

Searching for ‘WELCOMING SPACES’ in Europe: revitalising shrinking areas by hosting non-EU migrants

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Project description

Welcoming Spaces is a European research programme (H2020) that dives in to the world of migrants and local initiatives in European rural depopulating regions. Researchers from five different countries are involved from the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Italy and Poland, and together we will investigate how local initiatives can stimulate integration of non-EU migrants, and how these initiatives can revitalize shrinking regions. Currently we are expanding our overview of local initiatives in European shrinking regions, that intend to stimulate the arrival and integration of migrants. Also, we are organizing a two day kick-off conference, which will take place in March. For both activities we could use the assistance of a bright mind. Below you find a short abstract of the project, and the content of the assistantship.

WELCOMING SPACES aims to search for new ways to merge two policy challenges: how to contribute to the revitalisation of shrinking areas while also offering space for the successful integration of non-EU migrants in line with the Sustainable Development Goals ('leaving no one behind'). Our point of departure are existing examples of 'welcoming spaces' which do exist in some places, but often remain invisible and dispersed. Examples of small towns and villages offsetting a declining population by attracting non-EU migrants are found in various European regions in Italy, Spain, but also Germany, the Netherlands and Poland. Such initiatives to create 'welcoming spaces' and initiating new types of government-citizen-migrant engagement are often citizen-based, but can equally be the outcome of initiatives by governments, NGOs, businesses, or they can be migrant-based. Going against the current of 'anti-migration', most initiatives are highly contested. Their success seems to depend on a combination of collective action, multi-stakeholder collaboration and institutional innovations. Given the local scale of most of these initiatives, the dispersion in space and political sensitivity, much of what is happening around these 'welcoming spaces' remains under the radar. The possibilities for upscaling such initiatives are hence under-explored. WELCOMING SPACES aims to answer the following question: How to achieve inclusive and sustainable development in shrinking regions, contributing to revitalisation while providing opportunities for the successful integration of non-EU migrants?

As a bright minds assistant, you will collect data, write a literature study and contribute to a quick scan of currently known Welcoming Spaces in Europe. We have a small database with welcoming initiatives in Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Italy and Poland which need to be expanded. Also we would like to know more about the initiatives themselves. In addition to writing an academic contribution, you will also contribute to disseminating your results on the Welcoming spaces website through blogs and

other means. In a later stadium of this assistantship field visits to the project locations, and exploratory interviews with initiators are possible.

Furthermore, as a bright minds assistant you will participate in organising the kick-off conference, which takes place at March 5 and 6. We plan to invite several thought-provoking key note speakers, and to organise some panels. We need a helping hand in preparing the conference, practical assistance during the conference and someone to take care of our social media coverage during the conference (by twittering, blogging or vlogging). This event is also an opportunity to expand your network and get further acquainted with the state-of-the-art debate about migration, integration and public policy.

Job requirements

- An engaged storyteller: can write, blog, vlog or twitter for our website and during the kick off conference
- Work precisely and pragmatic: the database you create will be used by many researchers for the coming years
- Good command of English
- Communicative, keen to assist organizing a conference