

# OBSERVATORY OF YOUTH MIGRATION

---

*Guidelines for an observatory aimed at monitoring and analysing  
youth migration in Alpine territories*



**Editors:** Fabien Connétable (Vesoul Urban Community), Julien Calmand (JL Etudes et recherches), Isabelle Recotillet (IR2)

**Contributors:** Viviana Caldara, Marco Milano (Provincia Autonoma di Trento), Elisa Rapetti and Liria Veronesi (Fondazione Franco Demarchi), Amna Potocnik and Spela Flegar (Regional Development Agency for Podravje - Maribor), Giulia Sostero, Anna Benevolo, Mohammed Mustafa (European Association for Local Democracy), Hanna Öllös, Laura Haberkellner (CIPRA International Lab GmbH).

**Download:** <https://www.alpine-space.eu/project/out4ingov>

**Project partners:**

Autonomous Province of Trento  
Franco Demarchi Foundation  
CIPRA International Lab GmbH  
European Association for Local Democracy  
Regional Development Agency for Podravje - Maribor  
Vesoul Urban Community

## Disclaimer

Views and opinions expressed are those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union.

If not otherwise noted below an article or element, the content of this publication is published under a Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike 4.0 International Licence.



## Content

- I. Introduction
- II. Objectives
  - a. Quantitative analyses
  - b. Qualitative analyses (In particular through interviews) :
  - c. Participation to the creation of a dynamic relating to the theme "migration of 15-35 years old",
- III. Organisation of the activity
  - a. Our provider
  - b. Agenda
- IV. Data collection and management
- V. Communication and dissemination
- VI. Collaboration and networking
- VII. Evaluation and continuous improvement



## I. Introduction

The OUT4INGOV project examines youth migration in the Alpine region. These mainly rural, isolated mountainous areas are affected by an exodus of young skilled workers who are pursuing mobility. This “brain drain” is creating regional disparities within the region. Urban centers and tourist destinations attract young people. These attractive hubs offer young people a range of infrastructure and services that enable them to pursue their life goals and offer numerous opportunities. Depending on their size, they offer potential that rural areas do not have in terms of training, employment, socializing, and intercultural exchange. Urban centers compete to attract the most qualified young people, considered to be talented individuals, and develop policies, programs, and initiatives aimed at encouraging and facilitating their settlement in local communities.

For rural areas, retaining, attracting, or bringing back young people is a major challenge. Like all areas, they have socio-economic development needs. From this perspective, it should be noted that some of them, particularly those involved in outdoor tourism activities in both winter and summer, have assets that attract young people. Furthermore, in a context of increasingly precarious living conditions for young people, which has tended to worsen since the COVID crisis, young people face a variety of issues in the most attractive urban centers, with difficulties in accessing decent housing often highlighted. From this perspective, less attractive areas undoubtedly offer opportunities for young people.

In general, European policies have contributed to the development of mobility experiences. The free movement of workers within the Schengen area aims to meet the socio-economic needs of territories and contributes to the mobility of human capital. In the case of international mobility in Europe, it is institutionalized through programs such as Erasmus+ and Interreg, which promote these experiences within cross-border regions. At an individual level, whether regional, national, or transnational, mobility is supposed to increase the employability, personal development, and skills of young people. Numerous studies aim to understand the added value of mobility experiences on young people's life trajectories. From this point of view, social science research provides many insights into the understanding of these phenomena. First, it shows that young people are not equal in terms of mobility. Social background, experiences of mobility during childhood, and belonging to a particular territory are all factors that facilitate mobility experiences. Within this body of literature, several authors have introduced the concept of “mobility capital,” defined as the cumulative accumulation of mobility-related experiences and resources that can be mobilised as an asset, in a way comparable to human capital (Kaufmann, Bergman and Joye, 2004 ; Murphy-Lejeune, 2000), . Second, the added value of mobility experiences on professional integration remains very difficult to demonstrate, particularly in the case of experiences abroad in young people's trajectories.

Finally, in line with what has just been explained, the data available for measuring these different aspects remain limited, at least at the local level. Data and reports can be found, however, at the national level. There is a lack of qualitative and quantitative data, which limits the analyses that could be developed both in terms of the effects of mobility on areas for their economic development and on young people's career paths. **The creation of a permanent observatory on youth migration at local level will provide food for thought.**



## SCOPE

Although the scope of the observatory's work will need to be refined as the project progresses, a few elements can already be put forward. The scope of interest is migration, which in geography is considered to be permanent or long-term mobility (i.e. student mobility, professional mobility). It represents only one type of mobility and can be international - if a border is crossed - or internal. Therefore, the observatory will not study temporary mobility such as tourism or day trips. Similarly, daily mobility will not be included in the scope of observation. International and domestic migration will be taken into account in the observatory's scope of analysis. Within the framework of the Interreg project, mobility from and out of a municipality (among consortium members) is considered as relevant.

The geographical scope covers the areas of influence considered in the OUT4INGOV project, which refers to the territories of the Alpine arc. In this context, both **inbound and outbound migration** must be considered.

Inbound migration refers to the ability of territories to attract people to settle there, while outbound migration refers to permanent mobility to other territories. Depending on how discussions within the consortium progress, regional disparities within the areas involved in the project may be studied. Indeed, it could be interesting to consider the attractiveness of regions in terms of migration. In this context, the issue of means of transport, particularly public transport, could be considered on a regional basis. Taking territorial aspects into account within the scope of the analysis could ultimately provide information on local migration policies, i.e., strategies aimed at settling new populations, facilitating migration, and promoting territories during migration.

Finally, the scope of the study covers young people, i.e., those **aged 15 to 35**, regardless of their nationality. From this perspective, and in light of what was presented in the introduction, the diversity of the young populations studied must be considered in terms of their differentiated access to migration. Therefore, migration will be observed in terms of territorial differences and the intrinsic characteristics of young people: sex, gender, sociodemographic characteristics, age, and social, cultural, and human capital. The description of migration, young people's motivations for migrating, and the added value of these experiences in their life trajectories are therefore taken into account within the observatory.

The observatory's scope of analysis covers the humanities and social sciences. Within this framework, several scientific and theoretical bodies of work may be mobilized as the observatory's activities progress. While the initial activities will focus on statistical or sociological analyses, other areas of research may also contribute to the observatory's work. From this perspective, the observatory is designed as a living entity that will evolve over time, in line with the issues identified and the stakeholders involved in the project. Thus, initially, i.e., at the time of its implementation, the aim will be to quantify the phenomenon of youth migration and understand their motivations through qualitative sociological or biographical analyses. In the future, other scientific fields may be mobilized, such as geographical or spatial analyses.

As part of the Interreg project, **a pilot phase of the observatory will be implemented in Vesoul**. The observatory prototype developed under this project could be replicated in other municipalities and territories.



## GENERAL OBJECTIVES

The creation of a permanent migration observatory aims to monitor mobility within one territory covered by the OUT4INGOV project, as a pilot project. The methodological guide should enable the establishment of an observatory in other territories.

**The purpose of this document is to provide a methodological guide for the establishment of a youth migration observatory, with a pilot phase to be implemented in Vesoul in 2026. The scope of the Vesoul Observatory covers both the geographical mobility of young people from Vesoul and the inflow of young people moving to Vesoul.**

From this perspective, it is important to consider all of the activities that could be carried out within the observatory.

The Permanent Observatory on Youth Migration is tasked with **collecting, analysing and disseminating data and insights relating to migration flows among young people aged 15 to 35**. Its purpose is to support the development of policies that promote balanced territorial development under the OUT4INGOV project.

Drawing on reliable, objective quantitative and qualitative evidence, the Observatory is intended to guide the implementation of local strategies that both support and build upon young people's migration trajectories. It also aims to foster the long-term engagement and inclusion of young people in the governance processes created by OUT4INGOV, and more broadly, in the social, economic and cultural development of the territories concerned.

In more operational terms, the observatory's tasks will be as follows:

- To collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative data on youth migration (outbound, inbound, and return flows).
- To investigate the drivers, dynamics, and impacts of youth mobility at the local, national, and international levels.
- To publish regular reports, policy briefs, and thematic studies to inform institutional stakeholders and civil society.
- To promote the involvement of young people through participatory tools, dialogue, and consultation mechanisms.
- To foster cooperation between public institutions, research centers, youth organizations, and other relevant actors.



- Support evidence-informed decision-making for institutions and civil society on youth mobility issues.



## SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

The youth migration observatory is designed to collect, format, and analyse data related to migration among people aged 15 to 35, taking into account the diversity of migration flows.

**The Observatory's analytical function is articulated around 4 specific objectives.**

### Specific Objective 1: Identifying and Accessing Existing Data

- Identify existing data on migration among 15–35-year-olds and the associated data producers, assess their relevance, and document them.
- Establish partnerships with these producers to ensure regular updates and access to complementary data.

### Specific Objective 2: Processing Existing Data

- Access and compile data relating to youth migration (ages 15–35).
- Define and produce indicators relating to youth migration.
- Regularly analyse these indicators and present them in formats accessible to non-specialists, with a view to supporting public-policy decision-making.

### Specific Objective 3: Complementing Existing Data

- Supplement existing information to deepen understanding of migration flows and assess their spillover effects.
- Carry out the necessary surveys to generate this additional information.
- Analyse findings from qualitative surveys.
- Produce concise, accessible summaries for non-specialists to support public-policy decision-making.

### Specific Objective 4: Disseminating Findings and Stimulating Public Debate

- Produce consolidated analyses at regular intervals (data, indicators, analysis, and synthesis), with a focus on policy-oriented insights.
- Develop a digital platform where users can access:
  - methodological resources (indicator definitions, sources, methodological notes)
  - analytical resources (indicators, briefing notes, annual reports).



## SETTING UP THE OBSERVATORY

The following diagram outlines the steps required to establish the observatory. Each step is described in detail below.



### Step 1: Identifying and accessing existing data and scientific resources on youth migration

The very first step in launching the project to establish a youth migration observatory is to identify and map the resources that will feed it: local-level data, migration indicators, existing publications, as well as relevant researchers and subject-matter experts.

This initial phase therefore focuses on identifying, organising and structuring the information needed to build the observatory's content. Decisions regarding how the information will be presented and how regularly it will be updated will be defined once this mapping exercise has been completed.

To this end, the activities to be carried out are organised into four thematic strands. They are primarily based on desk research.

#### Territorial-level migration data

In order to carry out this data-mapping exercise, it is first necessary to restate the objective of the research: to identify, among public data-producing institutions, datasets relating to the migration of young people aged 15 to 35 at the local level. This last criterion is likely to be the most challenging to meet, as statistical bodies generally produce migration data at national or higher territorial levels (such as migration flows between regions or departments).

All data searches will be documented using a standard template, described below. This template records the existing datasets, their geographical coverage, migration indicators, accessibility, and



relevance for the observatory. It constitutes the first body of information on which the feasibility of establishing an observatory will be assessed.

### Template on Data

Data-producing institution	Name of the data source (population census, survey, etc.)	Years available	Update frequency (annual, etc.)	Geographical coverage	Availability of migration data (Y/N)	Availability of migration data for the 15–35 age group	Availability of local-level youth migration data (territorial level)	Type of migration indicators	Accessibility (open data, subject to agreement, not accessible)	Relevance for the observatory (high, medium, low)

Based on the completed template, several scenarios may be identified:

- High feasibility: relevant data are available and accessible, and indicators describing the migration of young people aged 15 to 35 already exist. The observatory will be able to build on these data and, where necessary, complement them with additional surveys.
- Medium feasibility: data are available but only partially. The observatory will therefore need to undertake additional data collection.
- Low feasibility: data are not available, and a significant data collection effort would be required. In this case, feasibility is considered low within the project timeframe.

Once the template is filled in, the overall feasibility can be assessed, according to this classification. This assessment must be supported by a clear rationale.

### Data on existing publications

In addition to identifying administrative and statistical data, it will be necessary to carry out a review of studies and research conducted on the migration of young people in the target territory. This review will help to complement the data template, as research teams may have collected quantitative or qualitative data on youth migration, or may have used data sources that were not identified at the initial stage.

This review work will be documented using a dedicated template.



Title of the publication	Author(s)	Year of publication	Journal name	Accessibility (open access, paywalled)	Relevance to the migration of young people aged 15-35	Data used	Indicators analysed	Geographical coverage	Relevance for the observatory (high, medium, low)

## Studies and research template

The review of studies and research focusing on the migration of young people at territorial level will make it possible to assess the degree to which this research topic is covered:

- Literature gap: few or no studies and research have been conducted at local level.
- Emerging field of research: some publications exist, but their number remains limited.
- Well-documented field of research: a substantial body of studies and research already exists on the topic.

### Mapping of local researchers and experts

Following the review of studies and research, the guideline requires to complete a third template listing the names and contact details of researchers and experts working on youth migration or related fields, at the level of the wider territory (regional and, where relevant, national).

This directory of researchers and experts will be a valuable resource for the operation of the observatory, in particular for the establishment of a scientific committee and the organisation of conferences.

## Template of researchers and experts



Surname	Name	E-mail	Phone number	Field research of	Relevant publication related to migration	Organisation

## Deliverable – Step 1

At the end of this first step, a document will be produced, containing:

- the three templates;
- an analysis of the templates based on the proposed classification;
- proposed directions for the next steps, including:
  - partnerships to be established with data-producing institutions, where relevant;
  - data gaps to be addressed;
  - thematic areas requiring further in-depth analysis.

## Step 2: Processing and analysing existing data

For each identified data source, a detailed data assessment will be required. This will involve accessing the data and documenting them in a precise manner in order to produce an analysis of the indicators, including their definition, coverage, relevance and limitations.

### Indicators template

Source of data		Indicator 1	Indicator 2	...
	Definition			
	Coverage			
	Relevance			
	Limitation			

Once this template has been completed, a consolidated analysis will be produced in order to identify the most relevant indicators to be integrated into the observatory. An analysis of these indicators will complement the overall indicator landscape.

## Deliverable Step 2

A summary note will include:



- the indicators template;
- a list of indicators selected on the basis of existing data;
- a list of additional indicators that would need to be produced;
- an analysis of the selected indicators.

### Step 3: Annual work programme

The deliverable for Step 1 will enable to develop the annual work programme, on the basis of components that are consolidated.

The annual work programme will need to document in detail:

- the objectives to be achieved, for example:
  - compilation of existing data in the form of a dashboard;
  - production of new data and/or studies;
  - organisation of an annual event;
  - development of a digital platform to showcase the observatory's outputs;
- the resources to be mobilised in order to achieve these objectives (including human resources);
- the milestones of the annual programme;
- the expected outputs.

Serving as a roadmap, this annual work programme will be presented to the project partners and to local stakeholders involved in the observatory. It will be updated annually on the basis of the observatory's annual review.

As outlined above, at this stage of the process, several activities may be implemented.

#### **Production of new data and studies:**

Depending on the resources available, the observatory may, where relevant, produce new data and undertake new studies. Several options may be considered in order to achieve these objectives:

- Conducting quantitative surveys;
- Conducting qualitative surveys.



The implementation of quantitative surveys could be envisaged within the observatory. In particular, an online survey could be developed. The target population may include young people currently residing in the territory, as well as those who have lived there in recent years.

The survey could either be conducted internally or outsourced to a service provider, in particular those already identified as data producers. Alternatively, where appropriate, the enhancement of existing survey instruments could be considered. Regular dialogue with data-producing organisations will help to prioritise these different options and to refine the methodology to be implemented.

In order to explore the drivers, dynamics and added value of youth migration, a qualitative survey may be implemented. In this context, two dimensions may be examined:

- territorial dynamics;
- individual dynamics.

With regard to territorial dynamics, the aim is to understand the effects of youth migration on territories, based on semi-structured interviews, discussions with relevant stakeholders, including elected officials, technical staff within local authorities, and organisations specialising in mobility and youth policies, among others.

With regard to individual dynamics, the objective is to understand how young people perceive and experience migration. In this case, biographical-type interviews will be recommended. One of the key steps in this activity will be the sourcing of young people to be interviewed. A diverse panel of profiles will be sought, including non-migrant youth, young people currently in migration, and young people who have returned after a period of migration, among others.

For both surveys, a methodology will be proposed and validated by the observatory's scientific committee.

### **Organisation of an annual event**

The dissemination of existing studies or those produced by the observatory is a central objective of the first-year work programme. This event, which may be organised in various formats, could take the form of:

- a webinar;
- an in-person conference.



The event will bring together all partners identified and associated with the observatory. It will provide an opportunity to reflect on the setting out of the observatory. The event may be thematic in nature and will allow space for experts to present findings, studies or scientific research. Finally, it will facilitate discussion on the future development of the observatory's activities. The event could be structured as follows:

Presentation of the observatory;

- Results of the activities implemented;
- Contributions from experts on a specific thematic area;
- Steps forward and conclusions.

### Development of a digital platform

A digital platform will be developed in order to support the dissemination of the observatory's studies, findings and research outputs.

The dashboard will be integrated into the platform.

The platform will provide access to and allow the download of the documents produced by the observatory.

## Step 4: Operation and Governance

Depending on the territories and the resources allocated, one or more individuals will be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the observatory.

Where necessary, an external service provider may be entrusted with the operation of the observatory.

### Setting up a scientific committee

In each territory, a scientific committee will be responsible for:

- overseeing the observatory;
- validating the observatory's work programme;
- monitoring activities and reviewing the observatory's outputs.

### Coordination between the Youth migration observatory and the Youth consultative body



The Observatory may involve the youth advisory body in identifying key issues to be analysed and addressed.

