

Inventory of Services and Activities for Newcomers in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine



Het Institute for Transnational and Euregional cross border cooperation and Mobility / ITEM is de spil van wetenschappelijk onderzoek, advisering, kennisuitwisseling en opleidingsactiviteiten omtrent grensoverschrijdende samenwerking en mobiliteit.

Universiteit Maastricht

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Executive Summary

This research is an exploratory mapping study intended to identify services and organisations that promote social and labour market integration for highly skilled newcomers in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine (EMR). The aim is to identify existing services which could compliment the European Employment Service (EURES) in attracting and retaining highly-skilled newcomers to the EMR. The aims are twofold: identifying areas which would facilitate the social and economic integration of newcomers, so as to increase the attractiveness of the region; and to identify where EURES can collaborate with existing services and initiatives. Newcomers are here defined as international and internal migrants who have moved to the EMR. Highly-skilled is a contested term, but it is often defined in regards to the level of education one has received (i.e. having completed tertiary education).

The research is based on extensive desk research and a series of semi-structured interviews with experts and service providers. To avoid duplication and to narrow the scope of this research some services and organisations (such as the *Grenzinfopunkt*) have been excluded from the mapping as they have appeared in other recent research. However, this is not to say that they may not be relevant to newcomers in cross-border situations.

In total, 155 relevant organisations were identified across the five sub-regions of the EMR. It was found that few services and organisations target highly-skilled newcomers specifically. Aachen, South Limburg, and parts of Belgian Limburg could be considered exceptions to this. Those regions feature more advanced initiatives and host services more focused towards the highly skilled. This is most likely linked to the presence of universities in those regions such as the University of Maastricht in South Limburg and the Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule (RWTH) and Fachhochschule (FH) in Aachen.

This is reflected in the number of international student associations found in these regions. Aachen region hosts the highest number of initiatives in the EMR, with 76, most of which are international student associations or cultural and religious communities. This was followed by South Limburg where twenty-six services and organisations directed at newcomers were identified. Many of these organisations are also international student associations.

Nineteen organisations each were identified in the Province of Liege and the German-speaking community in Belgium. These organisations have been found to focus more on disadvantaged individuals. In the German-speaking Community especially services were directed towards locals as

well as newcomers, and it was unclear to what extent highly-skilled newcomers engaged in the social and cultural activities offered. The province of Limburg in Belgium was found to have fifteen relevant organisations or services most of which were highly specialised. Notably, three worked on integration in general, three on labour integration and two on language training for international migrants.

There are different levels of organisational formalisation across the regions. Smaller organisations and services are harder to access as they have fewer resources and are often more dependent on the commitment of individuals. Many only provide introductory information in the regions native language and it is also frequently out of date. It is recommended that service providers make information available in English, the effective lingua franca of mobile highly-skilled newcomers.

There appears to be very little cross-border cooperation between organisations. The exceptions are some international student associations like the Young European Federalists (JEV) which have many international partnerships, and the Newcomerservice in Heerlen, which is a member of the Aachen based *Lotsenkreis Willkommenskultur*. The added value of increased cross-border cooperation is clear. Information exchange would allow organisations and services to keep better track of social and legal developments as well as identify best practices. Additionally, cross-border cooperation has the potential to solve practical issues, such as through the exchange of personnel with specific language skills. The only form of cooperation between EURES and an identified institution is the close collaboration between the Holland Expat Centre South and the *Grenzinfopunkt* in Maastricht, with staff members who are official EURES advisors specialised in social security and taxation issues.

Other proposals for cross-border cooperation between the identified organisations are for better collection and transparent presentation of information, for which the existing 'clickable map' hosted by *Lotsenkreis Willkommenskultur* Aachen is a good example. It is also recommended that international and cultural communities expand across borders, along with better harnessing of the potential of the international student population.

At the same time, it should be noted that cross-border cooperation does not make sense for all organisations. In addition, remaining border barriers can hamper cross-border mobility, especially for newcomers from non-EU countries. Further research is needed regarding the needs of highly-skilled newcomers, especially regarding their perceptions of feeling welcome in the EMR and existing organisational services.

1. Introduction

In times of globalisation and demographic change, policy makers are concerned with attracting and retaining highly-skilled individuals to mitigate negative population developments, upcoming skills shortages (*Fachkräftemangel*) and to foster economic growth. What is commonly known as the ‘war for talent’ is a consequence of globalisation, the move to a knowledge based economy and increasing economic integration. It gradually involves more actors including employers and governments at national, regional and local level (Czaika, 2018; Koser & Salt, 1997).

The focus of this study is the Euregio Meuse-Rhine (EMR). Founded in 1976, the EMR is among the oldest euroregions (Perkmann, 2003). It consists of five sub-regions covering three European countries: the Southern part of the Dutch Province of Limburg, the German *Zweckverband Region Aachen*, the German-Speaking Community of Belgium, and the Belgian provinces of Limburg and Liège (Euregio Maas-Rhein, 2013). The EMR is characterised as a top technology region in the heart of Europe (The Locator, n.d.), hosting four excellent universities, several universities of applied science and related research institutions.¹ Furthermore, both bigger companies as well as small-and medium sized enterprises, operating internationally are located in the EMR. The economic success of these institutions and companies largely depends on the knowledge and skills of their employees (Tremblay, 2005). Demographic challenges such as population decline and aging as well as upcoming skills shortages in certain economic sectors pose a risk to the economic success of companies in the EMR (Region Aachen, 2015). Attracting and retaining highly-skilled workers from outside the EMR can therefore be a way to mitigate these challenges and to secure economic growth. This partly explains efforts to further the internationalisation of the EMR’s sub-regions and to further integrate the euregional labour market (EMR, 2013).

This study aims to identify existing services and organisations on local and regional level, which (could) complement the services of the European Employment Service (EURES) and thereby contribute to attracting and retaining newcomers in the EMR. This includes formal services as well as more informal migrant associations since both could add to the region’s welcoming culture and potentially become associated EURES partners. The study distinguishes between initiatives focusing on different areas, which are relevant to facilitate social and economic integration of newcomers and to increase the region’s attractiveness for the target group (e.g. support with bureaucratic issues, housing,

¹ Maastricht University, Zuyd Hogeschool, Fontys Hogeschool, United Nations University-MERIT, Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule (RWTH) Aachen, Fachhochschule (FH) Aachen, Forschungszentrum Jülich, Universiteit Hasselt, Hogeschool PXL, Université de Liège

employment, language, leisure and culture, etc.). In a second step, the project explores possibilities for increased cooperation between EURES and the identified services and initiatives as well as increased cooperation between the identified services and initiatives themselves. Furthermore, it points out potential gaps in the service provision. This report aims at answering the following research questions:

1. Which services and organisations for newcomers exist that are complementary to the EURES services in the EMR?
2. How can service providers (and newcomers) benefit from increased cross-border cooperation?
3. What are the possibilities for cooperation between EURES and the identified services and organisations?
4. What are the possibilities to increase cross-border cooperation between identified service providers and organisations in the EMR?
5. What are possible funding opportunities?

The study is based on desk research and ten interviews with representatives of organisations providing services for newcomers.

1.1 Defining newcomers

For this project, newcomers are defined as individuals who moved to the EMR including international migrants and internal migrants, i.e. those who moved from other parts of Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands to the EMR without crossing a national border. While the focus is on highly-skilled newcomers, one should note that there is no uncontested definition for being highly-skilled. In the migration literature, highly-skilled migration is most frequently defined in terms of individual's educational level (i.e. having completed tertiary education), income, profession or occupation (Czaika, 2018; Parsons et al, 2014). All of these definitions need to be treated with care as they exclude individuals who still bring valuable skills but do not match the definition (Skeldon, 2018). Students form one of these groups, which, as will be shown below, are a valuable source of human capital for the EMR.

Figure 1 Map of the Euregio Meuse-Rhine



2. Background information

2.1 European Employment Service - EURES

The *European Employment Service* (EURES) was founded in 1993 to facilitate the intra-European mobility of workers by providing free information, placement and recruitment services across Member States of the European Economic Area (EEA)². Increasing the mobility of workers within the Union can help to arrive at a better match of supply and demand of labour (UWV, 2018). By definition, EURES services are targeted primarily towards European citizens although third country nationals who have long-term residency in a Member State of the EEA could equally make use of them (Pascouau, 2013). EURES consists of a European Coordination Office and National Coordination Offices as well as official and associated EURES partners on the ground (e.g. public and private employment services, labour unions, employers' association, etc). The European and National Coordination offices are responsible for coordination and organisation of EURES activities, while partner organisations are responsible for providing information and facilitating placement and recruitment on the ground. In the Euregio Meuse Rhine, the most important partner organisations are the (national) employment services of each of the EMR's sub-regions:

- Agentur für Arbeit (DE),
- Uitvoeringsinstituut Werknemersverzekeringen (UWV) (NL),
- L'Office wallon de la Formation Professionnelle et de l'Emploi (le Forem) (BE/ Wallonia),
- Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding (VDAB) (BE/ Flanders),
- Arbeitsamt der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft (ADG) (BE/German-speaking).

They work in close cooperation with labour unions and their interregional council³, the chambers of commerce in the EMR⁴, and the Cross-Border Information Points (GIPs) (EURES Maas-Rhein, n.d.). Since 2017, EURES services are divided into a cross-border and a transnational section: The cross-border section focuses on the support (i.e. counselling and placement) of (potential) cross-border workers, i.e. "persons who work in one [European Union] Member State but live in another" (European Commission, n.d.). Most frequently cross-border workers live in their home country and work in the neighbouring country. The transnational section focuses on helping applicants to start working in another country beyond the border region. An example of this would be the placement of

² The EEA comprises the 28 Member States of the European Union as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. The right to free movement allows EU citizens to move to another Member State for employment and is therefore one of the most important rights of EU citizens (European Parliament, 2018).

³ ACV-CSC, ABVV-FGTB, FNV, CNV and DGB

⁴ The so-called Euregio chambers bring together the Chambers of Commerce in the German and Belgian sub-regions (IHK Aachen, IHK Eupen-Malmedy-St. Vith, CCI Liege-Namur-Verviers, Voka-Kamer van Koophandel Limburg) and the Stichting Structuur Versterkende Projecten Zuid-Limburg in the Dutch sub-region: <https://www.euregiochambers.eu>

a Spanish jobseeker in Belgium, which usually goes hand in hand with moving to another European country.

2.2 Cross-Border Information Points

While the GIPs are not the focus of this study, they cannot be ignored completely since they closely cooperate with EURES partners and are important contact points for locals, newcomers and employers in the EMR who find themselves in a cross-border situation. Oftentimes, staff members of the GIP are also EURES advisors who are specialists in social security and taxation. Their expertise hence complements the work of other EURES partners focusing more on job placement and recruitment.

The GrensInfoPunkt (GIP) was introduced as an inquiry office for citizens and companies active in Dutch-German cross-border regions (Grensinfopunt, 2018). There are two GIPs in the EMR, located in Maastricht and in Aachen-Eurode, with the former being a partnership between the Dutch municipality Kerkrade and the German municipality Herzogenrath (Grensinfopunt Aken/Eurode, 2017). Those who utilise the services provided by GIP can receive help on a number of different topics. Foremost amongst these are insurance inquiries, healthcare services, taxation, child benefit laws, pension and benefit regulations, and issues with unemployment (Ten Doeschot, Esselink, Ten Hove & Lenderik, 2017; Grensinfopunt, 2018). The GIP is not only important for those who are already active as cross-border workers, it also has a role in promoting and facilitating future cross-border activity. The incoming stream of workers into the Netherlands is greater than the outgoing one towards Belgium or Germany, and around 90% of potential cross border movements are estimated not to take place (Ten Doeschot *et al.*, 2017). This largely has to do with disparities that exist in healthcare services, fiscal assurances and the protection of basic rights of workers (Ten Doeschot *et al.*, 2017). However, it also is affected by how little awareness there is off the possibility of cross border work (Ten Doeschot *et al.*, 2017; Grensinfopunt, 2018). The Team Grensarbeid assists employers and employees in the advertising for or finding of jobs in Germany, the Netherlands or Belgium, such as by providing help in the recognition of qualifications. The GIP also organises various Job Speed Dates and information exchange points throughout the year (Dautzenberg, 2017).

2.3. Attracting and retaining talent

Whether or not a place is attractive for highly-skilled people depends on a variety of factors. Traditional migration theories explain (international) migration flows mostly based on economic and structural factors such as differences in wage rates and in the supply and demand of labour (Castles et al, 2014). More recent strands of the migration literature, however, acknowledge migrants' agency in choosing their destination, which can be highly subjective and depends on individual perceptions,

expectations and experiences (Carling, 2014; Castles et al, 2014, De Haas, 2014). Arguably, highly-skilled individuals are in an advantageous position compared to other groups because they encounter fewer barriers to internal and international migration (e.g. migration policies are less restrictive for highly-skilled migrants; highly-skilled migrants are better endowed with human, financial and social capital to realise migration aspirations). As a result, they have more options when it comes to choosing when they move and where they move, which is also why in comparison to other migrant groups additional factors can influence their decision-making. Examples for such factors are opportunities for personal and professional development (Labrianidis & Vogiatzis, 2013; Kõu & Bailey, 2014) and amenities (Hansen et al, 2003; Florida 2002, 2003) including for instance cultural and social factors, the environment and infrastructure. In addition, migrants rarely make the decision of where to move in isolation, which is why employment and education opportunities for partner and children can also play a role in understanding where people move (Mincer, 1978). Hence, families do not necessarily migrate to places that offer the greatest gain for one partner only, but where the sum of gains is the greatest for all family members.

European Union efforts to attract and retain talent

European efforts to bolster the reach of its markets and to stay competitive in the global thriving towards innovation have fallen short in recent years (OECD/European Union, 2016). Ageing populations and labour shortages are a common problem for EU member states, enlarged by the limitations that remain to a fully integrated European labour market (González, Parkes, Sorroza & Ette, 2013). There is a desire to employ highly-skilled migrants as an answer to these issues, however, the possibility to do so remains limited due to the tense political environment surrounding the topic of immigration (Cerna, 2018). While a common perception amongst EU members is that immigration laws are not restrictive towards highly-skilled migrants, a study conducted by the OECD has found that the EU is decidedly less attractive to highly educated migrants (OECD/European Union, 2016). While all EU27 countries host a combined 33 per cent of highly-skilled migrants in OECD countries, North America hosts 57 per cent. Meanwhile, 56 per cent of low skilled migrants live in the EU (OECD/European Union, 2016). Moreover, the current structures of national labour forces do not correspond to the demands of the global economy, as such creating a larger qualification mismatch amongst European Member States (Cerna, 2018; González *et al.*, 2013). The shortage of highly-skilled workers in particular is seen as harmful to overcoming this mismatch and developing a knowledge economy.

There are several European responses to increasing recruitment of highly-skilled workers (from third countries), differentiable on the EU and national levels. Due to the global competition for talent, most

EU member states have been pushed to implement the EU Blue Card alongside their national policies to attract more highly-skilled migrants (Cerna, 2018). The EU Blue Card programme is a work and residency permit for highly-skilled migrants from third countries (EU Blue Card). To be eligible for the Blue Card, an applicant must have an employment contract with a company within the EU of minimally one year, and his or her monthly salary must be above a certain thresholds that varies depending on the destination country. Applicants must also have received a diploma in post-secondary education (EU Blue Card; Kroes Advocaten, 2019). As the requirements for the EU Blue Card are high, individual Member States also have various individual work, visa and residency permit provisions. In these, the labour shortages of a particular country are more accurately represented and may be tailored towards attracting those migrants that are wanted to fill certain jobs. For example, in the Netherlands, the Dutch highly-skilled migrant scheme and the Intra Corporate Transferee permit (ICT) allows for employers to set a more flexible salary for their employees, especially if these are younger than 30 (Kroes Advocaten, 2019).

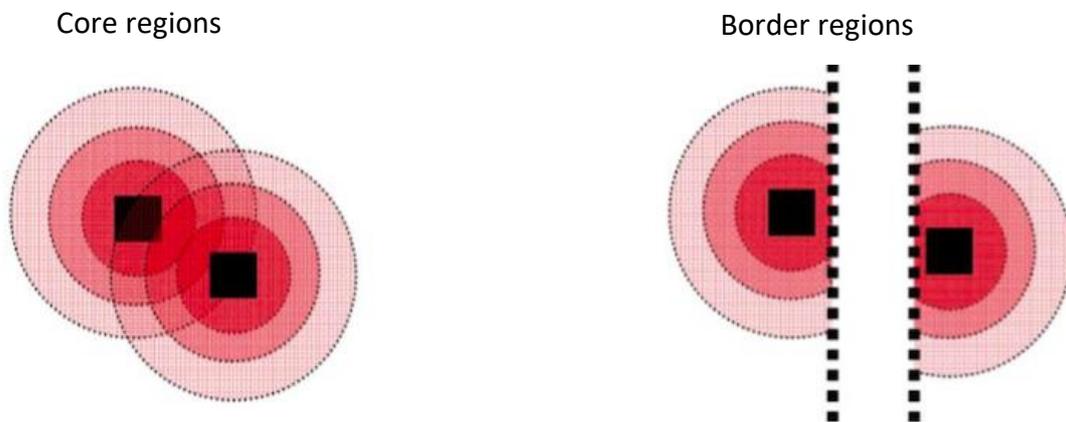
It has been difficult to persuade the European public to take an inviting stance towards introducing more migrant workers. After the economic crisis of 2008, domestic workers in the EU have demanded more protection from their government to ensure that they receive preference over immigrants when it comes to filling up jobs (Cerna, 2018). While policies may be liberalising once again in the EU, existing literature shows that immigrants also select their destinations on the basis of their expectation of where their skill is most recognised. Moreover, family ties, networks and language play a large role in attracting highly skilled migrants (Cerna, 2018). Therefore, integration efforts, such as the ones initiated by the European Commission in regards to integrating refugees into the labour market (European Commission, 2017), are of utmost importance to strengthen the attraction that highly skilled migrants might feel towards the EU.

Attracting and retaining talent in a border region context

In a border region context, attracting and retaining highly-skilled people can be especially challenging. In contrast to core economic centres of a country, border regions benefit less from agglomerations due to border barriers, which can affect the location behaviour of companies and individuals (Marlet, Oumer, Ponds & van Woerkens, 2014). One example for this is that the number of cross-border workers between the Netherlands and Germany is relatively low, which indicates that people living in border regions rarely look for work across the border. Hence, neighbouring regions and cities benefit less from each other's proximity when they are divided by national borders. As a result of these "amputated agglomeration effects" (Marlet et al, 2014, p.34), border regions are perceived as less attractive for firms and individuals (see figure 2). In addition, Hooijen et al (2017) find that border

barriers can also impact the perceived quality of life of prospective university graduates in the EMR and thereby influence their intention to leave the region.

Figure 2 Agglomeration effects in core and border regions



Source: Marlet et al, 2014, p.34

Considering this background information, one can assume that border regions like the EMR need to make an extra effort to increase their attractiveness for (international) highly-skilled workers by reducing border barriers for the target group. Cross-border services which point out opportunities in the neighbouring countries and organisations which increase the welcoming culture might be one solution for reducing border barriers. Given that highly-skilled individuals do not only base their migration decisions on economic and work-related factors, such services should go beyond employment services and also cover other areas of life such as cultural, social and leisure time opportunities.

3. Methodology

The methodology used for this research is an exploratory mapping study, employing a mix of qualitative methods, namely extended desk research and interviews with experts and service providers. As a first step, a systematic online search was conducted to identify services for newcomers and other organisations and institutions working with newcomers. The online search covered each of the EMR's sub-regions separately and used various search terms including "migrant service", "expat service", "newcomer service", "migrant organisation" and relevant synonyms in combination with locations (e.g. sub-regions of the EMR, cities, districts, etc.). The search was conducted in English, German, Dutch and French.

To complement the online search, semi-structured interviews with experts and service providers were conducted. They were used to arrive at a better understanding of the organisations' work beyond the information provided online; to identify other relevant organisations, which the online search might have missed; and to better understand possibilities for cross-border cooperation. In total, interview invitations were sent to 36 institutions. Ten interviews were conducted successfully between October and November 2018 (seven in person, one via telephone and two in writing). An overview of the interviewees and the interview guide can be found in the annex of this report.⁵ Interviewees are not quoted directly in this report for reasons of data protection. Interviews were followed by an additional desk research to verify the new information.

To narrow down the scope of this research and to avoid duplication, some services and organisations were excluded from the mapping. First, this report does not include information on the *Grenzinfopunkt* (Cross-border Information Points, GIPs) which been subject to another recent study (see Ten Doeschot, Esselink, Ten Hove & Lenderink, 2017). Nevertheless, we acknowledge that they may also be of relevance for newcomers who find themselves in a cross-border situation. In addition, services and other initiatives targeting refugees only are excluded from the study since their migration behaviour and location choice is subject to different mechanisms than voluntary forms of migration. In many cases, existing services, initiatives and organisations equally target different migrant groups, which makes a distinction difficult. In addition, one should not forget that most services and networks are open to the general population, including migrants and non-migrants. It is, however, beyond the scope of this study to also include those. Similarly, services and networks for internationals that are offered on a national level in Belgium, Germany or the Netherlands, which do not have specific representations at regional or municipal level in the EMR are excluded from this research. Finally,

⁵ Unfortunately, it was not possible to conduct any interviews with stakeholders from the South Limburg region. This is not assumed to impact the quality of this report, however, due to the authors previous experience researching related topics and their embeddedness in the international community in the region.

services and organisations for which no additional information besides name and address could be retrieved were ignored since it was unclear if they are still in existence.

Each service and organisation identified was added to a systematic database of resources organised in Microsoft Excel. This database includes the most relevant information about the organisations, including name, main area of work (e.g. health, leisure, sports, family, culture, work, housing, language, legal advice, etc.), contact details, summary of main tasks, and target group). By using Pivot Tables organisations can be sorted using different categories (main area of work, location, target group). It should be noted that the identified organisations and initiatives are formalised to different extents and also subject to constant changes. Therefore, the database may not capture all organisations and it cannot be guaranteed that all information provided (e.g. contact details) is complete and/or accurate.

4. Results

4.1 Which services and organisations for newcomers exist in the EMR?

This section summarises the most important findings of the mapping per sub-region of the EMR. For more detailed information on each of the services and organisations the systematic database of resources can be consulted.

Zweckverband Region Aachen (DE)

Most initiatives were identified for the Region of Aachen, namely 76 in total. This is mainly due to the comparatively large number of international student associations (N=32) as well as cultural and religious communities (N=11), which already make up more than half of the identified organisations. Student associations are in place for people from different countries of origin (e.g. Columbia, Korea, the Netherlands), intercultural activities (e.g. *INCAS*⁶), specific migrant groups like refugees (e.g. *STARRING*⁷), and fields of studies (e.g. technology; electronic engineering). Other student associations pursue certain goals like contributing to development cooperation or facilitating student exchange. The lines between student associations and other cultural and religious groups are sometimes blurred. For example, during the mapping it was noted that some of them share the same address. In addition, it is likely that university graduates who remain living in the region also stay active in student groups after finishing higher education.

There are seven organisations working on administrative issues related to migration as well as coordinating other activities in the field of migration and integration without having a lot of direct contact with newcomers (e.g. *Kommunales Integrations-Zentrum Aachen*⁸, *Heinsberg*⁹, *Düren*¹⁰; *Ausländeramt of the District of Aachen*¹¹; *Integration Commissioners in Aachen*¹², *Geilenkirchen*¹³; *Integration Council in Aachen*¹⁴).

Six of the identified organisations focus on general integration activities. It is striking that the Catholic and Protestant Church (*Caritas*¹⁵ and *Diakonie*¹⁶ respectively) is often involved in these activities. They

⁶ www.incas.rwth-aachen.de

⁷ www.starringaachen.org

⁸ http://www.aachen.de/de/stadt_buerger/gesellschaft_soziales/integration/integrationszentrum/index.html

⁹ <https://www.kreis-heinsberg.de/buergerservice/servicebereiche/servicebereiche.html?ID=273>

¹⁰ <https://www.kreis-dueren.de/kreishaus/amt/40/integration/index.php>

¹¹ <https://www.staedteregion-aachen.de/de/navigation/aemter/auslaenderamt-a-33/>

¹² http://www.aachen.de/DE/stadt_buerger/gesellschaft_soziales/integration/integrationsbeauftragte_neu/index.html

¹³ <https://www.geilenkirchen.de/rathaus/ihr-anliegen/details/Integrationsbeauftragte-4390/>

¹⁴ http://www.aachen.de/DE/stadt_buerger/gesellschaft_soziales/integration/integrationsrat/index.html

¹⁵ <https://caritas-aachen.de/angebote/ehrenamt/migrationsberatung-fuer-erwachsene-zuwanderer/>

¹⁶ <https://www.diakonie-aachen.de>

provide assistance, support and advice regarding many aspects of life including education, legal and administrative issues. In addition, they often offer language and integration courses and organise intercultural activities. Twelve of the identified organisations focus on education and language training specifically. Among them are for instance the five adult education centres (*Volkshochschulen*) in the region, which offer among other things language, literacy and integration courses for newcomers as well as some intercultural courses (e.g. cooking) to bring together locals and newcomers.¹⁷

Three organisations deserve special attention since they are particularly relevant when it comes to attracting and retaining highly-skilled newcomers and contributing to a welcoming culture. Those are RWTH Aachen's *International Office*¹⁸ and its *Dual Career and Welcome Centre*¹⁹ as well as the *Newcomer Service*²⁰ of the City of Aachen. The International Office advises and supports international students and researchers among other things. Available services and activities are very comprehensive and cover general questions about studying at RWTH Aachen and enrolment, welcoming events, exchanges between international and German students (i.e. *BeBuddy Programme*) and the coordination of cultural activities at the *Humboldt Haus*, RWTH Aachen's international meeting point. The International Office furthermore offers specific services for refugee students (*Akademische Flüchtlingshilfe*).

RWTH Aachen's *Dual Career & Welcome Centre* is part of the university's human resource department and helps newly hired researchers and their families settling into Aachen. What seems unique about the centre is that it supports partners of newly hired researchers at RWTH Aachen, who are often highly-skilled as well, to also find a job in Aachen and the surrounding region. For this purpose, the centre maintains close ties with companies and other research and higher education institutions in the region. The existence of this service can be decisive for researchers' decision to start working at RWTH Aachen since it is important that both partners can find suitable jobs in the destination (Interview; Mincer, 1978).

¹⁷ <https://www.vhs-kreis-heinsberg.de>
<https://www.vhs-nordkreis-aachen.de/>
<http://www.vhsstolberg.de>
<http://www.vhs-kreis-euskirchen.de>
<http://www.vhs-rur-eifel.de/>

¹⁸ <http://www.rwth-aachen.de/cms/root/Die-RWTH/Einrichtungen/Verwaltung/Dezernate/~pvd/Internationale-Hochschulbeziehungen/?lidx=1>

¹⁹ <http://www.rwth-aachen.de/cms/root/Forschung/Angebote-fuer-Forschende/Die-RWTH-heisst-Sie-willkommen/~bjoj/Dual-Career-Service/?lidx=1>

²⁰ http://www.aachen.de/DE/wirtschaft_technologie/arbeit_fachkraefte/willkommenskultur/newcomerservice/newcomer_region/index.html

Aachen's *Newcomer Service* was established specifically to contribute to the region's welcoming culture, for example through the organisation of regular events for newcomers (e.g. *Newcomer Friday* and *Newcomer Tours*). Furthermore, the service aims to support the acclimatisation process of newcomers. Compared to other services and organisations, activities of the *Newcomer Service* focus more on highlighting how attractive Aachen is in terms of soft location factors such as amenities and the quality of life. These factors are increasingly considered as decisive in understanding the migration decisions of the highly-skilled.

In 2014, the *Lotsenkreis Willkommenskultur Aachen*²¹ was established. It is a network of eleven services and organisations that aim to further increase Aachen's welcoming culture through increase cooperation and information exchange (Deutscher Städtetag, 2016). Partner organisations are FH Aachen's Student Service Centre and International Office, the Catholic University Congregation, the Newcomer Service Aachen, the Municipal Integration Centre, RWTH Aachen's International Office, Dual Career & Welcome Centre and Welcome Centre for International Researchers, StädteRegion Aachen, and the Pedagogical Centre Aachen e.V. Interestingly, the Newcomerservice of the Municipality of Heerlen in the Netherlands, which is further described in the next section, is also part of the network (Lotsenkreis, 2019). On the website of the *Lotsenkreis*, a so-called 'clickable map' can be found for newcomers which helps different target groups (e.g. students, professors, job-seeker, refugee, labour migrant) find the right support service for certain areas of life (e.g. counselling, housing, language training, social events and leisure). Unfortunately, information is mostly provided in German and only partly in English.

South Limburg (NL)

For South Limburg 26 relevant services and organisations for newcomers were identified. As in the case of Aachen, a majority targets or brings together international students (N=10) which is due to Maastricht University's large international student population.²² For the remaining identified services and organisations, it is very difficult to combine them under different topics since most of them seem to focus on very specific areas. In the following, some of the services and organisations which seem to contribute significantly to the welcoming culture of South Limburg are therefore described in more detail.

²¹ <https://www.willkommen-in-aachen.de>

²² Maastricht University is the most international university of the Netherlands, with approximately half of the students population and one third of employees coming from abroad.

The *Holland Expat Centre South* (HECS)²³ is a one-stop-shop for newly arrived internationals in the Southern parts of the Netherlands with a site in Maastricht. The HECS provides information and support for internationals and their families to help them settle into their new living and working environment. In addition, HECS organises the so-called 'Let's catch up' events in Maastricht and the surrounding regions for the international community to make them feel welcome and at home. Each time, these events are organised at different locations (e.g. Lumière Cinema, Conservatorium Maastricht) and combined with guided tours or arts performances so that internationals also get to know Maastricht's different neighbourhoods and cultural offers. In addition, HECS organises information workshops, e.g. for internationals who would like to buy a house in the Netherlands or start their own business. For these events, HECS cooperates with other specialised institutions in the field like the *Starters Centrum Limburg*²⁴, the *Housing Help Desk*²⁵ and the *Maastricht Business Contact Centre*²⁶. On its website and in the "Expats Guide", the HECS furthermore refers to other relevant organisations and services in all areas of life in the Maastricht region and beyond. Together with the GIP and Maastricht University's Institute for Transnational and *Euregional cross-border cooperation and Mobility* (ITEM), HECS is located at the Maastricht International Centre²⁷. The three institutions are in constant exchange, which contributes to the best possible information and service provision for internationals and cross-border workers. Since staff members of the GIP in Maastricht are also EURES advisors one can therefore speak of cooperation between EURES and the HECS, which is the only identified form of collaboration between EURES and services aiming to increase the region's welcoming culture.

As part of Maastricht University's Human Resource department, the *Knowledge Centre for International Staff* (KCIS)²⁸ provides services for international employees of the university. The KCIS mainly provides guidance for new employees, for example with regard to administrative and bureaucratic procedures. In addition, it cooperates with the HECS in organising welcome events for international employees ('Let's catch up').

The *Newcomerservice* Heerlen follows a similar concept as the *Newcomer Service* in Aachen and HECS. It organises informal network meetings for internationals who work in or near Heerlen to make them

²³ <https://www.hollandexpatcenter.com/>

²⁴ <https://www.starterscentrum.nl>

²⁵ www.housinghelpdesk.nl

²⁶ <https://www.gemeentemaastricht.nl/english/entrepreneurs/business-contact-centre-for-questions-and-advice/>

²⁷ <http://maastrichtregion.com/en/international-location/maastricht-international-centre.html>

²⁸ <https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/about-um/other-offices/knowledge-centre-international-staff>

feel welcome and help them get to know their fellow internationals and the city.²⁹ Their events do not only attract newcomers living in South Limburg, but also newcomers living in Aachen.

The *International Women's Club* (IWC) of South Limburg brings together women of all nationalities living in the region to promote friendship and form a platform for exchange.³⁰ In addition, the IWC provides support and information to newcomers. Especially for women who followed their husbands to the region and who do not work themselves, joining the IWC can be an important way to social integration.

As in Aachen, there are two online platforms for internationals (and locals), namely *InterNations* and *Meetup*. Furthermore, there are three international religious communities in Maastricht (i.e. *Damascus Road International Church*³¹, *All Saints Maastricht International Church*³², and *Redeemer Maastricht*³³).

Finally, it is important to highlight that South Limburg is host to two international schools (i.e. *United World College Maastricht*³⁴ and *AFNORTH International School*³⁵). This can be an important factor when highly-skilled migrants make a decision of where to move. As oftentimes this population is highly mobile and does not remain living in one place for more than a few years, they may prefer international over Dutch education for their children.

Province of Limburg (BE)

For the Belgian Province of Limburg, 15 relevant services and initiatives were found. As in the case of South Limburg it is difficult to combine them under certain categories since most of them seem to focus on specific areas. Broadly speaking there are three organisations working on integration in general (i.e. services offered by the Municipality of Leopoldsburg³⁶, *Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering*³⁷, *Samen Inburgeren*³⁸) and three initiatives focusing on labour market integration (i.e.

²⁹ <https://www.heerlen.nl/newcomers.html>

³⁰ <http://www.iwc-sl.nl/>

³¹ <http://damascusroadic.com>

³² <https://allsaintsmaastricht.nl>

³³ <https://www.redeemermaastricht.nl>

³⁴ <https://www.uwcmaastricht.nl>

³⁵ <http://afnorth-is.com>

³⁶ <https://www.leopoldsburg.be/home>

³⁷ https://integratie-inburgering.be/kaart-regio-limburg?f%5B0%5D=pas_164%3A202

³⁸ <http://www.sameninburgeren.be/initiatieven>

HOA@work, ENAIP Limburg³⁹). Two initiatives, which are also supported by the *Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering*, focus on language training for internationals (i.e. *Taalpunt*⁴⁰ and *VriendENtaal*⁴¹).

One of the initiatives for labour market integration seems especially relevant. HOA@work (previously @level2work) stands voor *HoogOpgeleide Anderstalige* (highly educated foreign-language speaker). It is a joint project of Hogeschool PXL, VDAB, RiseSmart and Hilda Martens, which aims to find employment for highly-skilled migrants that matches their (educational) level.

Expat Relocation Belgium (E.R.B.), a private company located in several Belgian cities including Hasselt, offers a broad range of relocation services, including for example welcome meetings, housing, school searches, support in finding employment for the partner and administrative support.⁴² E.R.B.'s services seem very similar to those of the Expat and Newcomer services in Aachen and Limburg.

Province of Liège (BE)

For the Province of Liège, 19 relevant organisations could be identified. Two of the organisations (CRIPEL⁴³ and CRVI⁴⁴) are regional integration centres, which are mainly responsible for coordinating and promoting integration activities within their geographic area of responsibility (i.e. Liège and Verviers respectively). The centres were established following the Walloon Decree on the Integration of Foreigners or People of Foreign Origin of 4 July 1996. CIRÉ⁴⁵ is an umbrella organisations for organisations working with migrants that focuses on migrants' rights and engages in lobbying and awareness raising. The internet platform *Commune Hospitalière* brings together different actors from 66 Walloon communities to raise awareness of migration issues among the general population and to improve the reception of migrants.⁴⁶

The majority of the identified organisations concentrates on the integration of newcomers with some applying a very broad approach to integration and others focusing on specific areas of integration (e.g. economic, social and cultural). *Le Monde de Possible*⁴⁷, the *Centre d'Accompagnement pour Migrants*⁴⁸, *La Belle Diversité*⁴⁹, *Live in Color*⁵⁰ and *SAM asbl*⁵¹ all apply a rather broad approach. They

³⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/EnaipLimburg/>

⁴⁰ <https://www.bibliotheekgenk.be/taalpunt>

⁴¹ <http://nederlandsoefenen.be/limburg/app/webroot/uploads/Overzicht%20groepen%20VriendENtaal.pdf>

⁴² <https://expatrelocationbelgium.com>

⁴³ <http://cripel.be>

⁴⁴ <https://crvi.be>

⁴⁵ <https://www.cire.be>

⁴⁶ <https://www.communehospitaliere.be>

⁴⁷ <http://www.possibles.org>

⁴⁸ <http://www.capmigrants.be/FR/>

⁴⁹ <http://www.labellediversite.be>

⁵⁰ <https://www.liveincolorassociation.com>

⁵¹ <http://www.sam-asbl.be>

aim at fostering integration for instance through intercultural activities, language training, civic education, awareness raising, legal and administrative assistance. The *Centre d'Accompagnement pour Migrants* (Support Centre for Migrants) emphasises that it aims at contributing to the welcoming culture. *Duo for a job*⁵² aims at facilitating labour market integration of newcomers through an intercultural and intergenerational mentoring programme. In the context of integration, learning the host country's official language is key. The mapping identified two organisations, *Call International*⁵³ and *Lire et écrire*⁵⁴ (read and write) which offer language courses and language and literacy courses for migrants and locals respectively. *Call International* offers language courses for expats and students specifically, thus targeting a more skilled group of migrants. Other initiatives focus more on integration through (inter-)cultural activities and education (i.e. *La Maison des Congolais de Verviers*⁵⁵, *Centre culturel Educatif Verviétois*⁵⁶). In addition, *Espace Rencontre*⁵⁷ offers social meeting places for local and migrant youth, also supporting their education and language skills. *Vie Féminine*⁵⁸ brings together local and migrant women and supports gender equality through offering education, training and language courses for women specifically.

Finally, there are two organisations which can be broadly categorised as legal support institutions. *BOD Belgium*⁵⁹ is part of a global network offering customer services especially in the fields of audit and assurance, tax and legal issues, and other business advice. In Belgium, they also have an expat service for expats themselves and companies employing expats. *Point d'Appui*⁶⁰ in contrast offers legal advice for less advantaged groups of migrants (e.g. residence rights, etc.). While they are generally also open for highly-skilled newcomers, it seems as if highly-skilled migrants do not consult small associations like *Point d'Appui* which are free of charge for legal advice. This is partly because they encounter less problems since migration policies are more favourable for this particular group. If they do encounter difficulties, they arguable consult a lawyer for whom they need to pay, which is not always an option for other migrant groups with restricted access to financial and other forms of capital (Interview).

⁵² <https://www.duoforajob.be/en/home/>

⁵³ <https://www.callinter.com/french-courses-for-expats/>

⁵⁴ <http://www.lire-et-ecrire.be>

⁵⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/MCVasbl/>

⁵⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/Centre-culturel-Educatif-Verviétois-679711065545107/>

⁵⁷ https://www.facebook.com/pg/espacerencontreasbl/about/?ref=page_internal

⁵⁸ <http://www.viefeminine.be>

⁵⁹ <https://www.bdo.be/en-gb/services/tax-legal/expatriate-services>

⁶⁰ <http://pointdappui.be/>

German-speaking Community (BE)

For the German-speaking Community, 19 relevant services and organisations were identified. Three of them mostly focus on the coordination of integration activities in the region (i.e. Ministry of the German-speaking Community⁶¹, Municipal Integration Officers of Eupen⁶² and St. Vith⁶³), which implies that they have little contact with newcomers themselves. The most important organisation working on integration issues with newcomers themselves is *Info-Integration*, an advisory centre for migrants and refugees, which offers integration support in all major areas (i.e. housing, health, education and training, language, work, mobility, leisure, family and marriage, socio-legal counselling, access to state assistance and other support services).⁶⁴ *Info-Integration* accompanies newcomers and helps them integrate through the integration course "Integrationsparcours" and with language courses and information regarding social and labour market integration (leisure, vocational training and education). In addition, the organisation offers training for social workers and other people interested in fields such as right of residence and intercultural competence and carry out awareness-raising campaigns for a better coexistence in diversity. On their website, information regarding all relevant areas of life is provided (housing, health, education and training, work, mobility, leisure, family and marriage, legal counselling, state assistance, and other support services), including links to and contact details of other relevant organisations and institutions. Most of the other identified services also contribute to the integration of newcomers, mainly through education and training (e.g. civic education) and language courses (KAP Eupen⁶⁵, Volkshochschule Eupen⁶⁶, Miteinander Teilen⁶⁷, Robert Schuman Institute⁶⁸). Three organisations that were identified provide social integration support for locals and newcomers in stressful situations (OIKOS V.o.G.⁶⁹, ÖSHZs⁷⁰, and SIA). The German-speaking Community also hosts organisations, which bring together locals and newcomers for more cultural and leisure time activities. The *FrauenErzählCafé* (Women Talk Café) is one example for this. It brings together local and migrant women and enables them to exchange ideas, traditions and practical information. Furthermore, the café provides an opportunity for migrant women to practice their German language skills. Similarly, the *Frauenliga* (Women's League) also involves local and migrant women. The league advocates gender equality through language training for women and

⁶¹http://www.ostbelgienlive.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-4795/8506_read-47195/

⁶²<https://www.eupen.be/leben-in-eupen/gesundheit-und-soziales/integration-und-zusammenleben/>

⁶³<http://www.st.vith.be/OSHZ/Dienstleistungen/Anlaufstelle-Integration>

⁶⁴www.info-integration.be

⁶⁵<https://www.kap-eupen.be>

⁶⁶<http://vhs-dg.be>

⁶⁷<https://www.miteinander.be>

⁶⁸<https://www.rsi-eupen.be>

⁶⁹<http://oikos-eupen.be>

⁷⁰http://www.ostbelgienlive.be/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-342/710_read-11533/

supporting labour market integration of women. In addition, there are four social meeting places and a youth centre, which are open to everyone including newcomers and locals.⁷¹

While the majority of services identified is open to everyone, it seems that many target more socially disadvantaged individuals including both locals and newcomers. It is unclear to what extent highly-skilled newcomers actually use the identified services and engage in social and cultural activities offered.

Summary

In sum, 155 relevant services and organisations were identified: 76 in Aachen, 26 in South Limburg, 19 in the German-speaking Community, 15 in Belgian Limburg and 19 in Liège. The mapping shows that with some exceptions few services and organisations target highly-skilled newcomers specifically. Available services and initiatives in Aachen, South Limburg and to a certain extent also Belgian Limburg seem more advanced and more targeted towards the highly-skilled – this can partly be explained by the more international outlook of the universities in Aachen and Maastricht, which attract many international students as well as researchers. Services and initiatives in the Province of Liège and in the German-speaking Community, on the other hand, seem to be mostly targeted towards less advantaged individuals. It is unclear to what extent highly-skilled newcomers also make use of these services.

In all sub-regions, there are differences regarding the extent to which existing organisations are formalized. This becomes evident for instance when comparing their websites, which is natural because more professional services like those offered by universities and municipalities (e.g. International Office RWTH Aachen, Holland Expat Centre South) have more access to the required resources than smaller citizens' initiatives. Nevertheless, the latter can also contribute significantly to the welcoming culture in the region as they often form a bridge between the local and international population and should therefore not be ignored. Sometimes it is, however, difficult to assess if the smaller initiatives still operate, for example because their management and addresses change constantly or because they largely depend on the commitment of individual people. Finally, information online is mostly provided in the official languages of the respective sub-regions (i.e. German, Dutch or French), which can be problematic when trying to reach a more international audience. When moving to a new country, newcomers are rarely fluent in the host country's official language, which is why information should be furthermore provided in English as the current dominant lingua franca. For international highly-skilled migrants who are highly mobile and

⁷¹ <http://www.viefeminine.be>

communicate for instance in English at work, learning the official language of the host country might not be desirable at all since they will move on after a certain time. Therefore, providing information in various languages is key for an increased welcoming culture.

4.2 Existing cross-border cooperation

The online mapping provided little information about existing cross-border cooperation of the identified services and organisations. First of all, Heerlen's Newcomersservice is also a member of the *Lotsenkreis Willkommenskultur Aachen*. With four annual meetings of the members of the networks this is an example for a more structural cross-border cooperation. Second, the Young European Federalists (JEF), an international student organisation that is located in Maastricht among other places across Europe, maintains a cross-border network that connects different sections of the organisation in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg and France. JEF's cross-border network provides opportunities for JEF members to meet each other, and to exchange practical experiences and ideas. In addition, some of the identified organisations contribute to ongoing Interreg projects which are relevant in the context of attracting and retaining (international) talent (e.g. Caltech⁷², IDZ-UDZ⁷³, TREE⁷⁴). The most relevant project in this regard is the "youRegion" project, which is described in more detail in the box below. Finally, the close cooperation between the HECS and the GIP in Maastricht is the only example for cooperation between EURES and a service aiming at increasing the region's welcoming culture. Besides these more structural/official approaches, cross-border cooperation seems to be limited to more sporadic exchanges of information with organisations working on similar fields according to the interviewees.

Interreg Project: "youRegion"⁷⁵

In the context of population aging and demographic change, the global competition for talent increases. The purpose of this project is to increase the EMR's competitiveness by establishing it as a top technological region that offers excellent career opportunities across borders as well as an exceptional living environment. To do so, *youRegion* aims to further develop, expand and harmonise existing services facilitating newcomers' labour market integration and further improve its welcoming culture. This will contribute to the region's attractiveness for individuals and companies in the long term, thereby mitigating the challenges associated with demographic change.

⁷² <https://www.interregemr.eu/projects/earlytech-en>

⁷³ <https://www.interregemr.eu/projects/idz-udz-1>

⁷⁴ <https://www.interregemr.eu/projects/tree-en>

⁷⁵ <https://www.interregemr.eu/projects/youregion-1-en>

The *youRegion* project is implemented by a consortium of nine ten partner organisations under the lead of the *Stichting Euregio Meuse-Rhine*. The other partners are the Municipality of Maastricht, Podium 24, ZFP Fabriek Maastricht, the Employment Office of the German-speaking Community in Belgium, RWTH Aachen, *Zweckverband* Region Aachen, Maastricht University's Institute for Transnational and Euregional cross-border cooperation and Mobility (ITEM), Locare in Limburg, and the City of Aachen.

4.3 Perceived added value of cross-border cooperation

Based on the conducted interviews, some ways in which service providers could potentially benefit from (increased) cross-border cooperation could be identified. Due to the explorative nature of this study, these are only initial ideas and require further research. Interviewees mainly see the benefit of increased cross-border cooperation in the exchange of information. It can help existing services and organisations working in similar fields to stay up-to-date regarding the social, legal and political developments in the neighbouring countries. In addition, cross-border cooperation facilitates information exchanges regarding best practices or practices that worked out poorly. It is important to keep in mind, however, that what works in one place might not work in another place for instance due to different structural conditions (e.g. population composition, legislation, culture, etc.). Through cross-border cooperation relationships between individual services and organisations can also be improved so that people know whom to contact in case they need more specific information on certain topics (e.g. legal procedures for residence permits).

4.4 Possibilities for increased cross-border cooperation between identified organisations

Based on the results of the mapping, a comparison of existing available services and the interviews, this section describes possibilities for increased cross-border cooperation.

First, regular exchanges of information between service providers and organisations working in different fields should be further encouraged. Table 1 below provides an overview of organisations working in similar fields for whom cross-border cooperation could be beneficial. In order to kick-start this process a euregional networking event/ conference could be organised that brings together representatives of the services and organisations identified through this mapping. For some of the organisations, the added-value of cross-border cooperation might not be straightforward and such an event could help to highlight potential benefits and to facilitate networking between organisations working in similar fields. In addition, examples of existing cross-border cooperation could be introduced and funding opportunities explained.

Second, it would be ideal to bring together information about existing services and organisation in the EMR in one place for more transparency. Like that service providers, organisations and newcomers could get a good impression of available services and organisations at a glance. The ‘clickable map’ of the *Lotsenkreis Willkommenskultur Aachen* could serve as an example for this. To increase the welcoming culture, it would be advisable to also include cultural and religious organisations into a potential euregional ‘clickable map’ so that newcomers can easily get in touch with people living in the region already for a smoother social integration.

Third, international and cultural communities could be expanded across borders, for example through creating euregional groups in online communities like *InterNations* and *Meetup* which up until now mostly address internationals from one city specifically.⁷⁶ Participation in euregional online communities, which also advertise events for internationals etc., can increase cross-border mobility of newcomers and thereby contribute to peoples’ familiarity with the region, which can ultimately also increase chances of their retention (Hooijen et al, 2017). Expanding expat and cultural communities across borders seems especially feasible since it involves few (legal) barriers and all members can share information about services, organisations and activities in each of the sub-regions.

Fourth, the (international) student population in the EMR translates into an enormous potential for the economy and companies in the Region Aachen (Region Aachen, 2015). Thus far this potential has not been used sufficiently, which is why retaining more university graduates is identified as another priority area to mitigate upcoming skills shortages for instance through increasing their familiarity with companies in the region and by actively supporting the (euregional) labour market integration of international graduates (Hooijen et al, 2017).

Finally, increased cross-border cooperation could be a solution to more practical problems, for instance through the exchange of personnel, e.g. interpreters, teachers and course instructors who speak certain languages. For some organisations in the EMR, it might not be feasible to hire for example a (native) Russian speaker for civic integration, language courses etc., simply because there are only few newcomers from Russian-speaking countries. Through exchanging personnel more newcomers could be supported in their mother tongue while at the same time reducing the costs for the organisations. This might not only be an option with regards to education, but also in the field of health care, where oftentimes communication issues arise due to a lack of interpreters (RESI, 2014).

⁷⁶ An example for this is the “Euregio Data Science Meetup”: <https://www.meetup.com/Euregio-Data-Science-Meetup/>

Table 1 Possibilities for cross-border cooperation

General topic	Relevant organisations	Possibilities for cooperation
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HOA@work • Dual Career and Welcome Centre RWTH • ENAIP Limburg • E.R.B. • Duo for a job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange experiences and best practices • Increase pool of suitable jobs for clients, also in terms of language skills
Arrival and settling in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Office RWTH • Dual Career and Welcome Centre RWTH • Newcomer Service Aachen • Newcomerservice Heerlen • KCIS Maastricht University • Jules & You • E.R.B. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange experiences and best practices • Organise welcome events and visits to other sub-regions of the EMR
Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate in Limburg • LIOF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange experiences and best practices
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AEGEE Maastricht • AEGEE Aachen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand social and cultural activities across borders • Information about potential job opportunities in the neighbouring regions
Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Women's Club • ENAIP Limburg • Frauenliga • Vie Féminine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand social and cultural activities across borders (potentially in cooperation with the Association <i>Women in the Euregio</i>)
Online community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • InterNations • Meetup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create euregional groups to facilitate networking between internationals living in all parts of the EMR
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural associations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand social and cultural activities across borders

Funding opportunities

The mapping showed that migration related projects across the EMR are commonly funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)⁷⁷, the European Social Fund (ESF),⁷⁸ as well as national,

⁷⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/financing/fundings/migration-asylum-borders/asylum-migration-integration-fund_en

⁷⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/home.jsp>

regional, municipal and university funds. For increased cross-border cooperation between existing services and organisations, the interreg programme is forms an additional funding opportunity.

4.5 Possibilities for cooperation between EURES and the identified organisations

Increased cooperation between EURES partners and the identified organisations could benefit both parties especially in terms of raising awareness. On the one hand, EURES partners could provide information about local and regional services and organisations to its clients who have found employment in the EMR through EURES. This could facilitate newcomers settling into their new home and integration. At the same time, through increased cooperation, the identified organisations could also help internationals to find EURES should they be in need of the network's services (e.g. to find employment in another sub-region of the EMR as far as possible or to find employment in another European Member State and remigrate). This could help increase the number of people who use EURES. Especially, non-Europeans residing in the EU seem to make little practical use of the EURES services (Pascouau, 2013). This could facilitate free movement and lead to an improved match of supply and demand of labour within the EMR and the EU and is regarded as one step further in accomplishing the single European market (Pascouau, 2013).

In addition, increased cooperation between EURES and identified organisation which aim at facilitating labour market integration of newcomers and their partners (e.g. HOA@work, Dual Career and Welcome Centre) could increase the pool of suitable jobs for clients within and across the individual sub-regions of the EMR.

Finally, cooperation between EURES and (international) student associations could facilitate graduates' transition from higher education to the euregional (or European) labour market. Recent research suggests that graduates from higher education institutions in the EMR rarely look for work in other sub-regions (Hooijen et al, 2017). Through increased cooperation one could show prospective graduates what job opportunities there are within the EMR (or in other European countries) and increase the visibility of EURES among young people. This could be linked to the "Your first EURES job" scheme that helps young people below the age of 35 to find employment or an internship abroad (European Commission, n.d. b). Another idea would be to help international students to find a side job or internship opportunity in another sub-region of the EMR through EURES during their studies so that they become more familiar with the EMR and its labour market, which is assumed to increased their likelihood to remain living in the EMR after finishing higher education.

5. Conclusion

This study set out to identify existing initiatives to attract and retain newcomers in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine (EMR) that could complement the available EURES services. This was done by means of an exploratory mapping study based on desk research and interviews with ten stakeholders. Furthermore, the study explored the existence of cross-border cooperation between the identified services and organisations as well as possibilities to increase cooperation between the identified services themselves and EURES. In total, 155 relevant services and organisations were identified: 76 in Aachen, 26 in South Limburg, 19 in the German-speaking Community, 15 in Belgian Limburg and 19 in Liège, all of which were added to a systematic database of resources. Since such organisations are subject to constant changes and information online is not always up-to-date, it cannot be guaranteed that all information is adequate.

The mapping shows that with some exceptions few services and organisations target highly-skilled newcomers specifically. Rather they are open to the (international) population in general. All of the services targeted towards the highly-skilled can be found in South Limburg, Aachen and Belgian Limburg, while identified services and organisations in the German-speaking Community and Liège seem to be targeted towards more disadvantaged groups. In all sub-regions, there are differences regarding the extent to which existing organisations are formalised. It is questionable whether or not services should be targeted towards highly-skilled newcomers, since newcomers are also needed to fill less skilled positions (Skeldon, 2018).

With some exceptions, mostly in the context of Interreg projects, there seems to be little structural cross-border cooperation between the identified organisations. Existing cooperation between organisations in different sub-regions of the EMR seems to be limited to sporadic exchanges of information. Exchange of information is also where most interviewees see possibilities for increased cross-border cooperation. Organising a euregional networking event for services and organisations working with newcomers could be a possibility to encourage increased cross-border cooperation.

Nevertheless, some recommendations for cross-border cooperation beyond information exchanges can be made:

- Expand cultural and online communities across borders.
- Organise euregional welcoming events.
- Create an online platform that brings together all existing organisations for more transparency.

- Through cross-border cooperation in the field of labour market integration, the pool of suitable jobs for newcomers can be improved.
- Euregional approach to more practical problems, e.g. through the exchange of personnel.

So far there is no cooperation between EURES and the identified services and organisations except for the collaboration between the HECS and GIP in Maastricht. EURES, other services and organisations as well as newcomers themselves could benefit from increased cooperation. In particular, informing newcomers about other available services could increase the visibility of these services and provide an improved welcoming culture. At the same time, organisations working in the field of labour market integration could benefit from working with EURES by increasing the pool of suitable jobs for their clients. In addition, this could increase newcomers' awareness of economic opportunities in their own sub-region as well as other sub-regions of the EMR. Increased cooperation between EURES and international student associations could lead to similar results and help to retain more graduates in the EMR.

At the same, time one should not forget that cross-border cooperation does not make sense for some organisations (e.g. those offering legal advice that is dependent on the national context). In addition, remaining border barriers can hamper cross-border cooperation. For example, cooperation regarding labour market integration might seem like a good solution at first, however, non-European citizens are not always allowed to live in one country while working in the neighbouring country (except if they are long-term residents).

Further research is needed to find out more about internationals' needs, to what extent they actually feel welcome in the EMR, and how they perceive living in a border region so that existing services and organisations can align their activities with this. In addition, it would be interesting to study to what extent third country nationals who are long-term residents in a Member State of the EU make use of EURES services.

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Appendix

Interviewees

Name	Organisation	Position	EMR Sub-Region
Emmanuelle Vinois	Point d'appui	Lawyer	Liège
Sevim Dogan	Kommunales Integrationszentrum Stadt Aachen	Director	Aachen
Janina Vomberg	Ministry of the German Speaking Community	Social Policy Officer	DG
Tanja Mertens	Info-Integration	Consultant for residence law	DG
Azadeh Hartmann-Alampour	RWTH Aachen, International Office, Admission and Social Affairs	Coordinator refugee aid; Fast-Track-Bachelor-Admission	Aachen
Pablo Hannon	The School	Co-Founder	Limburg (BE)
Dominik, Zakaria	INCAS	Coordinators	Aachen
Cathrin Urbanke	RWTH Aachen, International Office, International Student and Scholar Services	Welcome Centre	Aachen
Nicole Richter	RWTH Aachen, Human Resource, Appointment Management and Civil Servants	Dual Career and Welcome Service	Aachen
Ellen Indekeu	Hogeschool PXL	Coordinator Diversity, Project Manager HOA@work	Limburg (BE)

Interview Guide

1. Can you please introduce yourself briefly and explain what your position is at the organization you currently work for?
2. Can you please describe your organization? What are its main aims and activities?
 - a. What is the main focus (e.g. Social or economic integration? Housing? Health? Leisure/ culture? Language?)
 - b. What is its main target group?
 - c. At what level does it mainly operate? (e.g. municipal or provincial)
 - d. How is your organization funded?
3. How does your work relate to attracting and retaining (national and international) newcomers/migrants to/in your region?
 - a. Do you think it is important to attract and retain (national and international) newcomers/migrants to the EMR and its individual sub-regions? Why?
 - b. What are specific challenges related to attracting and retaining (national and international) newcomers/migrants to the region?
 - c. In your view, what makes the EMR and its individual sub-region attractive for (national and international) newcomers/migrants? What does not? Can you please explain your answer and give examples?
4. Do you cooperate with any other organisations/ service providers in your region or in other sub-regions of the EMR?
5. Do you think it could be beneficial for your organization and/or newcomers/migrants to increase (cross-border) cooperation with other organisations? Why (not)?
6. Do you know of any other public or private projects/ initiatives/ services that are in place to attract and retain (national and international) newcomers/migrants to the region?
 - a. How would you evaluate these projects/ initiatives? In your view, are newcomers/migrants satisfied with these projects/ initiatives/ services?
7. In your view, what else needs to be done to attract and retain newcomers/migrants? How can existing initiatives be improved?
8. Is there anything important you would like to add, that I might have missed during this interview regarding this topic?



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