

YOUMIG - Improving institutional capacities and fostering cooperation
to tackle the impacts of transnational youth migration
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WP5 Improved Local Services

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MUNICIPALITY SFÂNTU GHEORGHE

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1. Introduction

In YOUMIG project, Improving institutional capacities and fostering cooperation to tackle the impacts of transnational youth migration in the Danube region, 19 partners from 8 countries work together to support local governments of Maribor (SI), Graz (AT), Kanjiža (SRB), Rača- Bratislava (SK), Szeged (HU), Sfântu Gheorghe and Burgas (BG) in exploiting the developmental potential of youth migration, leading to a better-governed and more competitive Danube region.

The YOUMIG project aims at boosting their institutional capacities to enhance the scarce local evidence on youth migration, contributing to improved policymaking with a focus on human capital. Statistical offices & academic organisations team up with local governments in a complex and tailored transnational cooperation to create local developmental strategies based on improved impact indicators of youth migration. They also work together to introduce transnationally tested tools to manage local challenges.

To address the challenges, obstacles and benefits of youth migration in sending/receiving communities the Local Status Quo Analysis (LSQA)¹ was prepared, providing an overview of trends in youth migration and of related social phenomena, respectively. The study was based on policy-oriented research. The first aim was to synthesize the findings of the YOUMIG research activities concerning youth migration. In this respect, the municipalities were characterised and typified according the migratory trends they experience. The second aim was to understand the effects of youth migration, and to identify policy challenges related to it. Through the applied research, a screening of responses provided by local authorities to challenges related to in- and out-migration of young people was performed. A related goal was to identify management and capacity gaps in institutional mechanisms of local authorities to address youth migration and related phenomena.

To support the development of services on local level that will assist the local governments in coping with inward, outward and return migration of young people an European and global good practice collection of relevant services and actions linked to youth migration² was prepared. It was the first step towards tailor-made solutions aimed at improving institutional capacities and fostering cooperation to tackle the impacts of transnational youth migration at the local level. Based on the challenges and needs revealed in the Local Status Quo Analyses and on collected good practices, the local partners prepared tailored made solutions that assisted them in coping with immigrants, emigrants or returning youth migrants on the local level.

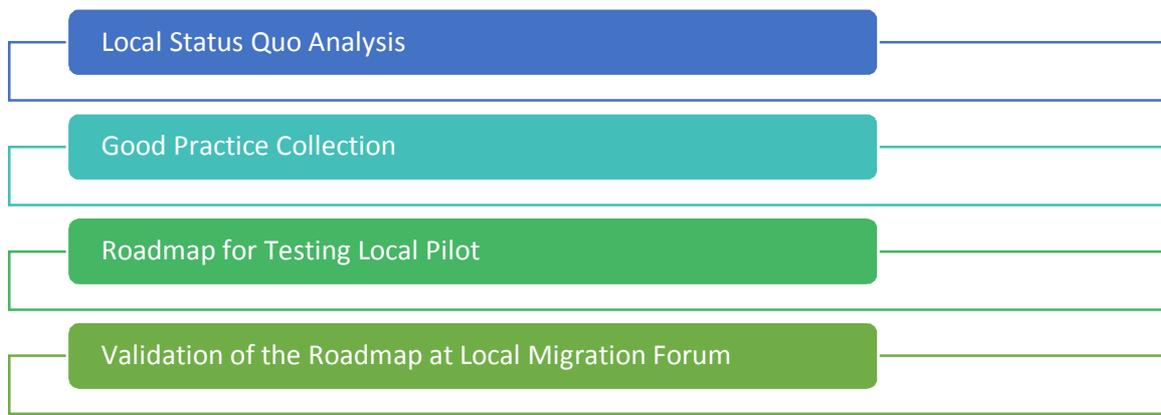
Reflecting on the local challenges and the administrative capacity gaps identified and measured in YOUMIG project, each local partner elaborated a Roadmap adapting existing practices and/or designing new ones. Different aspects were address, from challenges such as brain drain and care drain in the sending areas or immigrants' deskilling ("brain waste") or difficult access to public services in the

¹ Local Status Quo Analysis can be obtained at: http://www.interreg-danube.eu/uploads/media/approved_project_output/0001/14/a1a1150b1928611be1041496f6fba44aeb8c7835.pdf

² http://www.interreg-danube.eu/uploads/media/approved_project_output/0001/16/66df669c16410d500986323e1f5400055ac92908.pdf

receiving areas. Then, local pilot actions were designed and implemented in the identified topics. In case of already existing practices, actions were adopted to local context. The pilot actions were accompanied by local Migration Forums involving relevant stakeholders linked to the pilot area and receiving immediate feedback and general local supervision. In addition, partners peer-reviewed each other's pilot actions as part of a study visit to increase the knowledge sharing linked to the piloting and in order to assess its transferability. The pilots were evaluated based on common methodology.

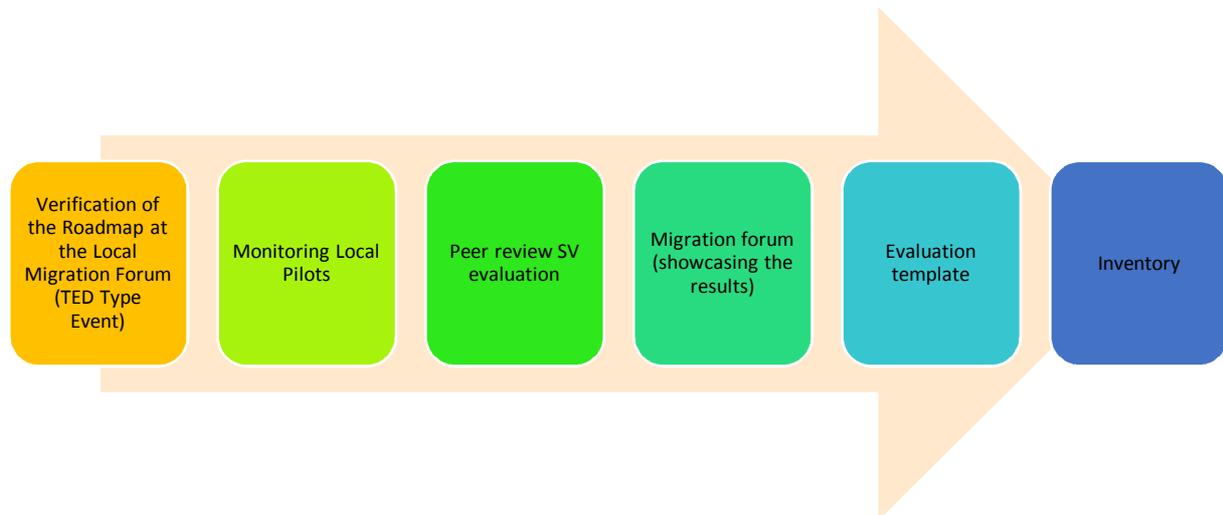
Fig. 1: Preparation of the Local pilot



The Local Pilot Testing Phase incorporated several activities: implementation, accompanied by the monitoring activities and presentation of the results to the whole partnerships as well as peer review study visits in which local partners not only visited each other but capitalised the lessons learned during the pilot project's implementation.

In figure below is the whole process of implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the local pilots documented.

Fig. 2: Implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the local pilots



With each of the local partners basinc their pilot actions on field research and Local Status quo Analyses, the individual action plans differ among themselves.

Tab. 1: Overview of YOUMIG pilot activity by local partners

Local partner	Name of pilot activity	Brief description of the pilot activity
Graz	M-GIST-HUB Migrant Girls – with a background in the Danube region - in Natural Science and Technology	The city of Graz is noticing a trend of youth not being interested in obtaining education in Natural Science and Technology, which is especially typical of young women with migration background. It has been identified that in many cases there is very low awareness raising about what skill sets are required or which jo opportunities exist in obtaining such education. M-GIST-HUB is therefore primarily concerned with awareness raising among the target group and above all, including the family members of the target group, as youth at the age of making such decisions is rarely independant and therefore under influence of familymembers and their lack of awareness is also one of the decisive factors. By raising awareness about the opportunities offered to the target group, there is an impact on their integration into society.
Kanjiža	Stay, work, be happy!	Municipality of Kanjiža opened a coworking space which offers youth opportunity to gain business and language competences to further their opportunities on the Serbian labour market, as the overall cooperation with the established national structures was inadequate for the specific situation of the municipality.

		<p>Through the municipality owned centre they reached the target group of young potential emigrants and offered them support which can influence their decision to migrate abroad or not. Through this activity local partner is tackling the issue of emigration of youth from the municipality to neighbouring Hungary, especially since the majority of population is part of Hungarian minority and has better language competences in Hungarian than the national (Serbian) language.</p>
Maribor	CWMB YOUMIG	<p>Maribor is a city facing both immigration and emigration. Therefore the CWMB YOUMIG programme is targeting youth with migration background or intention to migrate, as well as offering a supportive environment for return migrants. The coworking centre is offering support for youth in their process of self-employment, by offering free desk-sharing in a stimulating environment with access to key support organizations within the city (including national SPOT points, Technological park, Consultations available at the Regional Development Agency) as well as linguistic support in case of language barriers for migrants. By offering such support the CWMB YOUMIG is a hub that will stay in touch with its members even in cases that they emigrate from the city and it forms a supportive network for immigrants integrating into society through self-employment. During the pilot period CWMB attracted 3 immigrants and 12 potential emigrants.</p>
Szeged	Sensitization And Multicultural training (SAMU)	<p>The Municipality of Szeged identified the opportunity to achieve integration of young migrants with pre-school children, through a programme provided with public pre-school child-care providers. Trainings on sensitization and multiculturality have been conducted among public pre-school child-care providers and with municipal staff in order to break the potential barriers of communication between public service providers and immigrants. The pilot activities contributed, above all, to public service providers (municipality and kindergartens) by raising the staff competences in approaching the issues of dealing with immigrants (mostly young parents), who do not have the same cultural background and the same command of the language as their native peers. The trainings proved successful and provided tools to staff that could be applied outside their immediate field of work as well.</p>

2. Local Pilot Identity Card: Creating a welcoming environment for returning migrants in Municipality Sfântu Gheorghe

Title	Creating a welcoming environment for returning migrants in order to support the homecoming of young people
Starting Date	01.06.2018
Duration	01.06.2018 – 31.03.2019
Local pilot holder	Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe
Number of municipal staff involved in the implementation of the local pilot	5
Target Group	Young emigrants from Sfântu Gheorghe, returnees, and locals
Stakeholders (list)	Work Force Agency, Educational Inspectorate, Chamber of Commerce, Incubator House, Junior Business Club, LAM Foundation
Costs (as per AF)	5000 EUR
Transferred Good Practice (ref. to the Roadmap)	<p>We have selected two good practices because both of them are based upon the principle that emigrants should be connected to the locals and that the two groups could help each other inside and outside the country. Both projects consider local authorities and families as key factors in building this community</p> <p>Migrants: 3.3.3. Promoting cooperation among migrant communities and local governments for local development. Georgia and Latvia.</p> <p>Returnees: 4.1.1. Integration of Georgian migrants into the labour market</p>

3. Summary of the Local Pilot

Sfântu Gheorghe's pilot project, the Sepsinet webpage's structure and main graphic elements were elaborated by October 2018, but it started to be filled with content just by the end of the year.

The target group was defined as the young persons originated from Sfântu Gheorghe, both the returnees and the ones who live, work, or study abroad.

The aim of the webpage is to function as a bridge, a communication channel between communities, to tighten relation with those, who are far away from their hometown and to help to reintegrate the ones who returned, or plan to return home. Therefore, local news, events are shared in two languages,

Romanian and Hungarian, information about new investments, future plans of the city, as well as information about youth programs and details of youth public policies supported locally. There were published interviews, videos with representatives of local institutions, which deal with different aspects of the demographic challenge caused partly by the massive outmigration, and with young returned migrants, who tell their own stories of taking a decision to return home, the difficulties they faced during the reintegration, and how they found their way to start a business, or become successful at their workplace.

By re-vitalizing the Sepsinet website we showed for our emigrants the improving good but realistic image of the city by using stories of returned youngsters. All the stories have a common message: everybody found their place in both community and economic level and they are strongly connected to the local community and the presence of their friends and family is an attractive force.

4. Challenges address in the Local Pilot

Major local challenges and opportunities related to youth migration, identified by the Local Status Quo Analysis (Activity 3.2) and addressed in Local Pilot

Most problems enumerated by young migrants who came home for a short visit, or returnees, who spent a considerable time abroad can be classified in seven types: communication problems with the authorities, bureaucratic processes, attitudes of authorities, problems regarding naturalization, poor, infrastructure, problems of the labour market and challenges regarding mentality. Among these the most frequently mentioned was the frustration regarding problem solving capacity of diverse Romanian public authorities, compared to what they experienced in other countries, where citizens' problems are not treated with mistrust, indifference, as it often happens in Romania. Lack of transparency is doubled with lack of adaptation of digital solutions, which could ease and speed up the information provision and problem solving services of the authorities. As a response, the Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe is determined to improve the quality of the services in the administrative area.

By creating the Sepsinet website we showed for our emigrants the improving good but realistic image of the city by using stories of returned youngsters. The storytellers were mostly success stories: the marketing manager and the sales manager who left Dubai to move home, the waiter couple who left the United Kingdom to open a vegetarian diner, the topographer and his wife who left Budapest to come home and so on. All the stories have a common message: everybody found their place in both community and economic level and they are strongly connected to the local community and the presence of their friends and family is an attractive force.

We can say that the website with a delay launching could become a virtual meeting place of people from Sfântu Gheorghe living abroad and the returnees, where mostly the returnees talk about the opportunities and advantages of living in the common hometown.

5. LogFrame of the Local Pilot

PILOT SUMMARY	INDICATORS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	RISKS / ASSUMPTIONS
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OBJECTIVE	Efforts of the Municipality keeping or bringing home young people, by offering a wide range of public services on a high quality level.	Number of stakeholders, actors providing information Current:0 Target: 5	
AIM	Create an online community platform targeted to young migrants and returnees, to connect them with their hometown and presenting possibilities to return.	Number of emigrants, returnees registered on www.sepsinet.ro Current: 0 Target: 55	Launching local programmes by the Municipality which aim is to promote, facilitate returning of emigrants.
RESULTS	Upload the platform www.sepsinet.ro with content	Number of emigrants, returnees, locals who interact weekly Current:0 Target: 8	Regularly update with relevant content, keeping in touch with young migrants.
ACTIVITIES	“Revitalize ” the online platform	Means & Costs External: 5.000,00 EUR	Migrant youth will use the service provided by the local YOUMIG partner
			Pre-conditions Needs identified by the LSQA Mapping the stakeholders

The Logical Framework Approach was used for the preparation and validation of the pilot activities within the Local Migration Forum with the involvement of the stakeholders.

6. Indicators, linked to local pilot

Monitoring: indicators planned and achieved within the pilot project are presented in the table below.

	Planned (April 2018)	Achieved (March 2019)
Indicator 1	Number of stakeholders, actors providing information	We received relevant data's regarding the activities of the stakeholders, such as contact list, main activities, function hours, etc.
Definition	Number of stakeholders who will provide relevant information for the content of the site	
Baseline	0	
Target	5	
Data Collection (by whom and how)	Municipality of Sfantu Gheorghe	
	Planned (April 2018)	

Indicator 2	Number of emigrants, returnees registered, visited on www.sepsinet.ro	<p>-two persons, one from UK, the other one from Hungary, contacted the Municipality through Sepsinet, and asked for information regarding job opportunities, as they seriously think on returning home</p> <p>- in less than 3 months Sepsinet had over 20,700 visits on site</p> <p>- videos are the most popular, with over 1,000 clicks on the more interested ones and almost 2,800 hits on the most viewed one, but articles, written interviews had also lots of visitors.</p>
Definition	Number of emigrants, returnees visiting the website www.sepsinet.ro	
Baseline	0	
Target	55	
Data Collection (by whom and how)	Municipality of Sfantu Gheorghe	

7. Planned and Implemented Activities

Evaluating the www.sepsinet.ro website
 Making the “concept-design” of website
 Contracting an IT company for updating the webpage
 Externalizing the “content-service”: entrusting someone to be the manager of the site
 Uploading the site with content: collecting data on migrants and returnees, setting up and updating a data base about these people, collecting basic information about the city, writing articles, making interviews, presenting the YOUMIG project, etc.
 Communication activities
 Migration Forum linked to the pilot
 Monitoring the traffic on the web site
 Final report on the website’s utilisation
 Venue: online. The physical venue will be in the Registration office of the Municipality

8. Evaluation of the local pilot

8.1 Problems and Needs (Relevance)

Please state your opinion: were the selected (or invented) good practices that you were transferring adequate to the specific needs of the youth I/E/R in your local community and how?

Most problems enumerated by young migrants who came home for a short visit, or returnees, who spent a considerable time abroad can be classified in seven types: communication problems with the authorities, bureaucratic processes, attitudes of authorities, problems regarding naturalization, poor, infrastructure, problems of the labour market and challenges regarding mentality. Among these the most frequently mentioned was the frustration regarding problem solving capacity of diverse Romanian public authorities, compared to what they experienced in other countries, where citizens’ problems are not treated with mistrust, indifference, as it often happens in Romania. Lack of transparency is doubled with lack of adaptation of digital solutions, which could ease and speed up the information provision and problem solving services of the authorities. As a response, the Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe is determined to improve the quality of the services in the administrative area.

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We can say that the website with a delay launching could become a virtual meeting place of people from Sfântu Gheorghe living abroad and the returnees, where mostly the returnees talk about the opportunities and advantages of living in the common hometown.

8.2 Achievement of Purpose (Effectiveness)

Please describe, how well were the outputs level indicators achieved? (see the table of indicators in Monitoring report as reference point)

Since it was launched, the audience of the website produced a continuous growth. Visitors from around the globe clicked on articles, videos, interviews, and on features of the virtual OSS. In less than 3 months of activity there were over 20,700 visits on site. Although there wasn't a structured, paid media campaign to promote the site, the content shared on the site's social media profiles, like Instagram and Facebook, helped promote directly the recently launched website among young users. Videos are the most popular, with over 1,000 clicks on the more interested ones and almost 2,800 hits on the most viewed one, but articles, written interviews had also lots of visitors. Most visits were initiated from Romania, of course, followed by countries like Hungary, Germany, United Kingdom, United States, Austria, Scandinavian countries, but also more exotic parts of the world, like Brazil, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines or China. The virtual OSS, as part of the Sepsinet platform was designed to become a handy tool for those who look for basic information in several areas of public interest. In this period the different topics of the virtual OSS were visited 470 times, and according to the graphs the number of users continues to increase. Feedbacks received were mostly positive, but also very constructive, as there is room to improve the service.

The stakeholders were involved from the beginning of the project, helped to identify the needs and possible solutions to reach the target group and also sent helpful data we shared on Sepsinet.

Please rate the usefulness of the 2nd local event and migration forum for the implementation of local pilot?

The 2nd Local event was organized on the 12th of March 2018, brought together project partners from Romania, academic researchers and employees of the local government, with local stakeholders, actors with an interest in one way or another in the topic of youth migration. These stakeholders, include organizations involved in local enterprise development as well as the staff of the regional employment office, the Workforce Agency and Chamber of Commerce, Incubator House, Junior Business Club, LAM Foundation, Chamber of Commerce, Educational Inspectorate. The aim of the event was to discuss two projects of the Municipality set to be launched within the framework of YOUMIG. The two projects, creating the Sepsinet website and setting up a One-Stop-Shop service, both dedicated for issues concerning return migration. All forum participants welcomed the projects and provided further inputs for their improvement. All stakeholders involved in enterprise development and financing start-up businesses of Romanian citizens living abroad, provided further details of the frustrations experienced by those who intend to return and start a business. To connect with the project, the organizations offered their expertise in addressing and reaching migrant communities.

How did the peer study visits influence the implementation of the local pilot?

The Sepsinet webpage's structure and main graphic elements were elaborated in October 2018, but it started to be filled with content just by the end of the year. Hosting peers from

Burgas, Bulgaria took place at the end of September 2018, that is why the influence of the study visit had limited effect on Sepsinet website.

How would you rate the involvement of the stakeholders?

The stakeholders were involved from the beginning of the project, they helped to identify the needs and possible solutions to reach the target group and provide valuable inputs. We encountered some delays in getting the requested information from the stakeholders. Also, the institutions, service providers can't be flexible enough because of the rapidly changing national situations.

How well was the local pilot accepted by the decision maker (e.g., mayor) within the municipality?

The stakeholder platform, including decision makers at the Municipality, were always supporting of the activity and have seen it as relevant. The Municipality of Sfantu Gheorghe is strongly motivated in encouraging return migration, and intend to maintain the Sepsinet, in case there will be content providers among stakeholders.

What were the challenging factors in the implementation of the local pilot?

There was some challenging factors during the implementation of the pilot: at the beginning finding the content provider for the Sepsinet was very challenging, then appeared some technical problems regarding the function of the site.

It was easy to find Hungarian youngsters (over 75% of the population of Sfantu Gheorghe are ethnic Hungarians), but we had difficulties to find Romanian returnees to talk about the opportunities and advantages of living in the common hometown.

We encountered some delays in getting the requested information from the stakeholders.

We agreed with the Lead Partner to extend the pilot activity implementation period.

8.3 Sound management and value for money (Efficiency)

Please describe, how efficient was the local pilot regarding costs, staff engagement and time consumption: were the results/objectives achieved within the budgetary and time constraints?

All the set performance indicators were achieved within the proposed project budget.

8.4 Achievement of wider effects (Impact)

Please describe the impacts of the local pilots to the youth I/E/R in your local community. What would be the differences if you would not implement the local pilot?

In less than 3 months of activity there were over 20,700 visits on site. Although there wasn't a structured, paid media campaign to promote the site, the content shared on the site's social media profiles, like Instagram and Facebook, helped promote directly the recently launched website among young users. Videos are the most popular, with over 1,000 clicks on the more interested ones and almost 2,800 hits on the most viewed one, but articles, written interviews had also lots of visitors. The stakeholders were implicated and informed in the activity of the pilot.

8.5 Likely continuation of achieved results (Sustainability)

Are there needs to expand or modify the pilot activities and incorporate them in the long-lasting provision of services on a local level?

The Municipality of Sfantu Gheorghe is strongly motivated in encouraging return migration, and intend to maintain the Sepsinet, in case there will be content providers among stakeholders.

8.6 Strengths of the Pilot/Organization

Please list the strengths of the local pilot implementation (e.g., in terms of: staff commitment, stakeholders` participation, support of the mayor`s office etc.)

The Sepsinet website offers a realistic image of the city by using stories of returned youngsters.

8.7 Being proud of

Please write in a short story, what you are especially proud of in implementation of the local pilot?

We consider that the biggest achievements so far are:

- two persons, one from UK, the other one from Hungary, contacted the Municipality through Sepsinet, and asked for information regarding job opportunities, as they seriously think on returning home
- in less than 3 months Sepsinet had over 20,700 visits on site
- videos are the most popular, with over 1,000 clicks on the more interested ones and almost 2,800 hits on the most viewed one, but articles, written interviews had also lots of visitors.

8.8 Conclusions & Recommendations

Summarised conclusions and lessons learned during the local pilot implementation.

The programmes' main objective was achieved, the Sepsinet website offers for the town's emigrants the improving but realistic image of the city by using stories of returned youngsters.

The recommendation is to maintain the Sepsinet platform after the pilot testing period.

Author of the Report

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