	EUN	2017	South Limburg (NL)	Higher education	WI: Working WII: Working	Leave
39	43	F	EUN	2008 & 2012	South Limburg (NL)	Higher education, family	WI: Working	Leave
40	55	M	EUN	1986	Aachen (DE)	Higher education	WI: Working WII: Working	Stay for the foreseeable future
41	54	M	EUN	1997	Aachen (DE)	Moved for his partner	WI: Working WII: -	Stay
42	27	M	TCN	2017	Aachen DE	Higher education	WI: Studying WII: -	Stay in Germany
43	46	F	EUN	2005	Aachen (DE)	German partner	WI: Working WII: Working	Stay
44	27	F	TCN/EUN	2018	Aachen (DE)	Higher education	WI: Working WII: Working	Unsure, at least stay until after PhD
45	46	F	TCN/ EUN	2015	South Limburg (NL)	Higher education	WI: Working WII: -	Stay
46	21	F	EUN	2017	South Limburg (NL)	Higher education	WI: Studying WII: Studying	Stay until finishing bachelor, unsure after
47	34	F	TCN	2014	South Limburg (NL)	Military	WI: Working WII: -	Stay
48	25	F	EUN	2015	South Limburg (NL)	Work	WI: Working WII: Working	Stay
49	64	F	TCN	1985	Limburg (BE)	Dutch partner	WI: Working WII: -	Stay, possibly move back to the US in the future
50	33	F	TCN	2016	South Limburg (NL)	Military	WI: Working WII: -	Stay
51	31	M	TCN	2011	South Limburg (NL)	Work	WI: Working	Leave Limburg after PhD

52	26	M	TCN	2016	South Limburg (NL)	Higher education	WII: Working WI: Studying	Leave
53	33	M	TCN	2017	South Limburg (NL)	Work	WII: Studying WI: Working	Stay until his wife finishes her PhD, uncertain
54	32	F	TCN	2018	South Limburg (NL)	Work	WII: - WI: Working	Stay
55	46	F	EUN	2014/2015	South Limburg (NL)	Moved to Aachen for her husband's job, then to Maastricht for her children's school	WII: Working WI: Unemployed	Stay until her daughter graduates from high school, maybe leave after that
56	39	M	TCN/EUN	2008	Limburg (BE)	Belgian partner	WII: - WI: Working	Stay
57	40	M	EUN	2016	South Limburg (NL)	Work	WII: - WI: Working	Leave
58	31	F	TCN/ EUN	2016	South Limburg (NL)	Work	WII: - WI: Working	Stay for now, maybe move in the future depending on opportunities
59	35	F	TCN	2015	South Limburg (NL)	Work	WII: Working WI: Working	Stay
60	38	F	EUN	2015	Limburg (BE)	Belgian partner	WII: - WI: Working	Stay
61	37	F	EUN	2005 & 2008	South Limburg (NL)	2005: Higher education 2008: Dutch partner	WII: Working WI: Working	Stay
62	30	M	TCN/ EUN	2016	Liège (BE)	Work	WII: - WI: Working	Probably leave
63	37	F	EUN	2016	Liège (BE)	Work	WII: Working WI: Working	Leave after post-doc
64	43	F	EUN	2004	Limburg (BE)	Partner's work	WII: Unemployed WI: Unemployed	Leave
65	24	F	TCN	2018	South Limburg (NL)	Dutch partner	WII: - WI: Unemployed	Stay
66	55	F	TCN	2016	South Limburg (NL)	Partner's work	WII: Working (part-time job) WI: Unemployed	Unsure because of husband's work, would like to stay
67	30	F	EUN	2016	Limburg (BE)	Moved to Belgium for work, and to EMR to be with her partner	WII: - WI: Working	Stay
68	38	F	EUN	2017	South Limburg (NL)	Work	WII: - WI: Working	Leave
69	52	F	TCN/EUN	1994	South Limburg (NL)	Work, Dutch partner	WII: Working WI: Working	Stay

70	34	M	TCN	2017	Limburg (BE)	Work	WI: Working	Unsure, dependent on work and his son
71	30	M	EUN	2017	South Limburg (NL)	Higher education	WI: Working WII: -	Stay for the foreseeable future
72	60	M	EUN	2006	Aachen (DE)	Military	WI: Working WII: Working	Stay
73	28	F	EUN	2018	South Limburg (NL)	Work	WI: Working WII: Working	Stay until PhD is finished, leave after
74	61	F	EUN	1989	South Limburg (NL)	Dutch husband	WI: Unemployed WII: Unemployed	Unsure, stay or leave
75	40	M	TCN	2013	South Limburg (NL)	Military	WI: Working WII: Working	Leave for work, but come back
76	27	F	EUN	2016	South Limburg (NL)	Higher education	WI: Working WII: Working	Stay for PhD, unsure after

ITEM is an initiative of Maastricht University (UM), the Dutch Centre of Expertise and Innovation on Demographic Changes (NEIMED), Zuyd Hogeschool, the city of Maastricht, the Meuse-Rhine Euregion (EMR) and the (Dutch) Province of Limburg.

Institute for Transnational and Euregional
cross border cooperation and Mobility / ITEM

Mailing address:

Postbus 616, 6200 MD Maastricht, The Netherlands

Visitors:

Bouillonstraat 1-3, 6211 LH Maastricht, The Netherlands

Avenue Céramique 50, 6221 KV Maastricht, The Netherlands

T: 0031 (0) 43 388 32 33

E: item@maastrichtuniversity.nl

www.twitter.com/ITEM_UM

