



# REMINDER

ROLE OF EUROPEAN MOBILITY AND ITS IMPACTS  
IN NARRATIVES, DEBATES AND EU REFORMS

## Intra-EU Mobilities: Perceived Impacts

### REPORT

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Published: May 2019



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## **Intra-EU Mobilities: Perceived Impacts**

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Published: December 2018

Paper prepared as part of the REMINDER project

**[www.reminder-project.eu](http://www.reminder-project.eu)**

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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020  
research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 727072

## Abstract

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This paper offers a summary, from the perspective of recurrent mobility patterns, of three studies conducted over the past two years on selected sending countries and border regions in the EU. The first study analysed the perceived impacts of, and policy responses to, care-work mobility in two sending countries: Romania and Slovakia. The second study analysed the perceived impacts of cross-border practices in the Austrian-Hungarian and Austrian-Slovak border regions. The third study analysed return migration to Poland, with the aim of understanding the motivations for return and the labour-market integration of returning migrants.

The paper argues that, within the EU and particularly between Schengen states, “borders”, while no longer physical, continue to exist as boundaries linked to language, ethnicity, religion or dominant culture (Perchinig *et al.*, 2018: 17). In addition, bringing to the fore various examples of mobility patterns across selected borders, the paper argues for the concept of “centre of life” (Oswald, 2007: 13) as potentially more useful for describing the different ways in which people are living in the EU, across international borders.



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## Introduction

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International migration, loosely defined as the movement of an individual from one country to another which includes a change in the usual place of residence, also involves a shift in status – from citizen to foreign national. Nevertheless, a European Union citizen moving to another EU country enjoys, through his/her Union citizenship, almost the same rights as a national of that country. As border controls in the Schengen area have been relaxed, the function of the border as a locus of control has also decreased (Perchinig *et al.*, 2018: 6). However, as this paper will argue, international borders within the EU, particularly in Central-Eastern Europe, often continue to mark cultural and economic differences that influence intra-EU mobility and impact on regional development.

The paper offers a summary, from the perspective of recurrent mobility patterns, of three studies conducted over the past two years on selected sending countries and border regions in the EU. The first study analysed the perceived impacts of, and policy responses to, care-work mobility in two sending countries – Romania and Slovakia (see REMINDER Deliverable 6.2, by Martina Sekulová and Mădălina Rogoz). The second study analysed the perceived impacts of cross-border practices in the Austrian-Hungarian and Austrian-Slovak border regions (See REMINDER Deliverable 6.3, by Perchinig *et al.*). Finally, the third study analysed return migration to Poland, with the aim of understanding the motivations for return and the labour-market integration of returning migrants (See REMINDER Deliverable 6.4, by Anacka and Wójcicka, *forthcoming*).

While the methodologies and scope of these studies differ, all three examine labour mobility in the EU from the perspective of sending countries (an approach still rare in the literature). This paper, by summarising the main results of the research from the perspective of mobility patterns, draws mainly from the first two studies. The return migration of citizens who have spent more than a year in another country is an important issue in Poland, and also in some other Central and Eastern European countries, where improved employment rates have resulted in labour shortages in some sectors. The study



on return migration to Poland is included in our summary so far as it contributes to the main focus of inquiry, the perception of mobility.

This paper argues that, within the EU and particularly between Schengen states, “borders”, while no longer physical, continue to exist as boundaries linked to language, ethnicity, religion or dominant culture (Perchinig *et al.*, 2018: 17). In addition, bringing to the fore various examples of mobility patterns across selected borders, the paper argues for the concept of “centre of life” (Oswald, 2007: 13) as potentially more useful than the concept of “international migration” for describing the different ways in which people are living in the EU, across international borders.

The paper is divided into four main sections. The first section briefly describes the theoretical framework and the conceptual difference between (international) migration and mobility. The second section is highly descriptive, and summarises the main results of the three above-mentioned studies, focusing in particular on the various mobility patterns identified. The third section presents perceptions of the impacts of the various mobility patterns identified in the studies on care-work mobility and border regions in relation to the labour market, education systems and education attainment, and the health-care and long-term care systems in sending countries. The fourth section brings these themes together and discusses the potential implications for policies aimed at governing mobility in the EU.

## **Migration and Mobility**

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According to the 1998 UN Recommendations on Statistics of Migration, an international migrant is defined as *“a person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year (12 months), so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence. From the perspective of the country of departure the person will be a long-term emigrant and from that of the country of arrival the person will be a long-term immigrant”* (UN, 1998: 9). Short-term or temporary migration covers movements lasting between three and twelve months, while long-term or permanent migration refers to a change of country of residence for one year or more



(Perchinig *et al.*, 2018: 8). In this definition, a person's "country of usual residence" is defined as the country "*in which the person lives, that is to say, the country in which the person has a place to live where he or she normally spends the daily period of rest*" (UN 1998, 9; see also Perchinig *et al.*, 2018: 9). This definition therefore excludes forms of commuting for short periods of time, such as daily or weekly cross-border commuting.

According to EU legislation, all EU citizens, as well as their family members, have the right to move to and reside in another Member State. However, economically inactive EU citizens – in practice, those who do not have an income – have the right to reside in another Member State for a period of longer than three months only if they have enough resources to cover their daily living expenses and have valid health insurance (Fries-Tersch *et al.*, 2018).

While movements *within* the EU are designated as "mobility", movements *from* the EU to non-EU countries, and vice versa, are regarded as migration. This distinction, it has been argued by, for example, Amelina (2017: 109), is central to maintaining the external borders of the EU; in so doing, non-EU citizens are defined as the "other". Amelina (2017) also refers to narratives of enlargement and European belonging, explaining that, while before the enlargement of 2004 European belonging was understood in terms of West versus East, since this time it has been perceived as EU vs. non-EU.

The decision of the European Union to exclude, terminologically, the migration of EU-citizens to another EU-member state from the concept of "migration" in their documents reflects a self-understanding of the EU as a supranational system "*sui generis*"—that is, of its own kind (Bogdandy, 1993: 120). This view is not shared by international organisations. Neither the United Nations nor the Council of Europe have accepted the EU bloc as a member (rather, individual EU countries are members), and the publications on migration released by these organisations treat intra-EU mobility as international migration. In international law, the EU member states are still defined as sovereign states with clearly marked international borders. In other words, the EU resembles a federated state that allows free movement of its citizens between its provinces.

This decision of the European Union to differentiate between "migration" and "mobility" also cannot be justified by current migration research. As highlighted above, central to the



UN definition of an international migrant is the movement of a person to a new place of residence over an international border (UN, 1998: 18). Conceptually, international migration is understood within the context of an international system comprised of sovereign states clearly delineated from each other by internationally-acknowledged borders. Despite the abolition of border controls in the Schengen area and the freedom of movement and settlement that Union citizens enjoy, the movement of a Union citizen to another member state entails all the characteristics of international migration. Although European integration has weakened the significance of state borders between the member states of the EU and altered their character (Geddes, 2008: 24-29; Guild, 2004: 19-23), member states are nonetheless delineated by internationally-acknowledged state borders. Thus, Union citizens making use of their right to freedom of movement have to be regarded as international migrants granted the right to free movement by virtue of their Union citizenship.

Moreover, the terminological differentiation between “mobility” and “migration” established by the European Commission has supported a problematic misunderstanding of the concept of “integration”. Since the 1999 Tampere summit, the European Union has published a broad range of documents dealing with the integration of migrants from third countries, which largely portrayed them as culturally different and in need of support as regards language acquisition and civic orientation. Integration of EU member state citizens, on the other hand, was understood as a quasi-automatic process. Indeed, the term “integration” was reserved for third-country nationals, and not used with regard to migration within the EU. In this way, the “othering” of third-country nationals led to a neglect of the Union citizens’ concrete need for integration support (Perchinig, 2012: 147). Until 2014, for instance, Union citizens could not access language classes funded by the European Integration Fund in the manner of their third-country national peers.

Through examination of various mobility patterns, primarily involving EU citizens from newer Member States, this paper underlines persistent inequalities (regardless of opportunity) in terms of maintaining “transnationalised life worlds” (Amelina, 2017). Although the functional role of state borders as a filter for mobility has largely been abolished in the EU, those borders still function as places of “bordering, ordering and





othering” (Van Houtum and van Naerssen, 2002: 128) according to citizenship, language and regional origin.

## **Mobility Patterns in the EU**

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According to a recent Eurostat report on EU citizens residing in other EU member states (Eurostat, 2018), in 2017 almost 4% of EU working-age citizens lived in another EU state. On the higher end, 20% of Romanian citizens of working age (20–64 years) lived in another EU country, followed by Lithuanians (15%) and Croatians (14%). The least mobile in 2017 (out of the total population of their respective countries) were German nationals and citizens of the UK and Sweden (with less than 1.5% of their populations living in another EU Member State). While the overall share of mobile EU citizens increased from 2007 to 2017 by 1.3 percentage points, the picture looks rather different for individual countries. Most countries registered increases – a higher share of their respective populations lived in another EU country in 2017 than did in 2007. However, “older” Member States registered decreases – the percentage of Danish citizens of working age living in another EU country dropped by 0.3 percentage points and that of Irish citizens by 0.6 points, with Cyprus registering the biggest percentage decrease among EU mobile citizens at 3.2 points. Mobile citizens from Romania, Lithuania and Latvia showed the biggest changes in the decade from 2007 to 2017 compared with the respective countries’ populations, with an increase of 10 percentage points in the share of mobile Latvians from the total population of the country, and of 9.5 points for Lithuanians (Eurostat, 2018).

In general, the employment rates of mobile EU citizens are higher than those enjoyed by the population residing in the country of citizenship. The differences were significant for Greek, Croatian, Italian, Spanish and Polish mobile citizens (ranged from 10 to nearly 20 percentage points for Greek citizens). However, employment rates were higher in Denmark, Iceland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Germany and the UK than for those countries’ citizens who were living abroad (Eurostat, 2018). This kind of information is relevant if we are to understand how many EU citizens take advantage of their right to free movement in the Union, and what difference this makes. However, as the report notes, the data



presented above refers to those who resided in another country for at least twelve months without becoming citizens. Short-term movers, or those who acquired the citizenship of the country of residence, were not captured by the data (Eurostat, 2018). In addition, large differences between the share of citizens living abroad in 2007 and in 2017 from particular countries (e.g. Romania) should be analysed in context. Such major increases can be partially explained by the fact that Romanians already living in another EU state were able to legalise their status in the last decade, and thus were captured by the data.

In the three studies involving selected countries of origin of mobile EU citizens – on care-work mobility, border regions, and return migration – several mobility patterns were identified, ranging from long-term migration (working in another country for at least twelve months) to circular commuting, either daily or on a weekly basis, between the country of residence and the country of employment. This section provides an account of these mobility patterns and the main factors influencing them.

### ***Mobility patterns in the Austrian-Hungarian border region***

After the EU enlargement of 2004, migration flows from Hungary did not reach the levels forecast (Hárs, 2008). Those countries not implementing a transition period for new EU citizens, like the UK and Ireland, were the main receiving countries of Hungarian labour migrants in the 2000s. However, after 1 May 2011, when the transition period for the Austrian labour market came to an end, the flow of Hungarians abroad increased, reaching 85,000 per year by 2013 (Perchinig *et al.*, 2018). Research on the mobility of Hungarian citizens found that Austria, Germany and the UK were the main destinations within Europe (Perchinig *et al.*, 2018). Immediately after 2011, Austria was regarded as a short-term employment destination – particularly by young Hungarians – and Germany and the UK were regarded as possible destinations for long-term employment or emigration. However, since 2014, the migration potential for both short- and long-term employment has remained somewhat limited, at levels of around 9–11% (Sik and Szeitl, 2016).

The labour-force survey by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office in the first quarter of 2013 included a questionnaire for emigrants.<sup>1</sup> Family and household members living in



Hungary (about 30,000 households) provided data about their relatives and former members of the households currently living abroad. Within the framework of the project, a total of 1,908 persons were identified as residing abroad; however, only 1,430 persons were identified in this way by their relatives which, according to the authors, indicates that emigration is a rather sensitive topic among Hungarians. According to the results, Austria attracts mainly skilled workers – some 41% of Hungarians living there have a higher-education degree, more than double than the share among Austrians (18%) (Perchinig *et al.*, 2018: 27–28).

According to data from the 2011 Hungarian census, 83% (22,500) of the employees commuting abroad worked in Austria. Of the Hungarian households, 42% had at least one inhabitant working in the Austrian labour market. Commuting was common among people living in the western parts of the country: 12,252 people from the county of Győr-Moson-Sopron, 4,812 from Vas, and 893 from Zala commuted to Austria, while the combined total number of commuters from the capital (Budapest) and other counties did not reach 5,000. Of commuters to Austria, 60% worked in the service sector, 20% in catering, 17% in industry and 16% in the construction industry. Some 7.9% of the commuters worked in agriculture (mainly in Burgenland and in crop farming, horticulture and vineyards in Lower Austria), with a similar proportion working in transport, warehousing and trade. Except for education, healthcare and other services, men have worked in all branches of the economy (Perchinig *et al.*, 2018: 32).

According to the Austrian Social Insurance Organization (*Hauptverband der österreichischen Sozialversicherungsträger*), 77,871 Hungarians worked in Austria in 2016, accounting for 12% of all foreign workers (651,694 persons). In Austria, after German workers, Hungarians were the second-largest group of foreign workers. The majority worked in Vienna (19.16%), Burgenland (19.14%) and Lower Austria (18.93%) (*Hauptverband der Österreichischen Sozialversicherungsträger*, 2016).

In a 2012 study by EURES-T Pannonia (EMPIRICA, 2012), 30 Hungarian commuters to Austria were surveyed on their ideas and experiences. The majority of interviewees (22 persons) were male, with an average age of 32.5 years. Of these, 60% had some secondary education



and 40% had a higher-education degree. 53% worked in a job appropriate to their qualifications. Most (27 people) commuted daily, while those working up to or more than 180 kilometres away commuted weekly. Of the interviewees, 24 people went to Austria for higher earnings, although several mentioned that better working conditions, lack of job opportunities in Hungary, and the opportunity to learn a new language were main motivating factors (Perchinig *et al.*, 2018: 36).

### *Education*

Following widespread international institutional cooperation in the field of education, mobility for education has also risen considerably. Like labour mobility, educational mobility is unidirectional – from Hungary (and from Slovakia) towards education facilities in Austria. Our interview partners highlighted two main types of mobility: first, the increased trend for student mobility to post-secondary and tertiary education facilities; and second, the mobility of pupils of compulsory school age to schools in Austrian villages close to the Austro-Hungarian border. This second trend deserves particular attention, as it is linked with recent demographic developments and specific regulations in the Burgenland region of Austria. As access to bilingual compulsory education in German and Hungarian is a right granted to Hungarians by the Minority Education Act of Burgenland, any person belonging to the Hungarian minority in Burgenland has the right to an education in Hungarian. In 1998, a decision by the European Court of Justice extended the rights related to minority-language protection implemented in one Member State to all EU citizens present on the territory of that State, regardless of their nationality (Perchinig *et al.*, 2018: 78). In the early 2000s, due to reforms to the education system in Austria which imposed a stricter minimum number of students per class and per school, many small schools in Burgenland faced the possibility of closure. In order to prevent this, the mayors of villages along the Austro-Hungarian border declared schools in the villages as bilingual. After Hungary's accession to the EU in 2004 and the abolition of border control, these mayors began advertising the bilingual schools in the border regions in Hungary, and signing forged registration papers that allowed Hungarian citizens living outside the municipal area to enrol. This, together with the perception that the quality of the education system in Austria was greater than that of Hungary, made many



families living close to the border with Austria determined to send their children to school in Austrian villages.

### *The cross-border consumer*

Our Hungarian interview partners reported a slight increase in the number of Austrians retiring to Hungary, particularly in border towns. This increase is driven by lower consumer prices in Hungary – particularly for services – which led to cross-border consumer travel to Hungary. In fact, depending on the goods, retired Hungarians or Austrians in Hungary cross the border to Austria to purchase consumer goods thought to be of better quality there than in Hungary.

### ***Mobility patterns in the Austrian-Slovak border region***

Before Slovakia joined the EU, two studies with Slovak migrants found that migration to Austria was a circulatory intercity migration (Kollár, 2000). After the Slovak accession to the EU, several relevant opinion surveys were conducted. A study with clients of EURES in Slovakia on labour-migration potential found that, although Germany and Austria imposed transition periods, they were among the most preferred destination countries for finding employment abroad.

According to Labour Force Survey (LFS) data, in 2016 more than 160,000 Slovaks worked abroad. The main destination countries were Austria (31.7%), the Czech Republic (23.7%), Germany (18.6%) and the United Kingdom (7.7%). Industry and the health and care sectors made up 45% of Slovaks employment abroad (Perchinig *et al.*, 2018: 37).

Our interview partners on both sides of the border agreed that commuting from Slovakia to Austria is shaped by two different streams: 1) daily commuters working in construction, manufacturing, trade and tourism and 2) care-workers – commuting on a two-week schedule – providing 24-hour care. While, in the first stream, the male–female ratio is 2:1, the second stream is made up almost entirely of women. Our partners underlined that this



second stream triggers internal mobility – women from Eastern Slovakia move to the Bratislava region, from which they can commute to Austria.

According to several interview partners, in the first ten years following the 2004 enlargement, migration and commuting were mainly unidirectional – from East to West. The few Austrians who did commute or move to Slovakia worked in management positions in specific sectors, such as IT and finance, or in the automotive industries. Today there are many more such cases. The interviewees underlined the particular situation of the Bratislava region, where the Slovak government supported the growth of a regional automotive industry cluster with plants of Volkswagen, PSA and KIA, currently employing some 70,000 persons, including those working in the local supply industry (Perchinig *et al.*, 2018: 62). The growing demand for labour by these companies has led to a decline in interest in commuting to Austria among the better qualified. However, most commuters started to work in Austria years ago, and are eager to keep their positions. While Slovak commuters to Austria aged 35+ speak German, as many of them learned German at school, younger commuters learned English as the first foreign language. They do not have a comparable knowledge of German and are generally more strongly oriented towards mobility to the Czech Republic or English speaking countries. Only a few Austrians are fluent in or willing to learn Slovak, and do so mainly because of private relationships with Slovak partners. Therefore, it is expected that commuting for work from Austria to Slovakia will remain limited to those with management positions, who usually work in an English-speaking environment with international companies domiciled in Bratislava.

#### *The care-work mobility of Romanian and Slovak workers in Austria*

At the end of 2017, the Austrian Chamber of Commerce (WKO) registered 62,670 active self-employment licences for 24-hour personal care provision, of which 42.4% (26,144 licences) were registered by Romanians, followed by Slovak care-givers with 24,585 licences (39.2%). Other nationalities, such as Hungarians, Austrians, Czechs or Poles, registered 11,469 licences, or 18.4% of the total number (WKO, 2018). However, the proportion of the different nationalities has been changing. The total number of active care-givers from Slovakia peaked in 2016 at 26,144, growing from 25,038 in 2013, before declining again to



24,585 in 2017 (WKO, 2018). Slovak care-givers working mainly in bi-weekly shifts have dominated the 24-hour personal-care sector over the last twenty years. In contrast, care-work mobility from Romania continues to develop faster. The total number of Romanian care-givers increased from 13,065 in 2013 to 24,220 in 2016. By the end of 2017 there were 26,616 Romanians holding an active 24-hour care-giver licence (WKO, 2018). Romanians work in shifts of three or four weeks, depending on the commuting time and distance between their place of residence in Romania and the private home of the person they cared for in Austria.

#### *Cross-border residential mobility and commuting back to the country of origin*

This particular type of cross-border mobility is linked with the cross-border suburbanisation of Bratislava. Owing to the fact that the border with Austria is situated only five kilometres west of the city centre, a growing number of Slovak families started to move to several Austrian villages close to Bratislava (within a radius of 50km) in the early 2000s, from which many commute daily to Bratislava for work. Factors contributing to this phenomenon, in addition to the increasing price of property in and around Bratislava, are Austrian municipalities offering well-priced building sites, and the house-building subsidies available in Austria for young families. Municipal funding in Austria depends on the number of inhabitants in a municipality, so the local administration tries to attract young families to boost their funding. The financing aspect also influences the way in which schooling is being organised. There are Austrian municipalities where bilingual German-Slovak pre-schooling and subsidised bilingual-school projects are implemented with Slovak partners (e.g. the municipality of Kittsee).

#### ***Polish return migration***

The studies on the Austro-Hungarian/Austro-Slovak border regions and on care-work mobilities presented above analysed, among other aspects, the perceived impacts of the various mobility patterns. The study on return migration only covered the impacts of the long-term mobility experience on performance on the Polish labour market. More specifically, it looked at the Polish labour-market performance of persons who returned to



Poland after living at least one year elsewhere in the EU. Furthermore, the study also looked at re-emigration intentions in relation to past migration experiences. Employing a quantitative analysis of relevant data from the 2011 Polish census, Central Statistical Office (CSO) estimates and relevant surveys, the study found that, at least up until 2016, no years recorded massive inflows of returnees, unlike anticipation in the public discourse in the country. According to the census data, at least 730,000 Polish residents remained at least one year abroad (Anacka and Wójcicka, *forthcoming*). Between 2004 and 2008, those who returned to Poland made up 1.3% of the population. The most frequently-stated motives for return were family- and work-related. Regarding labour-market performance, the study found that, while the activity rate was higher for return migrants than for the overall population (65% vs 55% respectively), the probability of being unemployed was almost the same for returnees and non-migrants. Activity and employment rates depend on the socio-economic characteristics of returnees, including the area to which they return – urban vs rural, small or medium-sized towns vs cities, etc. Regardless, returnees are more likely to be self-employed than those who did not migrate (9.0% vs 4%) although dependent employment remains a popular source of income (37.9% are employed).

Analysis shows that the likelihood of re-migrating is greater for male returnees, for those aged between 16 and 25, and for those who are unattached (e.g. single or divorced). High education levels are also associated with an increased likelihood of re-migration. Labour-market status is also relevant, as those with part-time contracts, or who are unemployed or economically inactive, are more likely to declare an intention to re-migrate (Anacka and Wójcicka, *forthcoming*). Declarations of an intention to re-migrate were found to also depend on the reason for returning to Poland – whether the termination of a contract abroad, an interest in becoming self-employed in Poland, the completion of studies abroad, or missing family – as well as on whether the work undertaken abroad matched the respondent's qualifications. For instance, if return was determined by the termination of a contract abroad, the respondents were less likely to declare an intention to re-migrate. Similarly, if the respondent worked abroad below his or her qualification level, he or she is less likely to declare an intention to re-migrate than those in the reference category (those who worked above or according to their qualifications). One possible explanation is that migrants involved in work for which they are overqualified may regard migration as





temporary (Anacka and Wójcicka, *forthcoming*). In 2011, 46% of returnees declared that they were employed abroad below their level of qualification.

The length of the stay abroad and the destination country also influence the likelihood to declare intention to re-migrate. The study found notable differences regarding the moment of migration. Pre-enlargement migrants (those who left before 2004) who returned from Nordic countries were more likely to re-migrate than those who returned from Ireland or the UK.

To sum up, the study found that, despite the limited effects of the 2008 crisis on the Polish economy, no significant waves of return migration are observable based on the data analysed. Despite higher economic activity, the unemployment rate of returnees is greater than that of those who did not migrate. Those who intend to re-migrate are the most likely to be young, unattached, have high levels of education and have an unfavourable situation on the labour market in Poland. In fact, the characteristics of returnees who intend to re-migrate are similar to those of first-time migrants (Anacka and Wójcicka, *forthcoming*).

### ***Factors influencing mobility patterns in the EU***

Research on the drivers and motivations of long-term intra-EU mobility found that the most important factors are work- and family-related (Strey *et al.*, 2018). Our research on cross-border mobility found that unemployment and lower incomes in Hungary and Slovakia are seen as the most important push-factors for cross-border mobility or commuting. Income differences between countries, but also better working-conditions, are the most important pull-factors. For instance, the difference in salaries for comparable jobs and the better working conditions in Austria are between the factor 1:2 and 1: 3.5, and are regarded as the main drivers for labour mobility from Hungary (Perchinig *et al.*, 2018: 64).

Although employment and the financial situation in the Bratislava region have improved in the last ten years, the differences remain high if we compare Eastern Slovakia and the whole of Hungary with Austria. Thus commuting extends far beyond the direct border zone. In order to ease the commute to Austria, Slovak and Hungarian workers from the Eastern



provinces of their country first commute internally, closer to the western border, on a weekly base, where they rent a shared room. From there they commute daily to their place of work in Austria.

As several experts have highlighted, the existence and quality of travel infrastructure is a key element in the governance of commuting. According to an interview with a civil servant, at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s there was political resistance against an influx of workers from Slovakia and Hungary in Austria. As a consequence, Austria postponed investing into travel infrastructure. The Austrian part of the highway between Vienna and Bratislava thus was finalised only in 2007, approximately fifteen years later than the Slovak part, and the railways connecting the two cities underwent updates only from 2017 onwards (Perchinig *et al.*, 2018: 60). As, after the accession of the new Member States to the EU, borders no longer functioned as filters of mobility, politicians made use of traffic infrastructure acts as a tool with which to govern regional mobility (Perchinig *et al.*, 2018: 61).

Another factor influencing mobility patterns relates to educational policies. The German language was taught in Hungary and Slovakia as the first compulsory foreign language until the end of the 1990s. For this reason and due to the Austrian broadcasting company, whose transmissions (in German) were received in Hungarian and Slovak households close to the border, generations born in the 1970s had a good knowledge of German, which eased their access to the Austrian labour market. As of the early 2000s, English replaced German as the first compulsory foreign language in schools and thus fewer students chose to learn German (Perchinig *et al.*, 2018: 60).

In the early 2000s, a growing number of Hungarian families – either due to labour cross-border commuting to Austria or because they were living close to the Austrian border – started to send their children to schools there. In this particular case, specific regulations on schooling in Austria and the proximity to the border, and ultimately to the schools in Austrian villages close to the Hungarian border, determined a high rate of education mobility at compulsory schooling level.



To sum up, the three studies identified a multitude of types of movement within the EU, ranging from long-term mobility in the case of Polish returnees and the monthly or weekly mobility of care workers from Romania and Slovakia respectively, to the daily cross-border commuting of residential or educational commuters. The following section presents recurrent perceptions of the impacts which some of these mobility patterns had on the labour markets in border regions, as well as on education, health care and long-term care, particularly in sending countries.

## **Perceptions of Mobility**

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Perceptions of mobility in the EU have been addressed mainly from the perspective of receiving countries. Before the largest enlargement wave in May 2004, this topic was looked at from the perspective of perceptions or attitudes towards (im)migration. After enlargement, the distinction between “migration” and “mobility” in EU migration policies rephrased the question of how migration is perceived in receiving countries. A recent study on the differences between EU citizens’ support for immigration from within the EU and support for immigration from outside the EU, found little notable difference between the origins of immigrants. The study relied on data from seven European Social Surveys (ESS), comprising over 30,000 respondents from 18 EU Member States, Norway and Switzerland (Blinder and Markaki, 2018: 4). The study found that “the vast majority of support for EU mobility comes from people who support immigration in general” (2018: 44). Furthermore, fewer than 10% of EU residents (from the ESS data) “prefer inflows of some or many immigrants from [within the EU] while preferring to restrict immigration from outside Europe to few or none” (2018: 44).

### ***Perceptions of Eastern European enlargement***

#### *The labour market*

In the early 2000s, research on the impact of enlargement found that “while remittances can partially offset the negative effects on growth in sending countries in the short- to



medium-term, they cannot fully address the loss of labour input on capacity output in the longer-term” (Holland *et al.*, 2011: 4). Nearly ten years later, labour mobility associated with enlargement waves is perceived to have both positive and negative consequences.

According to Slovak experts, mobility to Austria attenuated the unemployment rates in Slovakia and acted as a trigger for internal migration from Eastern to Western Slovakia. On the one hand, the commuting of highly skilled workers from Bratislava to Austria put pressure on local labour markets to increase salaries and improve labour conditions in Slovakia. However, as unemployment rates are at a historical minimum, it becomes increasingly challenging to find suitable employees, and the country has thus to open its borders to workers from outside the EU. This is the case in the health sector, where the lack of trained personnel is thought to be one of the consequences of trained nurses commuting to Austria to work in 24-hour care. On the other hand, Austrian experts from Burgenland and Lower Austria highlighted that differences in salary levels on both sides of the border (in Hungary and Slovakia respectively, compared to salaries in Austria) led to pressure on salary levels in Burgenland in tourism and construction.

Like the views of their Slovak counterparts, Hungarian experts consider outmigration and commuting from Western Hungary to Austria to have contributed to the reduction of unemployment in Hungary. However, like companies in Slovakia, companies in Western Hungary struggle to find enough trained workers. In addition to “brain drain”, Hungarian experts underline the down-skilling of the Hungarian labour force in Austria and the UK (younger generations are proficient in English rather than in German), as many work in sectors which are different to the focus of their education, such as the hospitality industry. According to both Austrian and Hungarian experts, the hospitality industry in the northern region of Burgenland would not have survived without Hungarian workers. In addition, in sectors such as construction, manufacturing, tourism and seasonal work in agriculture in Austria, there is still a demand for Hungarian and Slovak workers.

### ***Perceptions of care-work mobility in sending countries***

Care-work out-mobility is perceived to impact sending countries in different ways, depending on a number of factors. One finding relates to the administrative level of the



institutions involved in the study. Representatives of institutions at the national level, for instance, tend to see care-work mobility as less relevant than do local-level authorities. What matters for national-level authorities, particularly in Romania, is that it is mostly women who leave to work abroad, while the fact that they work in care specifically is of less importance. On the national level, the positive effects of out-migration on the entire family are highlighted, even though specific (negative) effects on the education system and the education of children are also acknowledged.

### *Education*

Research on the impact of parents' migration on children's educational attainment finds various, conflicting results (Sekulová and Rogoz, 2018). While the overall negative effects require particular conditions (such as parents' level of education or whether children live in rural or urban areas), some studies find no particularly negative effects with regards to the school achievements of children whose parents migrated abroad for work compared to those whose parents did not migrate (Gassmann *et al.*, 2013). Our study of the perceived impacts on the educational attainment of children with parents abroad and on the education system as such, also found similar results but to a more limited extent.

In Romania, interviewees at the national level made clear that outmigration decreases unemployment rates in the country, and thus contributes to the wellbeing of family life in general. Furthermore, remittances sent by family members working abroad outweigh the negative effects of out-migration on children's education. In Romania, in 2017, there were 74,405 families registered as working abroad whose children were living in Romania; 96,723 children were registered with at least one parent working abroad, while 18,403 had both parents living abroad. In Slovakia it was assessed that related outmigration has only limited effects on education insofar as it is only a minority (15%) of all Slovak care-givers in Austria who have children aged below 15 years.

At the local level, stakeholders underline the various effects which the mobility of care workers has on families in general, and on children remaining in the countries of origin in particular. Although the relevance of care-work mobility is not recognised as such (in



relation to the compulsory education system in the country), it is acknowledged that it is mostly the engagement of women in care work abroad which has a negative effect on children remaining in the country. In Romania, in particular, the situation is assessed negatively by local-level stakeholders, who are in direct contact with families and children with parents working abroad. Above all, according to interview partners, a mother's out-migration has a devastating effect on her children's well-being, education and overall school performance. In addition, parents working abroad do not usually register other legal guardian for their children living in Romania. Schools face particular challenges when children are not officially registered as living with someone other than their parents, as they cannot approve transfers nor register the children for extracurricular activities. For day-to-day activities, teachers communicate with the person in *de facto* charge of caring for the child, but need the legal representative's signature for official documents.

In Slovakia, although care work is acknowledged by national-level institutions to be relevant for Slovak women and linked with intra-EU mobility, it is not regarded as negatively impacting on the well-being of children left behind, for two main reasons. Firstly, Slovak women working in care abroad are in their middle or later stages of their lives, and their children are therefore older. Secondly, the specific mobility patterns between Slovakia and Austria, for instance, allow these women to reconcile working abroad with their families' lives.

To sum up, although the general impact perceived is a negative one, interview partners in both countries acknowledged – through specific examples – that impact is contextual; the overall impact of parental migration on children's educational achievements depends on the individual migration process as well as on the structure of the family, including the age of the child.

### *Health care*

The negative effects on the healthcare system and access to healthcare in the sending country, caused by professionals leaving to work abroad, are highlighted by national-level stakeholders in both Romania and Slovakia.



In Romania, this concerns a lack of trained nurses and medical doctors, particularly in hospitals. As many care workers in 24/7 care in Austria are not trained nurses, this type of care work is seen in a positive light as a possibility for employment and the generation of remittances. In addition, the so-called “Italian syndrome” is gaining increased attention. It affects care-givers who provide live-in care to the elderly abroad (initially in Italy, hence the name); it involves physical symptoms such as pain and extreme fatigue, and can develop into long-term depression and episodes of paranoia (Sekulová and Rogoz, *forthcoming*). In Slovakia, “care-drain” results, firstly from an insufficient number of trained care workers and, secondly, the unwillingness of qualified carers to work under current conditions in the health-care system, leading them to find jobs in other sectors or abroad. In addition, the low social status of care work in Slovak society, limited career opportunities, the relatively low position of this kind of work in the healthcare hierarchy, and low pension payments, are the main triggers for nurses’ and care workers’ emigration.

At the local level, in Romania the lack of trained nurses and care workers leads to positions being filled by less-trained personnel, causing a reduction in the quality of the health-care service and a serious shortage of them in the country. In Slovakia, the situation is assessed differently. According to service providers, care work abroad steers additional financial resources into the Slovak healthcare system. While care-givers pay their health insurance in Austria, they utilise healthcare services in the home country, which is compensated for by Austrian social-insurance institutions. Experts interviewed in Slovakia reported that the commuting of nurses and carers from Slovakia to Austria, meanwhile, had a negative impact<sup>2</sup> on the health sector in Slovakia, considering that this country has one of the fastest ageing populations in Europe (Perchinig *et al.*, 2018: 70; Sekulová and Rogoz, *forthcoming*).

#### *Long-term care*

Very loosely, “long-term care” (LTC) refers to care services designed for the elderly, the chronically ill, and the disabled. Considering recent economic and demographic changes, the discussion in Europe around LTC has mainly been in relation to service affordability and the sustainability of systems (Mosca *et al.*, 2017). Due to a number of factors, among which is



population ageing, the increasing need for care in richer EU countries is currently being met through the work of mobile EU citizens from poorer countries (Sekulová and Rogoz, *forthcoming*). According to a recent report on intra-EU labour mobility, “EU level reliance on EU-28 mobile health professionals and health associate professionals was at 3% and reliance on mobile personal care workers<sup>3</sup> was at 5%, broadly corresponding to the share of active EU-28 movers from the total EU labour force, which was at 4% in 2016” (Fries-Tersch *et al.*, 2018: 111). While “Romanian, Polish and Italian citizens were the largest groups of mobile health (associate) professionals, [...] Romanians [were] the largest group of mobile personal care workers” (2018: 111). In 2016 “At EU level (and in Romania and Poland), personal care workers accounted for the highest shares of persons working abroad (compared to the ‘stayers’ in the same profession), followed by doctors” (2018: 130). These findings show the high relevance of care workers’ mobility for LTC systems across the EU. The high number of Romanian care workers involved in care abroad – 120,000 in 2016 – can be explained by “the high weighting of Italy as a country of destination for mobile personal care workers, where Romanians made up 86% of the group” (2018: 124).

In the two sending countries under examination – Romania and Slovakia – perceptions of the impact of care-work mobility on long-term care systems vary. In Slovakia, for instance, care mobility is thought to have a more significant impact on families and the organisation of care within families rather than on the LTC system as such. The lack of labour in this particular sector is not directly associated with care-work mobility, as those working in care abroad would not necessarily have been working in care in Slovakia. However, as in both countries LTC systems are largely based, *de facto*, on informal care provided to those in need by family members, the absence of these family members – often women who work in care abroad – has a negative impact on the provision of care.

Local-level stakeholders in Slovakia, for instance, regarded care-work mobility as beneficial for those in need of care from Slovakia. The fact that women commute between, in this case, Austria and Slovakia every two weeks is deemed to allow women to remain engaged in providing care to dependant family members, and to earn a stable income from which all family members – including dependant members in need of care – can benefit (Bahna and





Sekulová, 2018; Bauer and Österle, 2016). In general, care mobility is perceived to make only minor contributions to structural system deficits (Sekulová and Rogoz, *forthcoming*).

## **Policy Implications**

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While bearing in mind that the three studies summarised above are specific to either particular regions (selected border regions, regions within sending countries) or countries (Poland as an example for return migration), this section draws some main conclusions and reformulates the topics mentioned above – mobility patterns, factors influencing mobility, (perceptions of) impact – from a perspective relevant for policies governing mobility in the EU. All studies – although perhaps more so those on border regions and care-work mobility – function as a thermometer: they show the perceived impacts of mobility on either border regions or particular systems within sending countries, at a specific time (e.g. Brexit discussions and negotiations) and in specific places in Europe (border region and countries from the ex-communist bloc). While the results cannot and should not be generalised, by selecting this particular region within the EU, these studies together contribute to our understanding of developments in the region and, ultimately, of the effects of European enlargement and European integration.

### ***Regional development***

As the study has highlighted, regional development of border regions is mainly shaped by regional and local factors, in particular location factors and investment into local industries. While the positive economic development of the Bratislava region was fuelled by the decision of the Slovak government to establish an automotive cluster around the city, leading to high levels of investment by leading car manufacturing companies and the development of Bratislava into a local centre of the financial industry, no comparable development took place on the Hungarian side of the border. In this respect, both the specific geography of the twin cities Bratislava and Vienna – two capital cities within a driving distance of some 80 kilometres – and the comparably low level of investments in



Hungary were given as explanations. Unlike Bratislava, where an automotive cluster including a sizeable number of local supply industries formed, investments into the car manufacturing plants (Audi, Porsche) in Győr, a city 50 kilometers from the Austrian border with some 130,000 inhabitants, did not strongly impact on regional economic development.

Further to well-planned and -managed economic investments, traffic infrastructure was mentioned as an essential element of regional integration. While Bratislava and Vienna are linked by good train, bus and highway connections, travel infrastructure between Austria and Hungary has not reached a comparative level of development.

### ***The free movement of workers: work vs employment***

According to EU legislation, EU citizens and their family members have the right freely to move and live within the territory of the Union (see Directive 2004/58/EC). However, economically inactive EU citizens can only reside in another member state longer than three months if they can prove that they have enough financial resources to cover their stay and health insurance (Fries-Tersch *et al.*, 2018: 152). Furthermore, “migrant workers” are those EU citizens in an employment relationship “who carry out real and genuine activities which are not purely marginal and ancillary, in a Member State other than their state of citizenship” (2018: 152). According to Regulation (EC) No. 883/2004, frontier workers are cross-border workers who return to their country of residence “as a rule daily or at least once a week” (2018: 152). Cross-border workers return to their country of residence at a different time interval than frontier workers (longer than a week, for instance).

The studies conducted in selected sending countries in the framework of REMINDER, the results of which we have summarised in this report, revealed an array of mobility patterns – ranging from intra-EU mobility of over 12 months (in the case of Polish returnees) to frontier workers (in the case of Slovak citizens who reside in Austria and work in the Bratislava region). However, according to these explanations, most of those mobile EU citizens referred to in the studies are cross-border workers. Although access to labour markets in other EU countries is now unrestricted for workers from Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, as Perchinig *et al.* (2018) explain, bordering – the process which goes beyond



understanding the crossing of a physical border and is linked with ordering and othering – maintains the differences between EU nationals, particularly when it comes to “new” member states’ citizens working in specific occupations in “old” member states.

In Austria of the 1990s and early 2000s, daily 24-hour personal care delivered by care-givers mainly from neighbouring new EU member states was provided as irregular employment. In 2007 legislation was passed defining two legal options for 24-hour care, standard employment and self-employment, with the latter now covering about 99% of all 24-hour care work arrangements (Österle and Bauer, 2016). Today there are over 60,000 self-employed carers in Austria, 42% of them Romanian and 39% Slovak (WKO, 2018). Care workers consulted for this research highlighted the challenges they face as self-employed carers in Austria. They particularly referred to the effects which this arrangement has on the relationship between them (the carers) and the family/dependant relatives (the client). The relationship between the person under care or Austrian family and the carer becomes a business relationship and not an employer–employee one. Since the work carried out is defined as “service provision” rather than as regular employment, Austrian labour laws (regarding working hours, paid sick leave, collective bargain agreements, etc.) do not fully apply.

Moreover, this particular type of self-employment – in which the self-employed depend largely on one client – is defined by the International Labour Organization as dependent self-employment, a form of non-standard employment which can lead to exclusion from social protections (Behrendt and Nguyen, 2018). Arguably, the way 24-hour care work is organised in Austria leaves EU citizens working in care more vulnerable even than third-country nationals (TCNs), particularly when it comes to labour rights. TCNs, being required to fulfil certain criteria in order to access the Austrian labour market, would have access only to standard employment in care work, and would then have access to social protections linked with employment.



### ***Access to rights as EU citizens***

While cross-border commuting is perceived as having positive effects on unemployment rates in both Hungary and Slovakia, interviewees in Austria underlined the challenges posed by access to rights for Hungarian and Slovak workers in Austria. Slovak and Romanian care workers consider working in Austria an opportunity. However, they also report facing difficulties. These mainly concern the lack of regulation and control of placement agencies and of information about the regulatory framework for 24/7 care. Contracts with placement agencies often include illegal clauses, demand excess fees for placement, or oblige care workers to use insecure and overpriced transport services. The lack of an EU-wide regulatory framework for the training of care workers has (particularly in Romania) opened the door for fraudulent placement agencies – reportedly cooperating with some of the larger placement agencies in Austria – to sell forged training certificates. A lack of standards on minimum training requirements may lead to a low quality of care services. In addition, the lack of travel safety regulations for minibus services imposing maximum driving times is identified as a major reason for risky travel conditions. In autumn 2017, a road traffic accident which killed six Slovak care workers commuting from Austria to Slovakia – who were required by their placement agency to take this particular minibus service – has raised a public debate on the working conditions of Slovak care workers in Austria and the problematic role of placement agencies. This situation might require the development of a European regulatory framework for the duties and responsibilities of agencies, including the minimum training requirements for staff and a statutory maximum level of fees.<sup>4</sup> Alternatively, a common European standards for the ethical recruitment of (non-medical) care workers who are citizens of another EU member state – also applicable when they are self-employed – might contribute to better working conditions.

As a response to the abuse by employers of freedom of movement, particularly when it concerns Hungarian workers in Austria, the Chamber of Labour of Burgenland began to reach out to Hungarian workers through information in Hungarian on collective agreements, minimum payment and regulations on working conditions, as well as through consultations in Hungarian available in all offices in Burgenland (Perchinig *et al.*, 2018: 74).

Representatives of the Chamber also criticised current freedom of movement regulations,



declaring that they preferred the re-introduction of a system of regulating employment of Union citizens working in other countries than their country of citizenship (e.g. through a quota-like system).

According to interviewees in Austria, the existing regulations for posting of workers adds to brain-drain and de-skilling and encourages exploitation, as the posting period is too long, allowing lower social-security deductions from posted workers compared to those from Austrian workers. Representatives of the Chamber of Labour in Lower Austria suggested – as a solution to the fraudulent posting of workers – equal payment with equal social security and tax deductions from the first day of posting, as well as the limitation of posting to three months within each year (Perchinig *et al.*, 2018: 75).

As compensation paid to care workers in Austria is relatively low (particularly if we compare the self-employed with those working in care in regular employment), the workers regard child benefits for their children living in the country of origin as part of their income. Placement agencies legitimate low payment with access to these benefits. The indexation of child benefits (to be introduced in Austria in January 2019) is expected to make care work more expensive for clients and less attractive to care workers from Eastern Europe. According to Austrian civil servants consulted for this research, a reduction in the family benefits paid for the children of commuters – particularly with reference to Romanian and Slovak care workers whose children continue to live in their respective countries of origin – is expected to have an effect on 24-hour-care mobility but not on other types of commuting.

Another aspect worth noting relates to compulsory education. According to Austrian legislation, only children residing in the municipality of the school can enrol there. However, as noted above, in order to save the schools in their villages – which were threatened with closure due to falling numbers of children – some mayors in villages close to the Hungarian border started to sign forged registration papers in their villages for children who were in fact commuting, so that Hungarian children living in Hungary could enrol in schools in Austria. In the early 2010s the practice was uncovered by media reports and was stopped. While students already enrolled were allowed to finalise their compulsory schooling in



Austria, no new pupils from Hungary could enrol. According to one expert interviewee, this motivated some Hungarian commuters to buy properties in Burgenland in order to be able to send their children to Austrian schools. Apparently, the lack of freedom in the field of compulsory education is an obstacle to mobility for EU citizens living closer to the border (Perchinig *et al.*, 2018: 80). Although the field of education is not a competency of the European Union, but of each individual member state, our findings suggest a need to examine whether these or similar regulations are compatible with the right to freedom of movement.

## Conclusions

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This paper has presented the main mobility patterns identified in three studies on selected border regions, care-work mobility and return migration. To sum up in simple terms:

1.) There seems to be no significant distinction (at least at the level of perceptions in receiving countries) between “migration” and “mobility”; 2.) Sending countries perceive mobility as having both positive and negative consequences; and 3.) Returnees have advantages on the labour market which are determined by their socio-economic characteristics rather than by the fact that they lived abroad for more than a year. What seems to make a notable difference to how and to what extent people enjoy their rights as EU citizens – precisely the right to move freely within the EU – is how people live their transnational lives. From this perspective, the economic differences between sending and receiving countries, the distance between the place of residence and the place of work (both in space and time), the working conditions, the workers’ language competence, and social recognition seem to be the most relevant factors either fostering or impeding mobility.

Furthermore, the less time spent abroad – which ultimately makes the distinction between long-term or short-term migration/mobility – and the interaction between what Oswald (2007) calls the dimensions of change of the “centre of life” with the length and rhythm of stays abroad, both provide a much better account of the patterns of mobility identified in these three studies. These dimensions are the places of residence, of work, of the education



of children and of social networks. From this perspective, while international physical borders between EU countries are vanishing, those elements deemed relevant for transnational lives in the EU (economic differences, distances, working conditions, languages etc.) also contribute to the creation and maintenance of borders within the EU – very different from former physical international borders, but just as powerful.

## Notes

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1. The project Managing Migration and its Effects in South-East Europe, <https://www.demografia.hu/en/seemig> (accessed 05 December 2018).
2. Hungarian experts interviewed for the cross-border mobility study shared these views with regard to the diminishing labour force in Western Hungary – which has become insufficient for Hungarian companies as more workers commute to Austria for work (Perchinig *et al.*, 2018: 71).
3. “Personal care workers in health services provide personal care and assistance with mobility and activities of daily living to patients and elderly, convalescent and disabled people in health care and residential settings” (Fries-Tersch *et al.*, 2018: 111).
4. According to Art. 8(5) of Law 232/2017 of 29 November 2017 (Parlamentul României 2017), intermediary agencies registered in Romania are no longer allowed to charge commissions to Romanian citizens when mediating employment contracts abroad. Some Romanian care workers we interviewed consider this change a major development intended to address reported exploitative situations in which care workers pay fees to both Romanian agencies and agencies in the country of employment. Although the amendments entered into force in March 2018, care workers continue to report cases in which agencies demand employment fees (Sekulová and Rogoz, *forthcoming*).



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# REMINDER

ROLE OF EUROPEAN MOBILITY AND ITS IMPACTS  
IN NARRATIVES, DEBATES AND EU REFORMS

The REMINDER project is exploring the economic, social, institutional and policy factors that have shaped the impacts of free movement in the EU and public debates about it.

The project is coordinated from COMPAS and includes participation from 14 consortium partners in 9 countries across Europe



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research & innovation programme under grant agreement no 727072

