

In the context of the major threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic on the health security of all individuals, the vulnerable situation of refugees and asylum seekers was aggravated. In Europe, while the management of irregular migrants during the pandemic was discussed and decided upon by national governments, the consequences were felt at the local level. Given the local turn within the multi-level governance framework in the field of migration, this paper asks the following research question: how have European cities ensured the health security of refugees and asylum seekers during COVID-19? It hypothesises that the urban regime system within the MLG framework explains the way in which local governments develop responses aimed at protecting the health security of irregular migrants during the pandemic. By employing the Narrative Policy Framework, the paper compares policies developed by local governments in Bristol, Frankfurt and Timișoara regarding health security and irregular migration during the period March 2020 to March 2022. It finds that both the vertical (local government - national government) and horizontal (local government - civil society) relationships within the multi-level governance framework influence local policies. In addition, the paper shows that coordination between the national and local governments leads to increased health security for irregular migrants during the pandemic, and identifies a "North-Western European" model based on the similarities recognized in the case of Bristol and Frankfurt. Thus, this paper underlines the salience of urban governance within the MLG framework for the insurance of health security of irregular migrants during a global health crisis.