

2023 - 2026

# AspirE Toolbox

Practical resources for  
those working with or for  
(aspiring) re/migrants



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**AspirE** | Asian prospects  
in (re)migration  
to/within the EU

## What is AspirE?

AspirE – Asian prospects in (re)migration to/within the EU – is a three-year research project (2023-2026) that examines the decision making of aspiring (re)migrants from selected Southeast and East Asian countries (China, Japan, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam) to and within selected European Union (EU) member countries (Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Italy, and Portugal).



# What are the objectives of the project?

The Consortium, composed of 13 institutions and led by the Université libre de Bruxelles, aims to study how migration regimes in the countries of origin and destination consider (aspiring) (re)migrants' behaviour in their policies, why people decide to (re)migrate or to stay, and when individuals' migration decisions evolve.

A magnifying glass with a black handle and a white circular lens. The word "OBJECTIVE" is written vertically in blue capital letters on the left side of the lens, and a large blue number "1" is in the center.

OBJECTIVE

1

**Map to what extent spatial mobility policies consider aspiring (re)migrants' behaviour**

A magnifying glass with a black handle and a white circular lens. The word "OBJECTIVE" is written vertically in blue capital letters on the left side of the lens, and a large blue number "2" is in the center.

OBJECTIVE

2

**Determine the temporality of (non-)mobility decision-making**

A magnifying glass with a black handle and a white circular lens. The word "OBJECTIVE" is written vertically in blue capital letters on the left side of the lens, and a large blue number "3" is in the center.

OBJECTIVE

3

**Identify the micro- and meso-level drivers of mobility aspiration and/or intention**

# What is in this Toolbox?

In line with its humanising approach, AspirE developed the present Toolbox as a practical guide to help migration agents, NGO staff, and practitioners access and engage with the project's diverse research outputs. Organised by format (e.g., reports, policy briefs, academic publications, podcasts, and other media), the Toolbox provides clear pathways into the rich body of knowledge generated by AspirE. Each section offers concise summaries, suggestions for practical use, and direct links to full resources hosted on the AspirE website. Designed to be user-friendly and grounded in the lived experiences of migrants, the Toolbox supports ethical, evidence-based, and human-centred approaches to migration work.

Whether you are seeking evidence to inform practice, ethical guidance, or new ways to amplify migrant voices, the Toolbox is your pathway to the knowledge produced and shared by the AspirE project.

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### REPORTS ON MOBILITY POLICIES

Policy reports analysing mobility frameworks across Europe and Asia in six key fields, from labour migration to freedom of movement

## PART 2

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A collection of concise policy briefs translating AspirE's research findings into actionable insights for policymakers and migration stakeholders

## PART 3

### ACADEMIC OUTPUTS

Peer-reviewed publications presenting AspirE's in-depth research findings and theoretical contributions to migration studies

## PART 4

### LISTENING TO MIGRATION

A podcast series featuring conversations with researchers and experts exploring mobility, decision-making, and lived experiences

## PART 5

### CAPACITY BUILDING

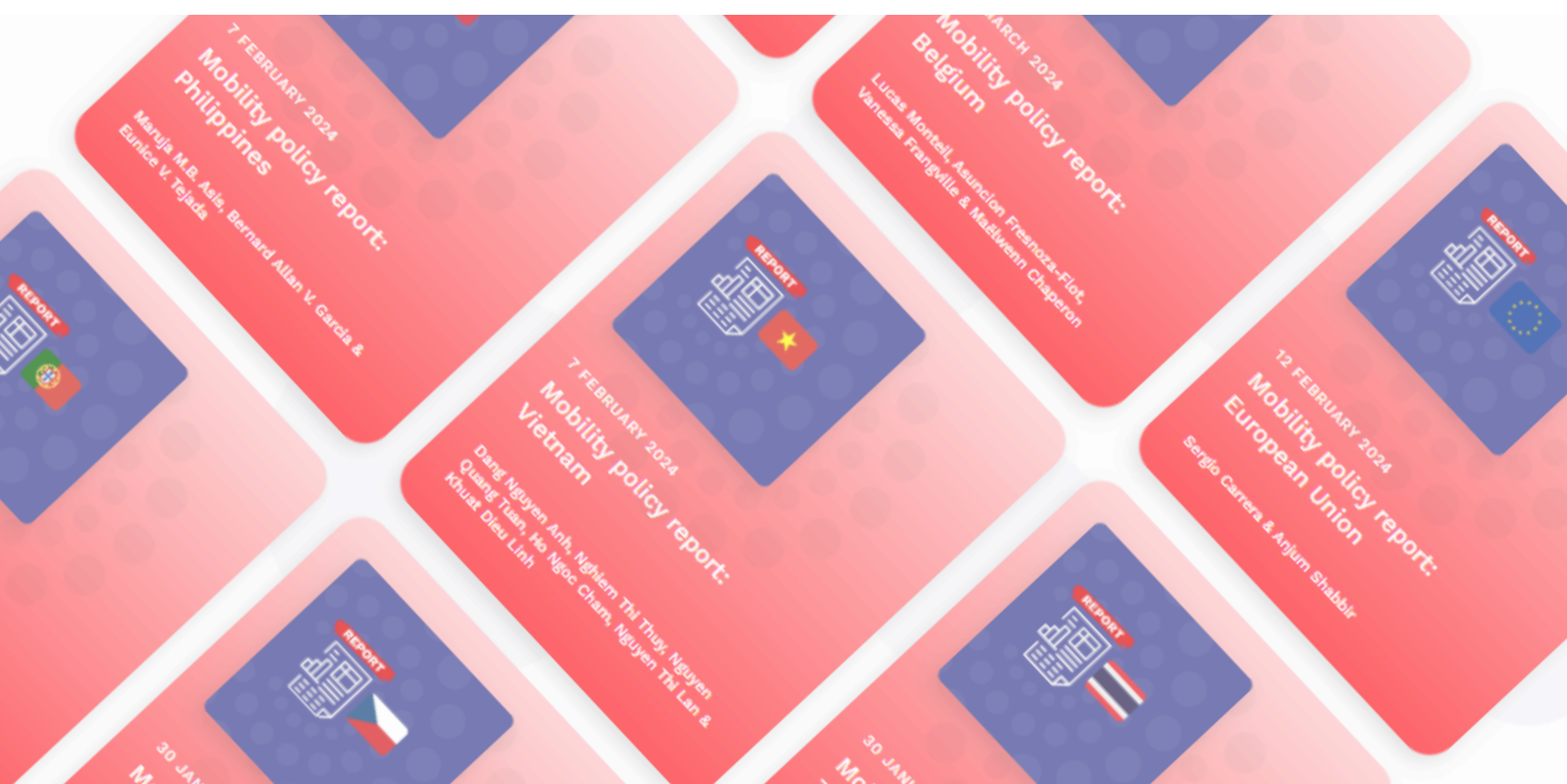
Training curriculum based on AspirE's trainings, covering ethics, qualitative and social network methods, open data practices, and policy engagement for practitioners and researchers

# REPORTS ON MOBILITY POLICIES

The AspirE project conducted a comprehensive content analysis of mobility-related policies at the European and country levels.

In 11 reports, the project explores how mobility is governed across different fields and political contexts, across Europe and Asia, offering insights into the ways migrants are positioned, categorised, and regulated in legal and policy discourses. Six key policy areas were covered within the framework of AspirE: labour migration, tourism, family reunification, student migration, and the EU's freedom of movement.

Through these publicly available resources, AspirE's reports show how mobility is structured and how policy shapes the possibilities and limitations migrants encounter. For migration agents, they offer a lens through which to interpret institutional logics and anticipate how they impact real lives.



# METHODOLOGY

The AspirE country reports are grounded in a shared analytical framework and standardised methodology, jointly developed by the coordinating institutions (the Université libre de Bruxelles and the University of Milan). This collaborative approach ensures consistency and comparability across national contexts, while providing space for country-specific nuances.

Each report is guided by a common set of research questions designed to explore how legal and policy frameworks shape (im)mobility trajectories. Key questions include:

- Are there any specific articles, rules, or clauses that address the change of mind of a labour migrant, an investor, a tourist, or a student who are not returning to their country of origin?
- If so, how do these (im)mobility laws relate to gender, class, or ethnicity?
- Who is exempt and who is not?
- What temporalities are reinforced or produced in the process?

To answer these questions, researchers in each partner country conducted a qualitative policy analysis focusing on six key areas of migration-related regulation (see page 6). The analysis draws on a combination of sources, including national legislation, official government websites, administrative documents, and publicly available policy resources. Where relevant, academic literature was also reviewed to provide additional context and interpretation. The country reports reflect migration policy content and analysis conducted during the lifetime of the project, acknowledging that these policies have evolved and may have changed since the time of study

## WHY THIS MATTERS

This collection of reports analyses how different national and regional frameworks govern mobility, revealing how policies shape migrants' journeys, rights, and possibilities. For each country, the main policy approaches and implications for those working directly with migrants are highlighted.

# SUMMARIES OF REPORTS



## BELGIUM REPORT

The Belgian mobility policies respond to aspiring (re)migrants' behavioural changes, such as status shifts and mobility, with a conditional and risk-averse approach that prioritises economic contribution and legal compliance, while imposing significant administrative barriers to long-term settlement for non-EU nationals.



## CZECH REPUBLIC REPORT

The Czech Republic's migration regime is highly restrictive, prioritising employment ties, security, and perceived deservingness over individual circumstances, with stringent and often unspecified requirements, particularly for non-EU nationals such as Vietnamese, while largely overlooking the behavioural realities and aspirations of aspiring re/migrants.



## FINLAND REPORT

Finland's migration policies, particularly in labour, family, tourism, student, and Schengen domains, are shaped primarily by state interests rather than those of (aspiring) migrants, with re/migration largely overlooked and limited attention given to the lived realities of contemporary migration flows.



## GERMANY REPORT

Germany's (im)mobility regime, while shaped by historical shifts and evolving self-perceptions as a country of immigration, primarily regulates Asian migrants through structured policies that emphasise conditional entry, stay, and temporality, with limited but notable provisions for behavioural flexibility such as benefits, penalties, and amnesty clauses.



## ITALY REPORT

Italy's migration regime has evolved into a highly selective and restrictive system that views migrants' behaviour largely through a lens of suspicion and control, yet allows limited flexibility after entry, enabling migrants to navigate legal transitions and alternative pathways through their own agency.



## PORTUGAL REPORT

Portugal's migration regime is relatively flexible and inclusive, with policies, except for investment-based migration, allowing for regularisation and alternative pathways, reflecting a legal framework that has evolved to balance national interests with the needs and aspirations of aspiring re/migrants.



### EUROPEAN UNION-LEVEL REPORT

EU legal migration law and policy is fragmented and economically driven, failing to reflect the lived realities and evolving statuses of non-EU nationals, which results in structural discrimination and contradicts the EU's own fundamental rights and legal standards.



### HONG KONG/MAINLAND CHINA REPORT

While European migration policies differentiate between Hong Kong people and mainland Chinese mainly in short-term mobility and tourism, long-term migration policies (e.g., for work, study, or family reunification) show little distinction, reflecting a convergence in how the two groups are treated by the six selected EU countries.



### JAPAN REPORT

Focusing on the evolving nature of Japanese emigration from state-led to individually and corporately driven mobility, this report highlights how Japanese aspiring re/migrants face diverse entry conditions across six EU countries, shaped by differing socio-legal contexts and policy frameworks in key migration areas.



### PHILIPPINES REPORT

Filipino migration to Europe is shaped by origin-country policies promoting legal departure and destination-country visa regimes, where long-term visas allow some status flexibility but short-term visas do not, highlighting the need for migration policies to better reflect migrants' aspirations, behaviour, and the broader impacts on origin countries.



### THAILAND REPORT

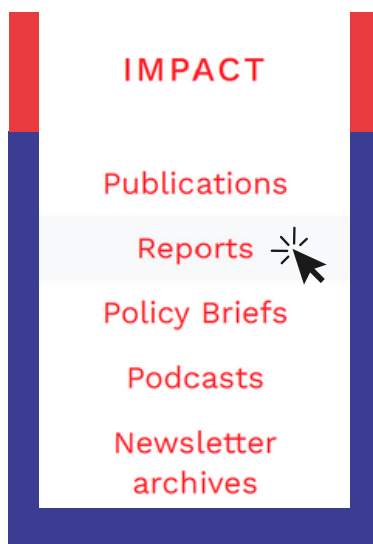
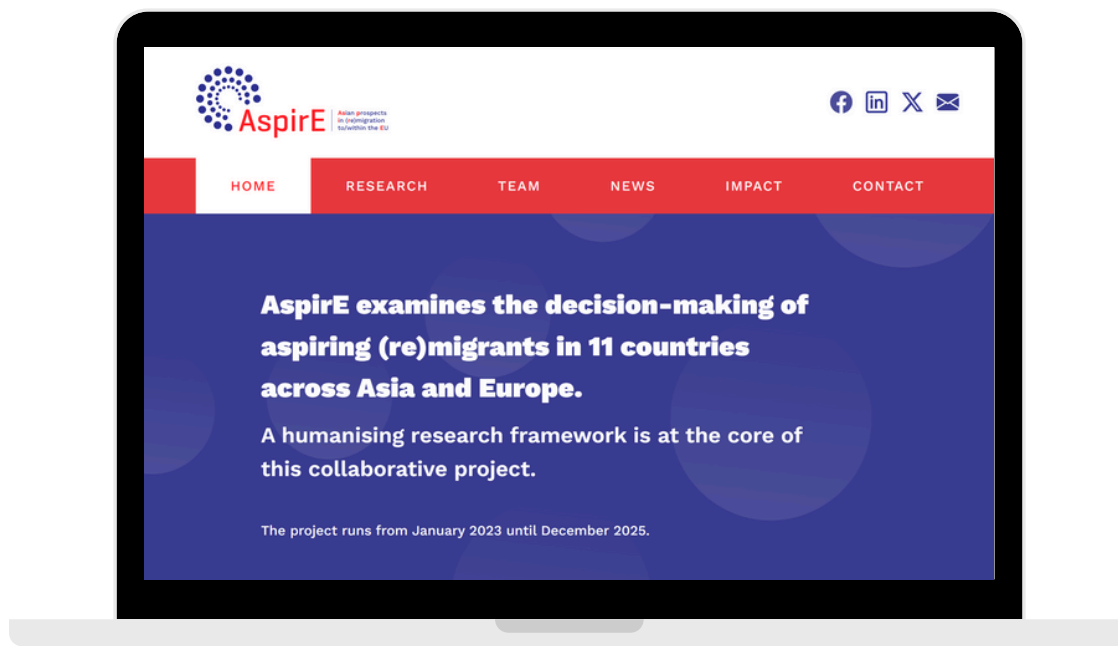
Thai nationals face strict entry restrictions across the six EU countries studied. Short-term visitors are subject to limited stays and financial proof requirements, whereas students, highly skilled workers, and employees in selected occupations are granted longer-term opportunities often linked to labour market needs. Family reunification is allowed under conditions of legally recognised and stable relationships.



### VIETNAM REPORT

Vietnamese migration to the six EU countries studied varies according to differing visa and mobility policies that partially reflect aspiring migrants' behaviour, highlighting policy gaps and data deficiencies, while emphasising the growing importance of recruiting Vietnamese labour amid the EU's aging populations and changing migration dynamics.

# RESOURCES ACCESS



## USE THIS IF

You work with (aspiring) re/migrants and try to navigate legal status across borders, you support advocacy around labour rights, or you are researching and/or are interesting in mobility policies in the European and Asian contexts.

# POLICY BRIEFS FROM THE FIELD

The AspirE project produced a series of topical policy briefs which offer policymakers accessible, research-based insights into the complex realities of migration aspirations and governance in Europe.

Drawing on qualitative data and mix methods of analysis, the briefs unveil how migrants are positioned within EU policies on human spatial mobility, how these policies shape the decision-making of aspiring migrants, and the broader challenges they pose for current (im)mobility regulations.

Each brief is grounded in specific strands of the AspirE project's empirical work:

- Briefs 1 and 2 stem from Work Package 2, based on a comprehensive analysis of migration policy content and expert interviews.
- Briefs 3 and 4 build on Work Package 3, combining insights from in-depth interviews with migrants and social network mapping.
- Briefs 5 and 6 are derived from Work Package 4, which centres on migrant-produced video diaries and focus-group discussions.



The value of these policy briefs lies not only in the richness of the empirical data they draw from, but also in the rigorous review process they underwent. Each brief was critically reviewed by leading experts in migration studies, including university professors and members of prominent think tanks, ensuring the accuracy, relevance, and clarity of the insights presented. This collaborative validation enhances the credibility of the briefs and reinforces their potential to inform evidence-based policymaking that reflects both academic knowledge and real-world complexities.

Together, these briefs offer a dynamic and layered understanding of migration governance in Europe, with the aim of informing more humane, responsive, and effective policy design.

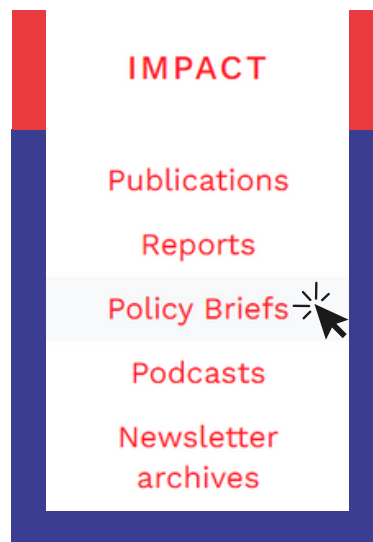
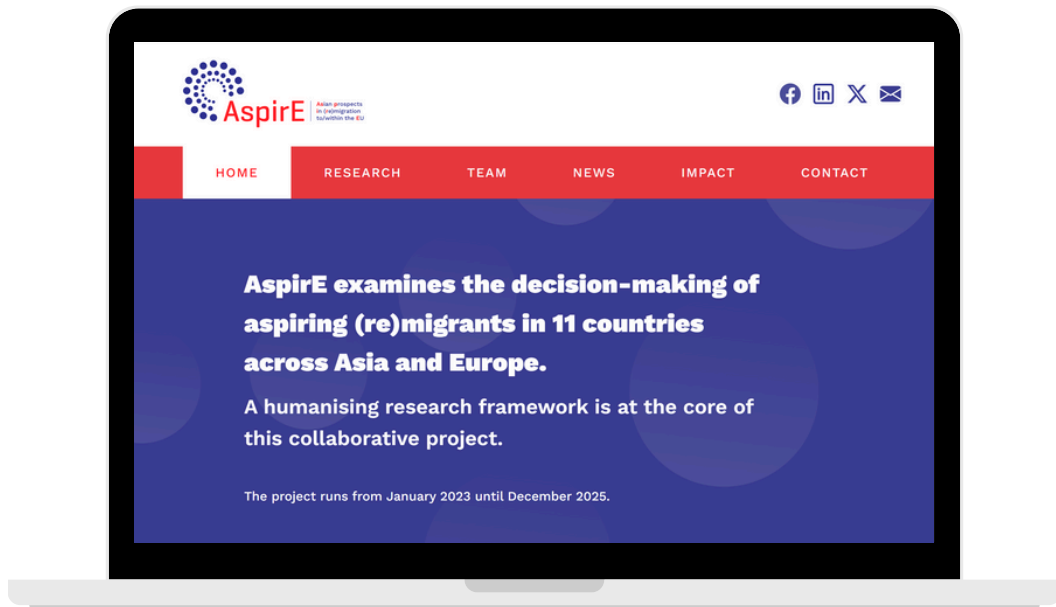
### **WHY THIS MATTERS**

Understanding how EU migration policies are perceived and experienced by aspiring migrants is crucial for designing fair and effective governance frameworks. These policy briefs matter because they highlight the gaps between policy intent and on-the-ground realities, revealing how regulations can unintentionally constrain or redirect human mobility. By centring the perspectives of both policymakers and migrants, the briefs offer evidence to support more nuanced, inclusive, and responsive migration policies in Europe.

### **USE THIS IF**

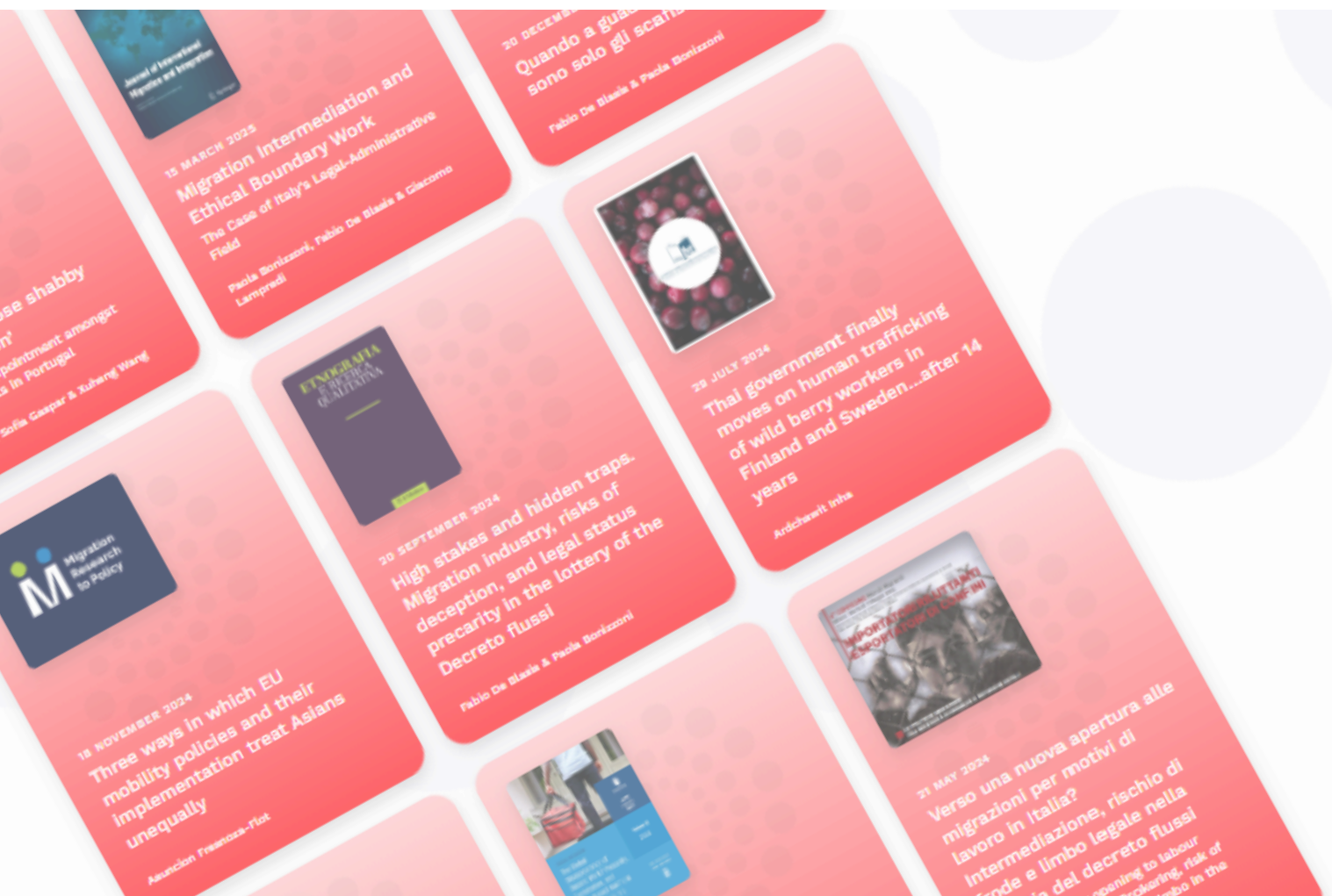
You are a policymaker, advisor, or practitioner seeking concise, research-informed guidance on EU migration policies. These briefs are especially useful if you want to understand how current regulations impact aspiring re/migrants' choices, explore the unintended effects of mobility governance, or identify opportunities for more inclusive and responsive policy design.

# RESOURCES ACCESS

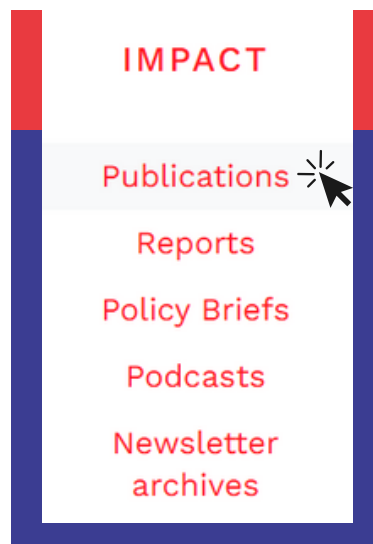
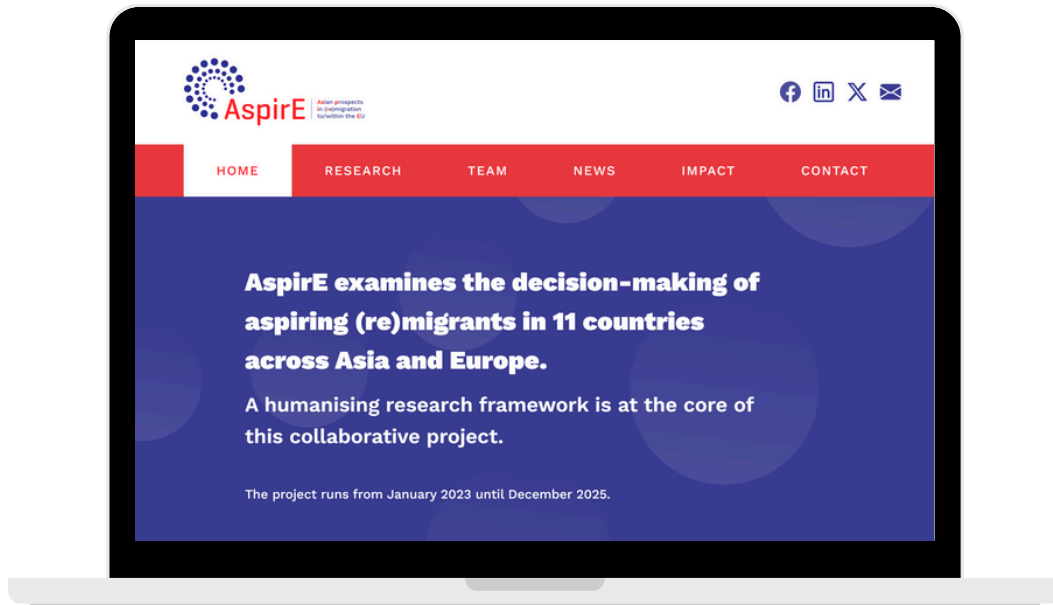


# ACADEMIC OUTPUTS

The scientific outputs of the AspirE project are disseminated through a series of peer-reviewed articles and book chapters published in leading academic journals and by respected publication houses. These publications contribute to advancing theoretical and empirical understandings of migration aspirations, mobility governance, and the lived experiences of (im)mobility across Europe and Asia. By engaging with disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, and political science, the AspirE research team ensures that its findings are accessible to both scholarly communities and interdisciplinary audiences through, mostly, open-access publications.



# RESOURCES ACCESS



## USE THIS IF

You are a researcher, student, or academic interested in cutting-edge studies on migration, mobility, and governance. These publications offer in-depth theoretical insights and empirical findings that can support your own research, teaching, or critical engagement with migration-related issues.

# LISTENING TO MIGRATION

AspirE's podcast series presents an accessible and engaging way to delve into the themes and stories at the heart of the project. Through conversations with team members and invited experts, each episode explores different dimensions of migration from Asia to Europe.

The series complements AspirE's written outputs by offering thoughtful reflections and thematic discussions in an audio format that brings the human aspects of AspirE's work to life.



The podcast series is structured around thematic episodes that reflect key aspects of the AspirE project, such as transnational mobility, aspirations, and inclusion. The episodes feature project researchers presenting core findings. The format is designed to be both informative and reflective, offering listeners a clear sense of the project's scope.

The podcast was developed as part of our broader commitment to making research more approachable and multidimensional. It was produced collaboratively by members of the AspirE team, drawing on their fieldwork, data analysis, and communication expertise. By choosing audio as a medium, the aim is to convey tone, emotion, and context in ways that written reports often cannot, helping listeners connect more directly with the content and the people behind the data.

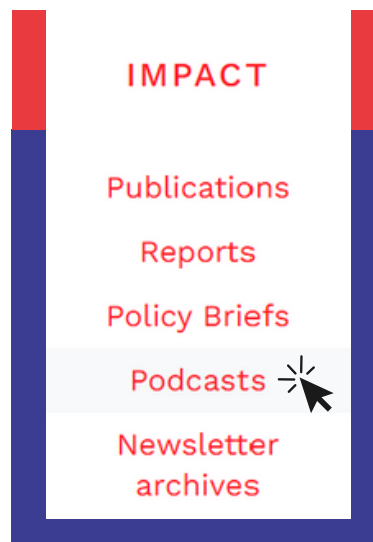
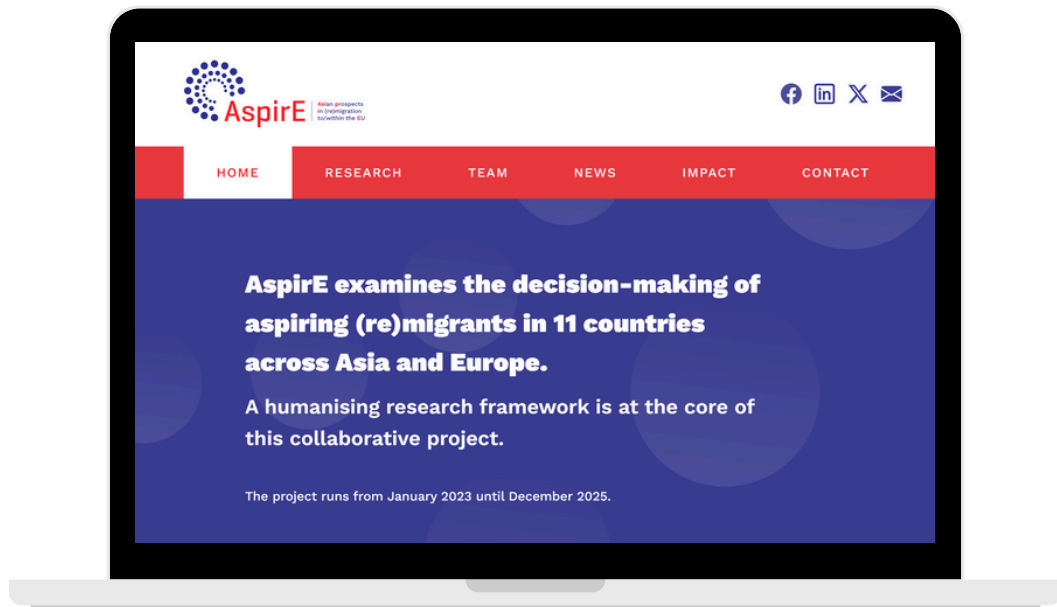
### **WHY THIS MATTERS**

The podcast series transforms complex research findings into a format that is easy to access and understand. By presenting results through spoken word, it broadens the reach of the AspirE project and supports the dissemination of knowledge beyond academic circles. This matters because making research more publicly available encourages wider reflection on migration and fosters dialogue grounded in evidence and lived experiences.

### **USE THIS IF**

You are looking for a concise and accessible way to engage with the main findings of the AspirE project. Each episode offers an oral presentation of key insights drawn from this research, making it a useful entry point for understanding the project's scope, themes, and outcomes without having to read through extensive reports or academic texts.

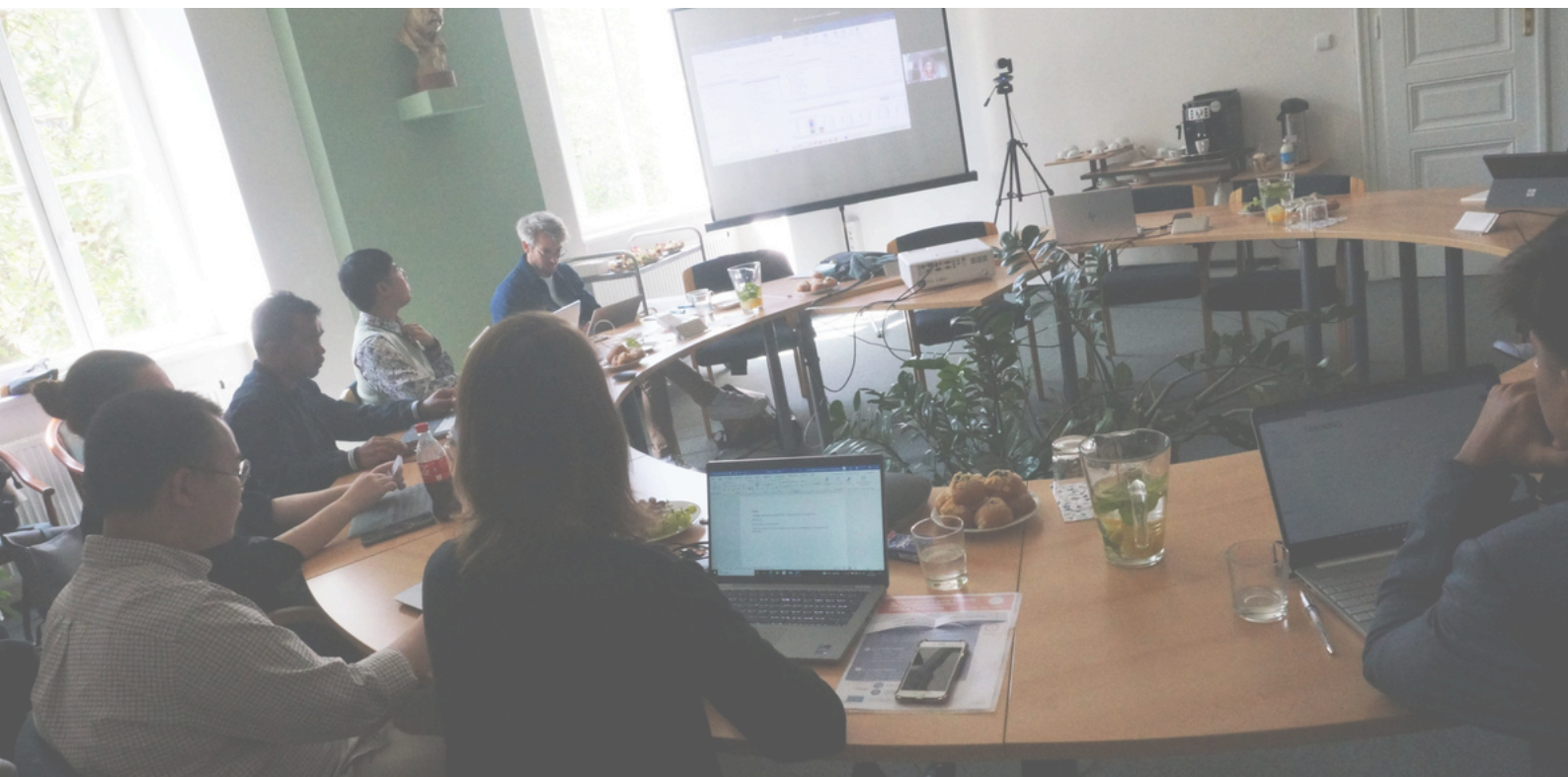
# RESOURCES ACCESS



# CAPACITY BUILDING

As part of AspirE's commitment to mutual learning, ethical engagement, and long-term impact, a series of training sessions were organised and aimed at strengthening research capacities across the project team and among partners. These sessions covered a range of topics central to AspirE's work, including ethics, working with social network mapping tools, open data and open science, as well as hands-on training in qualitative data analysis software to help early career researchers effectively organise and manage their research data.

These trainings were designed to strengthen research skills, encourage interdisciplinary exchange, and promote ethical and reflexive practices when working with migrant communities. Each training was led by international professionals who brought expertise from a wide range of fields. Their diverse perspectives enriched the learning environment and helped ground the team's practices in both academic rigor and lived experience.



# ACTIVITIES ORGANISED

While the primary audience for these trainings was early-career researchers within the AspirE team, the trainings were designed to support learning and exchange across all levels of the project.



01

## **ETHICS TRAINING**

This online training, led by international experts in research ethics and migration studies, focused on navigating complex ethical dilemmas in migration research. Participants explored topics such as informed consent, confidentiality, power dynamics, and the ethics of co-producing knowledge with (aspiring) participants. Through case-based discussions and interactive exercises, the training equipped early-career researchers with practical guidelines for conducting ethically sound, respectful, and accountable fieldwork and data collection.



02

## **QUALITATIVE AND SOCIAL NETWORK MAPPING TOOLS TRAINING**

This hybrid session introduced AspirE team members to key digital tools for qualitative data analysis and social network mapping. Facilitated by specialists with extensive experience in the field, the training combined technical demonstrations with hands-on exercises, helping participants become familiar with software such as NVivo, ATLAS.ti, and Network Canvas. The sessions aimed to strengthen analytical capacities across the project and support consistent, methodologically sound approaches to managing and interpreting qualitative data.



03

## OPEN DATA TRAINING

This training explored the complexities and responsibilities of open data practices within social science research. Framed around the EU's emphasis on open science as a core value, the training addressed the practical and ethical dimensions of working with personal and sensitive data. Participants examined how to share qualitative data safely via trusted repositories, while also reflecting on issues of trust, responsibility, and power in the context of open research. The training encouraged critical engagement with open science principles, particularly in relation to protecting research participants and ensuring ethical data stewardship.



04

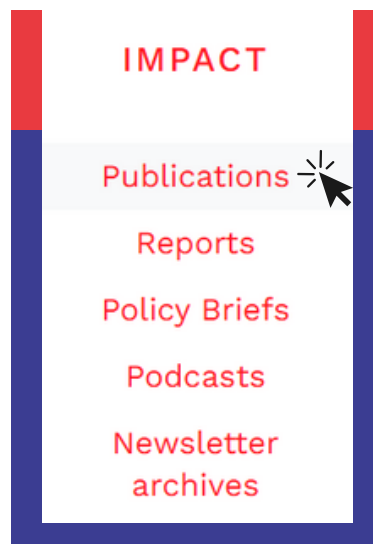
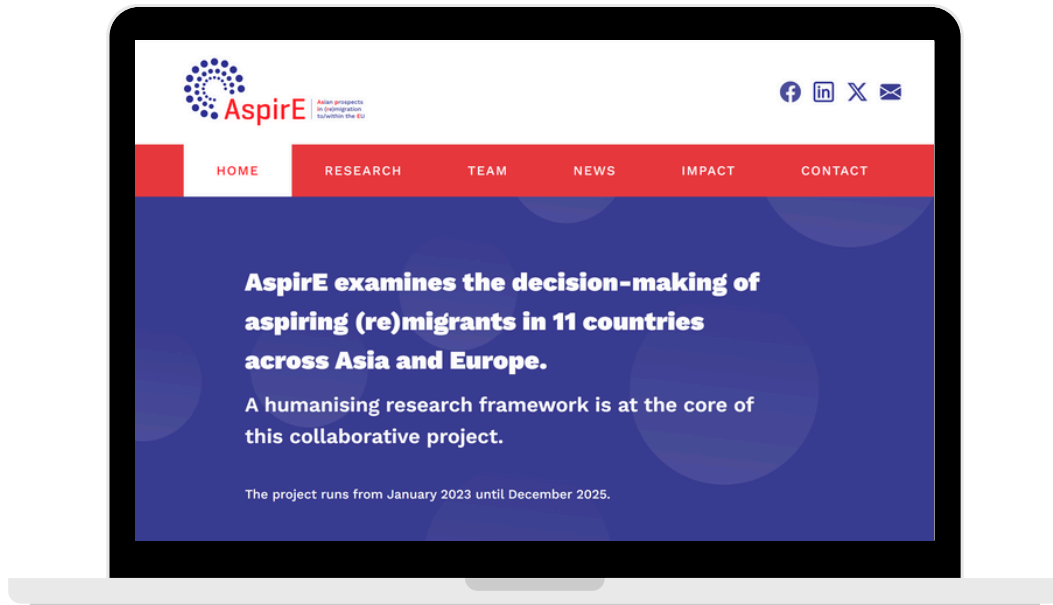
## TRAINING CURRICULUM FOR EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS

As part of a final training effort, AspirE is developing a dedicated training curriculum tailored for early-career researchers working in migration studies. This curriculum serves as a lasting capacity-building resource beyond the project's lifespan.

### WHY THIS MATTERS

Building research capacity is essential for fostering ethical, reflexive, and methodologically sound work, especially in sensitive fields like migration studies. While the AspirE trainings were initially designed to support and equip the project's own team members, particularly early-career researchers, the ambition extended beyond internal development. AspirE's final training was opened to the public, creating space for broader dialogue and knowledge exchange. As a key output, a dedicated training curriculum will be published on the AspirE website to ensure that the tools, insights, and approaches developed within the project continue to benefit others working in this field.

# RESOURCES ACCESS



## USE THIS IF

You are an early-career researcher or practitioner seeking to deepen your methodological skills and ethical awareness in migration research. While the trainings have already taken place, the publicly available training curriculum provides a valuable resource for educators aiming to build capacity when engaging with migration studies.

Aspire – Asian prospects in (re)migration to/within the EU – is a three-year research project (2023-2025) that examines the decision making of aspiring (re)migrants from selected Southeast and East Asian countries (China, Japan, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam) to and within selected EU member countries (Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Italy and Portugal).

### **Consortium partners:**

Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB), Belgium (**coordinator**)  
The Education University of Hong Kong, China  
Masarykova univerzita, Czech Republic  
Tampere University, Finland  
Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, Germany  
Università degli Studi di Milano (UniMi), Italy  
Waseda University, Japan  
Scalabrini Migration Center Inc., Philippines  
Iscte - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Portugal  
Mahidol University, Thailand  
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