



How Civil Society Organisations Assist Refugees and Migrants in the EU:

Successful experiences and promising practices from the 2016 EESC Civil Society Prize



European Economic and Social Committee

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Foreword



Georges Dassis
President of the EESC

The humanitarian refugee crisis has led to heated debates at political level and in the media, as well as to deep concerns among the European public at large. But it has also shaken the foundations of the European Union in unexpected ways and put at stake on the one hand the legitimacy of the Union's policies in terms of its common border, asylum and migration, and on the other hand its commitment to the values enshrined in the Treaties.

The most visible responses to this crisis were those led by fear, prejudice, xenophobia or racism from certain EU governments and populist political parties. This has overshadowed the numerous actions, initiatives and projects carried out by civil society and individual citizens to help refugees and immigrants. These actions have focused on delivering the values which make us 'European': solidarity, human rights protection and humanitarian assistance.

Indeed, there is a positive and profoundly inspiring side to the European refugee crisis which has not received sufficient attention. The EESC recognised the existence of many bottom-up initiatives by civil society organisations and European citizens who have played a decisive and visible role in filling the protection and integration gaps left by EU and national policies, for example by offering asylum seekers a place to stay, food, clothing, healthcare or education.

With this in mind, the 2016 EESC Civil Society Prize rewarded those civil society organisations and individuals who have taken up the challenge of helping asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants to have access to their rights, protection and socio-economic inclusion in line with European values of humanity and solidarity.

Throughout history, migrants have actively contributed to the economic, social and cultural development of European societies. Now, with an ageing European population, migrants' skills, energy and determination are much needed to ensure our societies continue to flourish.

It is time to stop thinking in terms of "us" versus "them" and focus on ensuring more inclusive and democratic societies. EU Member States and the European institutions must assume their responsibilities towards asylum seekers, immigrants and refugees in line with the Treaties. They must also continue to support the work of civil society actors and not criminalise their humanitarian assistance actions.

The EESC is the only EU body that represents the interests of all sectors of civil society. One of its main tasks is to raise awareness of the vital place of civil society organisations in a healthy, democratic and pluralistic society and the EESC Civil Society Prize is one way of doing so. This publication on the 2016 Civil Society Prize puts the spotlight on civil society organisations, social partners and volunteers who are actively working to integrate migrants into the labour market and society at large, and to defend fundamental human rights, non-discrimination and human dignity.

Selecting the 5 winning projects was difficult. This was done according to the criteria set, but all who work in this area are winners. That is why I also awarded an honorary price to Dr Bartolo from Lampedusa during the Committee's event in Rome on the Future of Europe, marking the 60 years since the signing of the Treaty of Rome.

Civil society organisations have played a vital role in the recent migration crisis – civil mobilisation has the force to change the course of history.

The EESC Civil Society Prize 2016

Migration and Asylum: Improving Lives and Fostering Integration

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) is an institutional consultative body established by the 1957 Treaty of Rome. It brings together 350 members from across the European Union (EU). The EESC represents the various economic and social components of organised civil society. It constitutes the bridge between the EU and organised civil society.

The EESC Civil Society Prize was created in 2006.¹ It aims at rewarding and encouraging initiatives and achievements by civil society actors and individuals in the promotion of EU identity and European integration. The 2015-2016 European refugee crisis brought about profound challenges for the EU. The crisis left wide open the unfinished components and deficits associated with its external borders, migration and asylum policies.

The 2016 EESC Civil Society Prize² sought to raise awareness and reward initiatives implemented by civil society actors aimed at delivering solidarity and humanitarian assistance, improving the lives and rights of refugees and migrants and fostering their socio-economic inclusion in the EU. The aim was to reward the best human solidarity in Europe as well as initiatives that demonstrated a real impact on the ground, playing an inspiring role in improving the rights and lives of migrants and fostering their integration into society.

Civil society has demonstrated a strong commitment, facilitating first reception upon arrival, saving lives at sea, ensuring access to social services, fundamental rights and international protection and promoting long-term integration. The prize aimed at highlighting their contribution to the values underpinning European integration.

The 2016 Civil Society Prize placed special emphasis on those initiatives fulfilling the criteria of sustainability, participation and innovation. Equally relevant was the significance of their contribution to promoting the EU values enshrined in the EU Treaties and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

This publication provides a general overview of the Civil Society Prize and presents the winners, as well as a selection of initiatives put forward by other candidates. The initiatives have been grouped under eight themes and areas of intervention. At least one initiative is highlighted under each theme. The initiatives have been selected, with the consent of the respective organisations, in order to provide an illustration of the themes, highlights and results. They are not aimed at providing an exhaustive picture of all candidates and submissions. The publication was written by Prof Sergio Carrera and Mr Ngo Chun Luk (Centre for European Policy Studies, CEPS).

¹ For more information refer to www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.civilsocietyprize

² See <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-civil-society-prize-2016>

The Five Winning Projects

Solidarity and EU Values in Action

The 2016 Civil Society Prize received a total of 284 applications representing 26 EU Member States. This constituted the highest level of participation since the launch of the EESC Civil Society Prize in 2006. The five prizes were awarded to the following civil society actors and individuals: Artemisszió Foundation; Dionysis Arvanitakis; Iliaktida AMKE; SOS Mediterranee; and SOS Racismo Gipuzkoa Gipuzkoako (SOS Arrazakeria).

These five initiatives were considered to best match the criteria and evaluation standards of sustainability, participation and innovation. The geographical coverage of the initiatives spanned four EU Member States, i.e. Greece, Hungary, Spain and Germany. One of them is an association comprising members from Germany, Italy and France and their actions take place in the Central Mediterranean Sea in cooperation with the Italian authorities.

Artemisszió Foundation (Hungary) provides assistance programmes for migrants and refugees, with activities aimed at encouraging the social integration of these groups (through language, job skills and civil rights training sessions).

Artemisszió is currently running the project “Building Bridges”. The core of the programme is based on a system of mentorship in which a Hungarian or a migrant volunteer accompanies a migrant or a refugee for a limited period, guiding him/her through everyday life. The goal will be to transform “Building Bridges” into a permanent and sustainable project entitled “Mira Community in Hungary”.



Iliaktida AMKE (Greece) is a non-profit organisation based in Lesbos. It helps to cover the basic needs of refugees, migrants and their families through the work of volunteers. It provides social, legal, medical and psychological support to families who have lost their children at sea, devastated parents, exhausted elderly people in wheelchairs and unaccompanied minors who have seen their homes being destroyed.

Its main concern and goal has been to get refugees out of camps and into local communities. Iliaktida AMKE has run local guesthouses and apartments where refugees can start a new daily routine, do their shopping, cook their meals, enjoy local cultural activities, meet the locals and develop friendly relationships with them.





SOS Mediterranee (Germany) has played a role in rescuing more than 5 400 refugees from the risk of drowning in the Mediterranean Sea since it began working in February 2016. The civil society organisation operates with its partner, Médecins Sans Frontières, on the MS Aquarius between Sicily, Lampedusa and Libya, one of the world's most dangerous and popular migratory routes, to complement and support rescue and search operations from Italy, the EU and other NGOs. The European network of German, French and Italian volunteers and members aims to amplify the voices of refugees to promote mutual understanding.



SOS Racismo Gipuzkoa Gipuzkoako (SOS Arrazakeria) is a branch of SOS Racismo located in San Sebastián founded in 1993 to combat racism, intolerance and xenophobia. The "Next door family" project is based on an idea that is very simple, though difficult to put into practice: a native household welcomes a migrant family into their home for a meal so that they can talk and have a chance to learn more about each other and become real neighbours.



Dionysis Arvanitakis bakes over 100 kg of bread a day for refugees in Kos. The 77-year-old baker fills his truck and distributes his fresh bread to the hopeless men, women and children who land in Kos, soaked and exhausted. He was one of the first to assist the refugees who were arriving by hundreds on the island every day. His action inspired colleagues, citizens, hoteliers and many more to follow his example.

Projects and Initiatives

General Overview

The 284 initiatives which were entered for the 2016 Civil Society Prize competition provide an inspiring set of experiences and successful practices relating to the role of civil society actors and individuals in providing humanitarian assistance, social solidarity and the socio-economic inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in the EU.

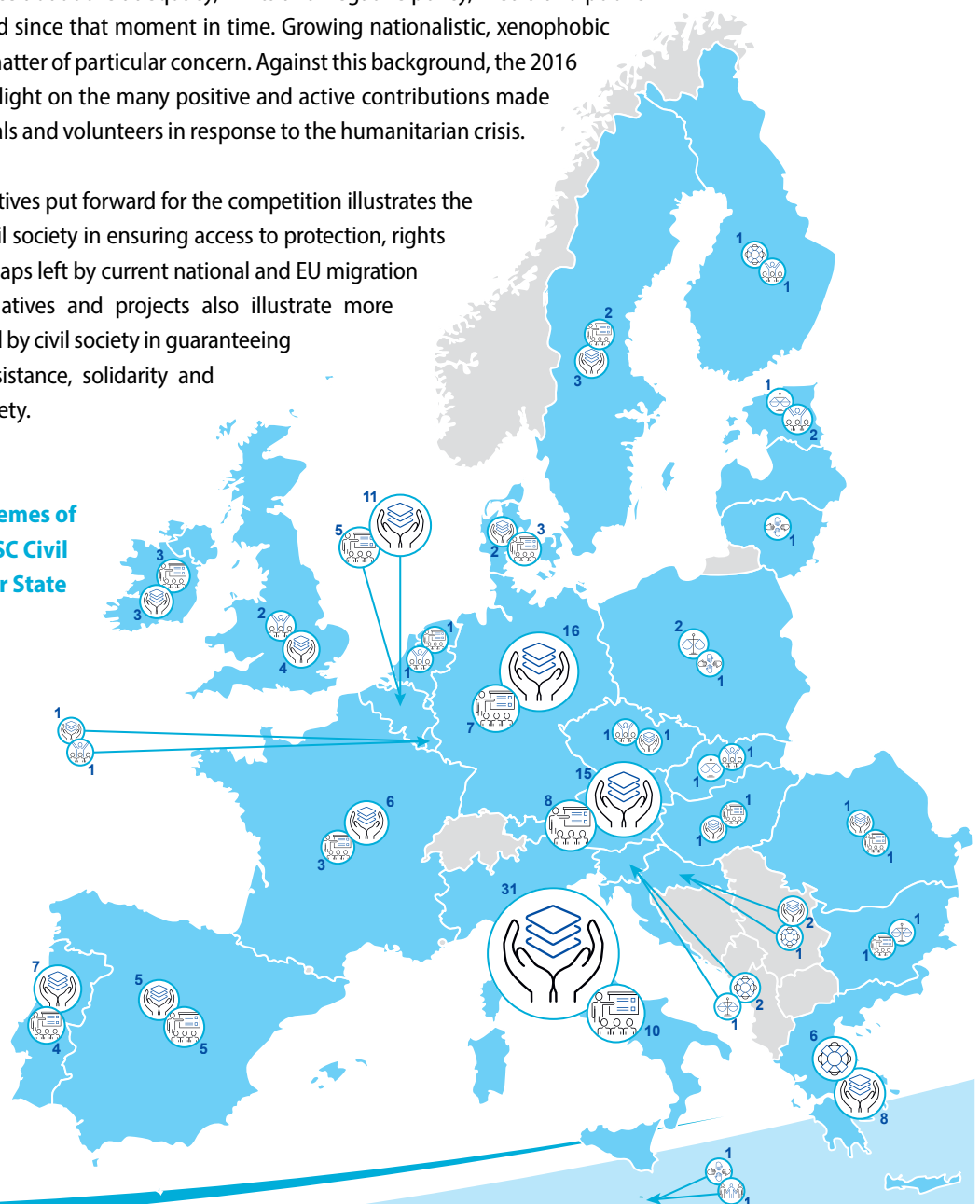
The 2016 Civil Society Prize took place in a period during which the EU was still directly confronting the European refugee humanitarian crisis. A substantial increase in the number of asylum seekers seeking international protection entering via the Eastern and Central Mediterranean brought about profound challenges for the Union's legitimacy and its common borders, migration and asylum policies.

Much discussion has taken place about the adequacy, limits and negative policy, media and public reactions that have proliferated since that moment in time. Growing nationalistic, xenophobic and racist trends have been a matter of particular concern. Against this background, the 2016 Civil Society Prize put the spotlight on the many positive and active contributions made by civil society actors, individuals and volunteers in response to the humanitarian crisis.

A general overview of the initiatives put forward for the competition illustrates the fundamental role played by civil society in ensuring access to protection, rights and services, and in filling the gaps left by current national and EU migration and asylum policies. The initiatives and projects also illustrate more generally the central role played by civil society in guaranteeing the chain of humanitarian assistance, solidarity and inclusion, as well as trust in society.

Map showing the top two themes of submissions for the 2016 EESC Civil Society Prize in each Member State

- Legend:**
-  Emergency relief, first reception and rescue at sea
 -  Legal advice and access to administrative procedures
 -  Access to services, protection and integration
 -  Non-discrimination and fundamental rights
 -  Awareness-raising, information campaigns and transparency
 -  Mutual understanding, inclusion and participation
 -  Training, education, information and mentoring



The 2016 Civil Society Prize has shown their far-reaching role in fostering socio-economic inclusion, welcoming societies and mutual understanding, as well as long-term integration. The actions reflect the existence of numerous projects and positive mobilisation trends led by civil society organisations, the social partners and volunteers in facilitating welcoming societies, combating discrimination and racism and ensuring respect for EU values.

Through these awards, the EESC aimed at helping the selected organisations, which often do not have access to, or cannot rely on, government funds, to secure the resources they need to carry on and scale up their projects. It also hopes to see them replicated in other European countries and even beyond, as examples of best practices for others to consider.

A total of 284 applications were received, out of which 271 were eligible. The applications came from all EU Member States except Cyprus and Latvia. The highest volume of applications was received from individuals and organisations based in Italy (61), followed by Austria (33), Germany (29), Belgium (24), Greece (15) and Spain (14).

Figure 1: Total Number of Actions by EU Member State

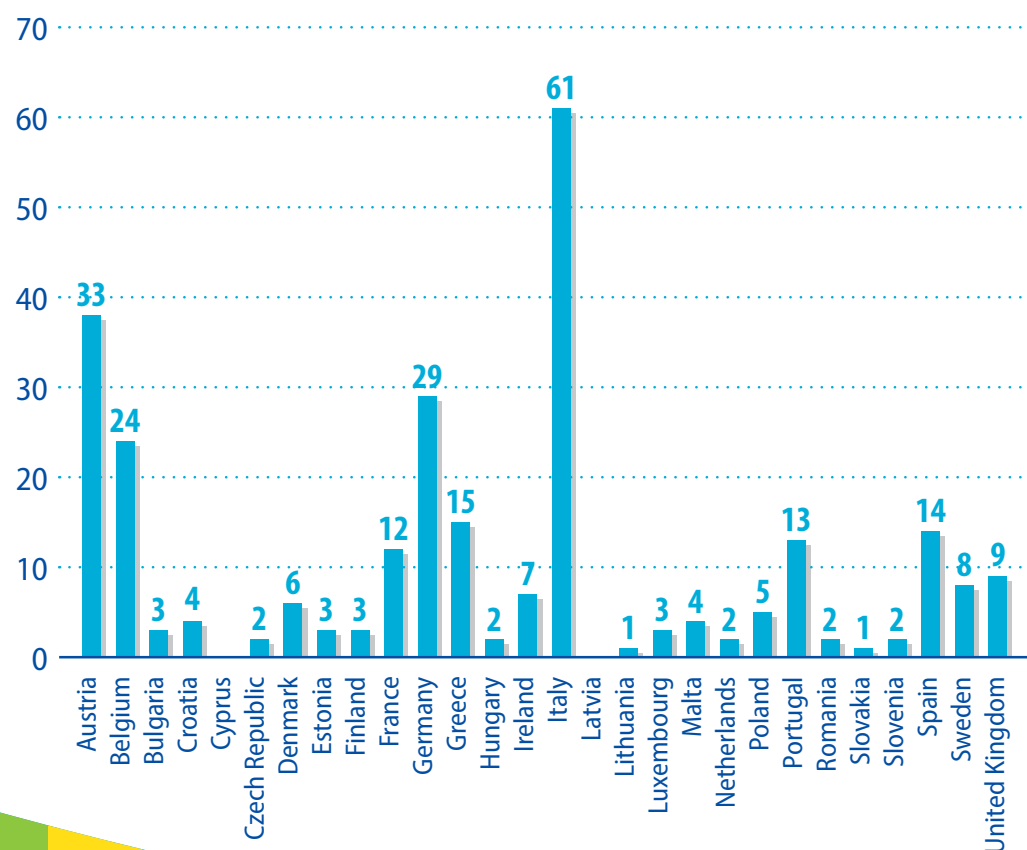


Figure 2: Providing Solidarity, Humanitarian Assistance and Inclusion to Migrants and Refugees – eight stages of intervention

From the total of 271 applications accepted for evaluation, 29 were submitted by individuals. The rest were put forward by civil society actors including: non-governmental organisations, social partners and labour market players, organisations representing social and economic players (not social partners in the strict sense), community-based organisations and religious communities.

There were several private or citizen-led initiatives based on volunteer actions aimed at filling in gaps in protection and access to services and rights.

The actions covered a wide-range of general themes and areas of intervention (see figures 2 and 3). These included first aid and relief in front-line states and border regions, as well as search and rescue for people in distress in the Mediterranean Sea; assistance in legal and administrative procedures; facilitating access to basic social services and goods, international protection and the longer-term socio-economic inclusion of migrants and refugees; actions against discrimination, racism, xenophobia and safeguarding fundamental rights; awareness-raising campaigns and actions fostering mutual understanding with receiving societies; training, education and mentoring, as well as projects focused on sharing information relating to promising practices.

The majority of actions put forward dealt with training, education, information provision and mentoring programmes (about 70 initiatives). This was followed by actions dealing with access to services, international protection and integration (about 60 projects).

Next came emergency relief and rescue at sea (40) and projects dealing with mutual understanding and participation between migrants and receiving societies (33). 25 actions and projects focused on legal assistance and access to administrative procedures and 20 covered training, education, information and mentoring. In some cases, one action or project included or covered more than one of these themes or areas of intervention.

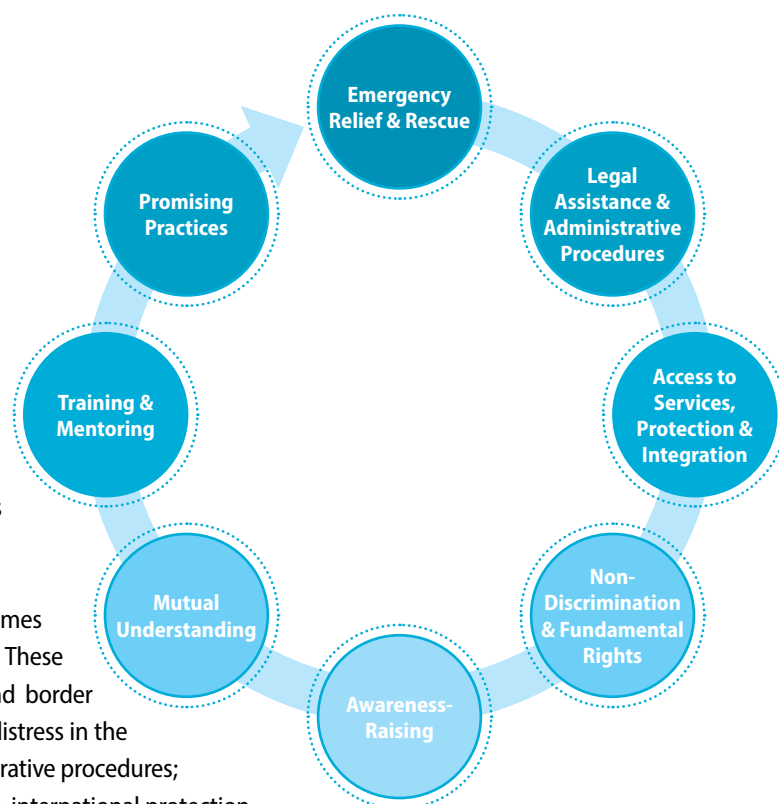
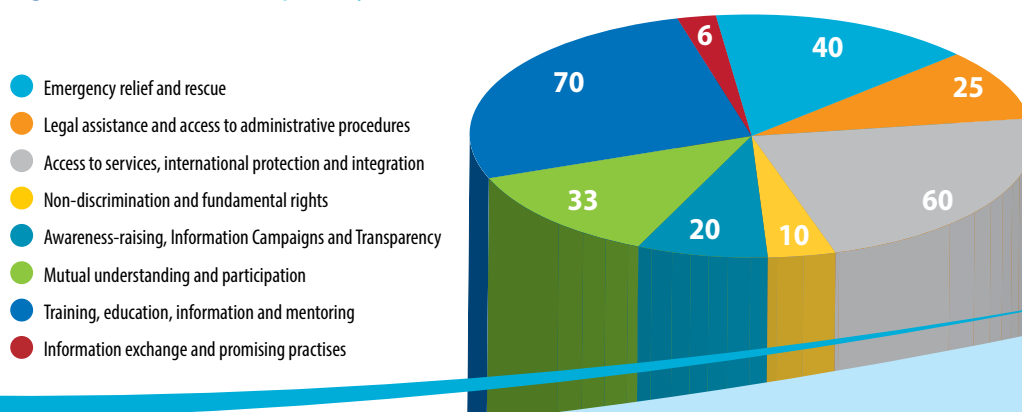
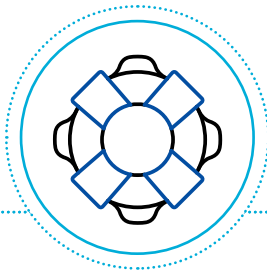


Figure 3: Actions and Projects by Theme





Projects and Initiatives

Themes, Highlights and Results

1. Emergency relief, first reception and rescue at sea

THE MODEL OF NAGU (FI)

The Model of Nagu is an initiative run by an informal group of citizens in Nagu. These *friends of refugees in Nagu* aim to create a decent everyday life for refugees in Nagu by providing clothing and sanitary accessories to refugees upon arrival and integrating them into existing activities in Nagu. They also provide private housing to refugees following the closure of the reception unit in April 2015.

Several actions mainly covered emergency relief and first reception of asylum seekers, migrants and refugees upon arrival. They also included examples of support activities including first relief and aid in border and transit regions. These projects constitute a visible response to the 2015-2016 refugee crisis in countries like Greece, Italy and Hungary, as well as in other EU countries of transit and destination in central and northern Europe such as Austria, Belgium, Germany or Finland.

Specific actions consisted of first aid activities in reception camps, transit zones and emergency reception centres or informal settlements. The services provided covered e.g. medical consultations and treatment, psychological-social counselling and support, the provision of means of subsistence such as food, accommodation (shelters and tents), blankets and clothing, etc.



There were many examples of initiatives led by non-formalised grass-roots collectives, as well as by volunteers and citizens who mobilised on their own initiative in response to the European refugee crisis in order to provide first reception conditions and humanitarian assistance, as well as search and rescue services for people in distress at sea in the Mediterranean.

TASK-FORCE FÜR FLÜCHTLINGSHILFE GELSENKIRCHEN (DE)

The Task-Force für Flüchtlingshilfe Gelsenkirchen is an initiative that provides assistance to refugees arriving in Gelsenkirchen from the moment of their arrival. It provides them with basic German language courses, help with administrative matters, etc.

www.fluechtlingshilfe-gelsenkirchen.de

ARE YOU SYRIOUS? (HR)

Zemljani – Are you Syrious is an initiative offering, inter alia, first-response assistance and immediate relief to refugees and migrants. *Are you Syrious* deploys volunteers in Croatia, Slovenia, Italy, Greece, Serbia, France, Hungary and Syria. One of its innovative activities is its use of social media to produce and publish a daily digest of non-censored information from the field.

www.facebook.com/areyousyrious/



2. Legal advice and access to administrative procedures

The provision of basic information to asylum seekers and migrants upon arrival concerning legal issues and administrative procedures was reflected in several actions under the EESC 2016 Civil Society call. These related to issues such as advising and answering questions about asylum procedures and/or referring them to a lawyer or organisations that could provide more specific assistance.

Other examples included lawyers' associations in specific countries providing pro bono legal counselling to asylum seekers and migrants – information, practical support, and tailored advice on asylum procedures.

Some projects aimed at securing legal counselling and free assistance for first arrivals and help with completing forms and administrative work, for instance for accessing the national healthcare system or other basic social and reception services.



One project consisted in a network of information centres for third country workers and covered legal counselling, information on health, education, mobility, return and integration policies, as well as awareness-raising initiatives to combat xenophobia.

There were actions tailored to offering legal assistance and support to specific categories of migrants such as refugee women or victims of trafficking.

XARXA D'OFICINES DEL CITE (ES)

The Network of Information Centres for Third-Country Workers (CITE) is an initiative supported by the Catalan branch of the trade union CCOO, which provides information and assistance to immigrants on legislation concerning foreigners, healthcare, education and integration policies. It also provides legal counselling to third-country nationals on international mobility.

www.ccoo.cat/cite

STRONGER, WE STAND! (PT)

This initiative was run by the Portuguese Association for Victim Support (APAV). They provide shelter to female refugees and victims of human trafficking, and their children. APAV also provides them with language courses, skills training and individual support.

www.apav.pt

REFUGEE LAW CLINIC (IT)

The Refugee Law Clinic (RLC) is an initiative established by the International University College of Turin. The RLC prepares students, through experiential learning, to provide legal advice pro bono to asylum seekers. In this way, the RLC aims to train and create a new generation of socially responsible lawyers aware of the problems that asylum seekers face and capable of supporting their social and economic integration.



THUIS IN DE WERELD VAN DIVERSITEIT & MIGRATIE (BE)

ORBIT has developed many initiatives to support newcomers during their first stages of residence in Belgium under the motto "At home in a world of diversity & migration". Among their many initiatives, they provide refugees with support in the search for housing, encourage employers to give refugees and migrants a fair chance in employment opportunities, and bring together third-country nationals and host communities to foster mutual understanding.

www.orbitvzw.be

3. Access to services, protection and integration

A substantial number of initiatives and projects dealt with actions aimed at ensuring access to social services and international protection, as well as the longer-term integration into society of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.



Some projects involved securing access to housing (decent accommodation), healthcare, labour market inclusion, etc. Others focused on the provision of comprehensive longer-term assistance to each of these categories of migrants, including integration programmes for specific groups of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, such as unaccompanied minors and young adult refugees.

A key area of intervention was facilitating socio-economic inclusion in the labour market and other areas of life. For instance, some projects focused on providing individual support to refugees, in order to guarantee their access to social rights, accommodation and employment, as well as on removing obstacles and facilitating refugees' inclusion in society.



Several actions entailed the organisation and running of reception and integration centres. Some actions were dedicated to providing hostels for refugees. Some projects focused on migrant women's access to social services or covered the specific situation of unaccompanied and separated children, for example by providing accommodation, mentoring, education, etc.



One initiative implemented a multi-disciplinary approach in order to help migrants: social workers, psychologists, nurses, lawyers, doctors, psychiatrists from all over the country deliver services in the field of healthcare, education, social aid, integration, etc.

Some specific actions focused on victims of torture and human trafficking.

These involved, for example, providing psychological aid to the victims of torture and offering them opportunities for social rehabilitation. An example of this is the "Freedom from Torture" project, which provides health services to third-country nationals who are survivors of torture.

H2O – HOST TO OPTIONS (PT)

H2O – Host to Options is an initiative of the Portuguese Red Cross (PRC). Among other things, its Psychosocial Support Team offers assistance to people seeking international protection with emotional wounds due to disasters, armed conflict and other crisis situations. They also provide asylum seekers with an initial health assessment and offer asylum seekers a "safe & well" telephone call.

www.cruzvermelha.pt





4. Non-discrimination and fundamental rights

FREEDOM IN MIND (AT)

HEMAYAT is an Austrian non-profit organisation that provides medical, psychological and psychotherapeutic treatment to survivors of war and torture. They raise public awareness of the mental health issues and needs of highly traumatised migrants and refugees. They also provide support to refugees facing racism, discrimination, prejudice and xenophobia and take action to combat these phenomena.

www.hemayat.org

Non-discrimination and the safeguarding of fundamental rights were also key cross-cutting themes in several projects. There were initiatives aimed at combating racism, discrimination and prejudice against third-country nationals, promoting tolerance and facilitating an open-minded attitude towards refugees among young people. An example here is the “Hemayat” project, which aimed at combating xenophobia and racism.

Other projects covered fundamental rights and non-discrimination against specific groups. There were actions aimed at empowering women at risk of exclusion, in order to reduce inequality in the labour market and boost their opportunities for creating their own businesses.



Other initiatives focused on providing information and assistance to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans- and intersex asylum seekers, as well as services tailored to LGBTIQ asylum seekers and refugees during and after their asylum procedure. The rights of migrant workers in agriculture and combating exploitation and promoting workers’ rights were also a central focus of some of the proposed actions. These included actions fostering self-managed production in order to combat exploitation.





5. Awareness-raising, information campaigns and transparency

Several actions under the call were centred on initiatives aimed at tackling and eradicating prejudice towards refugees and foreigners by providing information, stimulating discussion and showing that immigration is an opportunity for society as a whole. An example is *iamnotarefugee.lu*, a platform to raise awareness and bring together refugees and host communities through storytelling.

There were also a few initiatives devoted to raising awareness about the realities of migrants and refugees in schools; other projects involved using stories, video interviews and short films by students to show the history of local emigration as a starting point for understanding migrants.

Other actions consisted of thematic workshops for young people in schools and social centres aimed at combating prejudice and debunking stereotypes about migrants and refugees. Other actions involved organising cultural evenings (movies) in shelters and centres hosting or bringing together migrants and asylum seekers.

Another case is InContro by Human Balance United, which presented an annual awareness programme (collecting food, debate on human rights and illegal hiring, a stand with a photo exhibition and testimonials of migrants, a brochure, posters in the streets and Refugee Day celebrations).

There were very interesting initiatives consisting of documentaries and films that aimed to raise awareness. The role of arts was also reflected in the applications. Events were held to raise awareness of refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers in the host society and to break down barriers and hostility towards third-country nationals.

I'M NOT A REFUGEE (LU)

iamnotarefugee.lu is an internet platform launched by Frédérique Buck in order to connect locals with refugees and to raise public awareness about the situation of refugees. The initiative focuses on giving refugees a voice, using prose and photography to present their narratives and stories.

iamnotarefugee.lu

THE MIGRANT ENCYCLOPEDIA (FR)

The *Migrant Encyclopedia* is an initiative by *L'âge de la tortue*, a French organisation which designs and develops visual and performing arts projects. The *Migrant Encyclopedia* initiative aims to paint a multi-faceted picture of migration through the life stories of 400 migrants in 8 cities across France, Spain, Portugal and Gibraltar.

agedelatortue.org/?page_id=2613





REAL LIFE SUPERHEROES (FI)

Real Life Superheroes is a photography exhibition by the Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters (FMS). The exhibition uses photographs and postcards of children in Helsinki reception centres in superhero costumes to show that asylum-seeking children are just like any other children.

NEVER ARRIVE (MT, Somalia)

Never Arrive is the autobiography of Farah Abdullahi Abdi, a Somali transgender refugee in Malta. It details her experiences as a refugee seeking protection in the EU and how she was received by the community. The initiative aims to challenge misconceptions about refugees in the mainstream media and has been used as a tool for integration in schools.

Other promising actions included Project Xchange, in which “ambassadors” present their own personal story in workshops to raise awareness and combat xenophobia, racism and discrimination, and the Real Life Superheroes photo exhibition and post-cards showing that asylum-seeker children are just like any other children.



Other projects consisted of theatre pieces and dialogues to raise awareness through spreading the testimonials of refugees. These were accompanied by art and music festivals covering the contribution of migrants and refugees to receiving societies. These projects included story telling initiatives involving people linked to migration and autobiography in order to bridge the gap between receiving communities and refugees by telling refugee stories honestly and giving the situation a human face.



6. Mutual understanding, inclusion and participation

An important cross-cutting thematic priority was fostering mutual understanding and participation in receiving societies and communities. Some actions involved community work to develop relations between asylum-seekers and neighbours, associations, institutions and the community as a whole. Others provided meeting places for exchanges between migrants and local populations.

Innovative initiatives included the development of games to spread information about migration, allowing players to experience the journeys that migrants make through interactive visualisations of the dangers, risks and difficulties, like Immigropoly or The Journey: Khartoum.

Several projects dealt with food and cooking as a way to foster a two-way process of inclusion and understanding between migrants and receiving societies. Specific actions allowed for the participation of young people and the design of youth development initiatives for migrant/refugee communities and ethnic minorities, in order to promote interaction and common understanding with local communities.

Some actions consisted of centres organising social and cultural activities for migrants, which also served as meeting points for exchanges and leisure activities between migrants and receiving societies and communities. There were also a number of actions implemented by young students to promote international understanding, tolerance and peace, or to bring the local community and migrants together by sharing meals and conversation or offering a welcome dinner to a refugee at their home.

REFUGEES GOT TALENT (BE)

The Refugees Got Talent (RGT) initiative aims to produce and disseminate works of art by refugees from various countries and to integrate the artists into the European artistic fabric. The initiative uses art as a medium for networking, disseminating the positive contribution of other cultures and challenging prejudices, stereotypes and mutual fears.

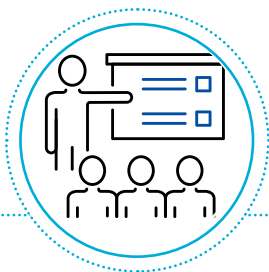
www.refugeesgottalent.com

YOUTH IN ACTION (IT)

Youth in Action was an initiative which connected students of UWC Adriatic and refugees. Using music as a medium for expressing uniqueness, Youth in Action allowed the students to learn from different cultures through different musical traditions and narratives. The goal of the initiative was to move away from the stereotypical figure of the “refugee” and re-discover the “human being”.

www.uwcad.it/Mondo2000





7. Training, education, information and mentoring

SYRIËRS GEZOND (NL)

Pharos, a Dutch centre of expertise on health(care) disparities between different groups of people. The *Syriërs Gezond* (Syrians Healthy) initiative uses the social platform Facebook in order to provide refugees with easy access to information about the Dutch healthcare system, even before their arrival. Their Facebook page also allows refugees to put forward questions to teams of Dutch and Syrian health-care professionals.

www.facebook.com/syriersgezond

ASYLOTHEK (DE)

Asyllotheek, short for Refugee Centre Library (*Asylbewerberheimbibliothek*) is a volunteer-run library for asylum seekers and refugees in Germany. Refugees are offered language courses from the first day of their stay. A central part of the Asyllotheek's work is to inform refugees about their rights and responsibilities, as well as about their host country's value system. They are also active in providing emotional and educational primary care.

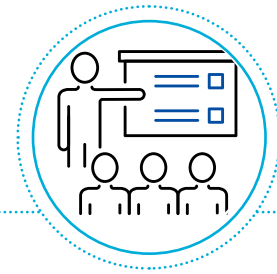
www.asyllotheek.de

A majority of projects participating in the competition were dedicated to providing training, education, counselling/information and mentoring actions. Several initiatives consisted of language training or courses. There were also several information centres dedicated to educational activities, pre-school for children, sports training and inclusion through sport, particularly football. Some projects involved providing library books and tailoring library services to asylum seekers.

Several projects focused on mentoring initiatives for migrants in order to facilitate their integration into the labour market and raise employers' awareness and support with finding jobs. A number of actions involved individual mentoring to integrate migrants into society, particularly minors, or to enable employed refugees to acquire the necessary skills that will facilitate access to the labour market on equal conditions with other citizens.

Other actions included reducing waiting times for accessing the labour market, identifying skills, organising training and retraining courses, providing relevant logistical support and supplying basic necessities. There was also specific training in labour sector-specific domains such as agriculture, fashion, cooking, etc. A few projects focused on ensuring access to internet sources and the use of apps to connect with other individuals or even Facebook pages for health support, or the production of multimedia and multilingual audio guides.





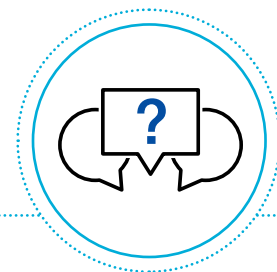
Other actions were aimed at providing help in creating a business and benefiting from internships. Volunteers speaking the languages of migrants and refugees assisted them in accessing services. Other initiatives highlighted the role played by universities – for instance, initiatives such as ERASMUS+ projects dealing with migrants and ethnic minority learners, programmes designed for asylum seekers and refugees, university scholarship programmes for refugees or initiatives focused on scholarships for refugees.

One initiative called The Lighthouse focused on strengthening and empowering migrant women in their linguistic, emotional and social skills in order to improve integration. Other actions covered information and support for women who were victims of trafficking and prostitution. Social interpreting initiatives run by female migrants aimed at making medical and social interpreters available to institutions, providing linguistic training for migrant women and promoting the recognition of women's skills and qualifications.

THE LIGHTHOUSE (ES)

The Lighthouse was an initiative by the non-profit organisation Fundació Privada La Salut Alta. The aim of the initiative was to offer migrant women a place that, like a lighthouse, would guide them on their path to integration. The initiative created spaces where locals could connect with migrants. The Lighthouse also offered them training and assistance in their contact with educational, medical and social services. In addition, the initiative also provided training to migrant children in order to help them begin attending schools with local children as soon as possible.

www.fundaciolasalutalta.org/que-fem/far/



8. Information exchange and promising practices

A number of projects included cross-national experiences and a variety of promising practices from civil society actors to develop counter-narratives about refugees in the EU. Other actions aimed at benchmarking EU Member States integration policies and identifying promising practices in the EU.

MIGRANT INTEGRATION POLICY INDEX (EU)

The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) project aims to measure, compare and assist public authorities with a view to improving the fair treatment, equal opportunities, empowerment and participation of legally resident third-country nationals in social, economic, political and cultural life. MIPEX measures how the laws and policies of 38 countries create equal opportunities and the full participation of migrants across 8 key areas of integration.

www.mipex.eu



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