



Pre and Post – Arrival Schemes
to facilitate inclusion and prevent xenophobia and radicalization



PANDPAS SOCIAL SURVEY REPORT

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ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES IN EUROPE: SHORT INTRODUCTION

By the end of 2015, after witnessing a peak of asylum applications in Europe, citizens could read ‘refugee crisis’¹ all over Europe newspapers’ headlines. Human mobility has long been associated with the idea of crisis (Lindley, 2014). In reality, various political, social and institutional challenges and crises have affected the lives of asylum seekers seeking protection and dignifying living conditions. While numbers might contribute to political rhetoric claiming that the so-called European refugee crisis has come to an end², the critical scenarios are far from ceasing.

Asylum seekers and refugees are still facing considerable challenges related to integration and participation in social life. For those who have managed to arrive in Europe, many of the difficulties and challenges faced in their daily lives do not seem to come to an end.

Racism, exclusion from the labour market, struggling to have their degrees and working experience recognised as well as to achieve a satisfactory language proficiency, risking to be transformed into illegal refugees after seeing their asylum applications rejected, slow asylum seeking procedures accompanied by a systematic inefficiency of institutions to translate refugee-hosting policies and integration programmes into practice, are just a few of many other obstacles that lead to situations of limited autonomy and potential alienation (Scheibelhofer & Täubig, 2019). The inefficiency of organisations in providing support, has showed the limitations of highly bureaucratised systems in responding to the demands of increasingly complex and pluralistic societies.

¹ In that year, over 1.2 million first time asylum seekers were registered within the EU Member States (Eurostat, 2016).

² In 2016, the total of asylum applications in the EU-28 Member States had a reduction of about 100 thousand applications comparing to the previous year. In 2017 though, it significantly decreased to about 700 thousand and, finally, in 2018, to about 640 thousand, nearly the same as in 2014 (Eurostat, 2019).

Therefore, one of the most important challenges facing European countries today is how to give voice, listen and consistently scale up our social solutions to improve the lives of asylum seekers and refugees.

In general terms, a refugee is a person who has a well-founded fear of being persecuted of reasons of race, religion, nationality or political opinion and seeks safety outside their home country, and that has received more temporary or more stable form of legal protection and support. An asylum seeker is someone seeking protection and who is waiting for the government to consider their case. A migrant is a person who flees their home country due to severe poverty or lack of economic opportunities. We could also call them temporary citizens or forced migrants. As Turton (2003), we consider forced migrants not as passive victims and instead as “purposive actors, embedded in particular social, political and historical situations”.

The study presented herein was carried out within the framework of the PandPAS - Pre and Post Arrival Schemes project, and had four interrelated goals. On one hand, to portray the refugees’ population. On the other hand, to highlight their experiences, concerns and needs, and allow their voice to be heard. Finally, to contribute to the knowledge about the conditions of integration of refugees but also to inform and improve public policies. It also intends to improve people’s understanding of the decision-relevant issues and inspire actions and political change.

The survey was multi-sited and focused on the common experiences of integration in six cities in five European countries: Padua and Venice in Italy, Maribor in Slovenia, Zagreb in Croatia, Nicosia in Cyprus, and Lisbon in Portugal. It draws from the results of semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 148 participants, including asylum seekers and refugees, relevant stakeholders and local citizens.

Operational staff, decision makers, wider public and the refugees themselves are important targets of the PandPAS project, to whom this report is addressed. In this respect, the report is intended to be accessible, focused, fit for discussion with non-specialist audiences and to be used as training resource.



THE PANDPAS PROJECT

The project PandPAS focuses on pre and post arrival support for the integration of people in need of international protection. The main goal of the project is to pilot schemes for management and active participation of migrants in host communities. The beneficiaries are both the refugees and the local communities (included professionals and volunteers). The expected impact is refugees' empowerment, capacity building for hosting institutions and communities, improvement of cohesion and solidarity in society overall, reduction of risks of xenophobia on one hand and radicalisation on the other.

The project involved partners in five countries: Italy, Slovenia and Croatia, at the forefront for welcoming and inclusion; Cyprus, with an interesting social enterprise for inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers; and Portugal, with established and effective pattern of “widespread welcoming”. The project team is a multi-sectorial team: a local entity, a research centre, two professional training institutes, and two NGO. The key project outcomes already accomplished include:

- A collection of good practices in integration (available for download at [http://www.pandpasproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Good Practices.pdf](http://www.pandpasproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Good_Practices.pdf))
- Action programmes at local level (described on <http://www.pandpasproject.eu/local-action-plans/>)
- A First Meeting of the European Local Communities engaged in welcoming and promoting inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers, that took place at in Ljubljana in February, 2019 (<http://bestpractices.pandpasproject.eu/>).
- a video-documentary based on the telling – stories of the experiences of refugees resettled in the Partner towns.

This publication embodies the outcome related to the social survey on refugees' and asylum seekers' feelings, needs and expectations (coordinated by CIES, ISCTE-IUL). The guiding template used by the partners to carry out the research is also available on the project website.



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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS & KEY IDEAS

The PandPAS social survey focused on the integration of AS&R population and took over an 8-month period between September 2018 and April 2019. The survey was multi-sited and focused on the common features of the experiences and challenges of integration in the host communities of asylum seekers and refugees; in six cities of five European countries: Padua and Venice in Italy, Maribor in Slovenia, Zagreb in Croatia, Nicosia in Cyprus, and Lisbon in Portugal.

Data analysis focused upon the shared features of integration experience in these cities, and drew from the results of semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 148 participants, including asylum seekers and refugees, relevant stakeholders and local citizens. In particular, it addressed the subjective dimensions (positive and negative aspects of refugee experience); structural and legal dimensions (rights and citizenship; employment/work; housing; education; healthcare); and social dimensions (conviviality, relationships with local populations and other AS&R) of integration. The participants were also encouraged to suggest recommendations in order to improve the conditions for integration of AS&R (further in this report).

As a summary of findings of the PandPAS Social Survey (developed further in this report), 5 key words are highlighted. They stem from the 66 recommendations made by the participants in the survey, presented further in this document as well as the results of the social survey:

COMMUNICATION, PARTICIPATION, EDUCATION, COORDINATION and AWARENESS

The words represent the most valuable lessons learned from the research findings to meet the challenges of refugee integration. They summarise the most important integration aspects learned from the research findings and articulate the views of asylum seekers and refugees, stakeholders and operators, and local citizens, with those of the European team responsible for the study.



- **COMMUNICATION**

Effective communications facilitate access to rights and services, participation in civil society and democratic processes, and the sharing values and behaviours. How can the language skills of AS&R (Asylum Seekers and Refugees) be improved? How can language programmes be tailored to AS&R specific needs? Language courses are of great importance for integration in the host society. Other practices that foster social networking building and conviviality, as social cafes, forums, and others, can contribute greatly to the improvement of language skills.

Lack of knowledge of the local language prevents access to networking, community, protection, employment, education, health care and other services. Also, the clear transmission of relevant information must be assured. Rights need to be known and clearly communicated. A repeated, effective and consisted information about rights, asylum process, and social services should be provided to AS&R, as they are unaware and totally dependent on operators for understanding how systems work in the host communities. The absence of cultural and linguistic mediation in the context of health care, for example, impedes, in practice, the success of the consultations.

- **PARTICIPATION**

Participation refers to improving access and enabling refugees to employment, education as well as contact with art and culture. In addition, it refers to aiding grassroots networks within resettlement communities. Refugee associations, when existent, are the main interlocutors of refugees in resolving everyday issues, due to the proximity they have to them. They work on a voluntary basis and they are well informed, however, in most cases, they are not recognised by the responsible authorities. The participation of refugees and migrants in economy, public spaces and civil society life, namely political participation, is a key element for integration. We need new and better forms of improving refugees' economic, social, public, and political



participation. The active participation of AS&R in local economies, labour markets, politics, arts, sports, can create collective experiences that setback stereotypes and create belonging. Participation is the key to build community and break the loneliness and isolation widely asserted by AS&R in this study.

- **EDUCATION**

Access to educational opportunities at all levels of education (primary, secondary, tertiary education, vocational training) is not yet guaranteed. AS&R should have the opportunity to validate and improve their skills, but also to take part in formal and informal training. They need time to invest in their language skills and education to avoid long-term precarity and exclusion. Access to education and conditions for success should be established by law, and not depend on the goodwill of the institutions.

Training is also required for operators and service providers. How much do I know as an operator in AS&R integration? What should I learn to improve my work? Where are, the resources, the knowledge and the information? Operators engaged in integration and social services should be provided with more specific training. Some of the staff members who work in the field of migration or social services do not know the legal context of the asylum procedure and some do not have a clear perception of what the rights of the asylum seekers are.

Teachers, doctors, nurses, and public servants are generally unaware of the complexity of the situation of refugees and asylum seekers who, similarly to general public, lack the awareness of their rights. Moreover, intercultural skills should also be increased and volunteers should receive adequate training for the challenges of supporting refugees.



- **COORDINATION**

The results of the survey show the lack of coordination across different sectors (such as labour, health care, housing and education), as well as across levels of government and action. Different actors, actions and programmes need to be articulated to respond the complexity of AS&R' needs. There is a multiplication of actions and organisations that work on the integration of refugees, however, there is lack of coherence.

A significant effort must be made in order to contribute to the coordination and cooperation among integration actors and policies, enhancing processes of sharing information between key partners in place. Well-structured and articulated reception and monitoring programmes should address the multi-dimensional needs and provide opportunities for AS&R at the local level. Those programmes should motivate people to develop their personal resources. An effort must be made to link opportunities, social capital, organisations and services with AS&R, as well as to link operators and academia, refugees and local population.

- **AWARENESS**

Cross-cultural understanding between AS&R, operators and broader community are needed. AS&R are vulnerable, they carry the weight of separation and suffering, although at the same time they remain trustful and they dream of a better life. They should be recognised as vulnerable people. Therefore, knowledge should be created by academic research, and awareness should be raised, especially through the media. Moreover, “migration-sensitive” services, initiatives and policies should also be developed. Raising awareness of integration, human rights, anti-discrimination, and emancipation is vital for the cohesion and democracy of the local communities.



PATHS TO INTEGRATION: RECOMMENDATIONS

This section contains the set of recommendations on how to improve the integration of AS&R. They were provided by asylum seekers and refugees, stakeholders and local citizens, and they reflect the major needs and obstacles faced in the host communities. Their formulation aims to inform public policy, inspire action, as well as it intends to improve people's understanding of the decision-relevant issues and inspire political change. The recommendations will be illustrated and accompanied by direct statements from stakeholders about their experiences and ideas.

A methodological choice of the PandPAS Project team was to hear about experiences and ideas of all those involved in the integration processes at the local level which resulted in a great contribution to the project knowledge and impact on the project results.

For this reason, the PandPAS team suggests that local host communities should repeat this process with a sample of local AS&R and experts, individuate the most relevant issues for their own area (the most urgent on one side, and the most important in a strategic vision on the other) and elaborate a multi-annual work-plan, including short-term and medium-long term measures.

The following recommendations are, in this sense, an example of the multiple actions that are relevant and needed.



Recommendations from asylum seekers and refugees

The most widespread recommendation relates to language support:

- To structure and enlarge the language support offer.
- To access more appropriate language courses, tailored to needs, organised for different levels of proficiency.
- To be entitled to more hours of national language courses with colleagues who are at the same level.
- To be provided with language tuition.
- Language courses should always be free.
- There should be more information regarding language courses in general.
- To increase the availability of translators.

They are wasting our destiny.
[AS&R person, Nigeria, Italy]

When I came here, the translator helped me. I was talking to him in Tigrinya (Eritrean) language, he translated it in English and the third person translated it in Slovene. It was not good. I think that the translation was often lost or wrongly translated. Therefore, I began to learn Slovenian very quickly and intensely. I can now arrange things by myself.

[AS&R person, Eritrea, Slovenia]

Refugees also recommend that measures must be taken to ensure:

- Refugees' voices are heard and considered when decisions that impact their lives (support, housing, work, language...) are made.
- Dissemination of relevant information done in a fast manner and in simplified language.
- Anticipation of the right to work. Work can help the integration process in many other dimensions.
- Consideration of the enlargement of the periods of assistance.
- Increase of the opportunities to access education.

The government should have a better articulation (...) articulate things with all entities, with all municipalities and it should work the same way everywhere... They can't have different norms in Porto, Coimbra, Santa Maria da Feira or Faro.

[AS&R person, Eritrea, Portugal]

I will have to write job applications in Slovenia



scholarships, namely in higher education.

- Opportunities for conciliate study and work.
- Improvement of access and communication in health services.
- Allowing AS&R people to travel to other countries.
- Training on culturally sensitive approaches, diversity, and refugee needs to public servants, officers, and teachers. Operators and public servants are not sufficiently prepared to help refugees, despite their efforts.
- Increased institutional engagement, specifically with the governments.
- Countries should learn from each other concerning good practices.
- Funding and reinforcement of opportunities of participation in local life (volunteering), and fund activities, projects, and services which facilitate intercultural connections between the refugee population and the host society.
- Acknowledgement of the gender unbalances and addressing AS&R women invisibility and lack of participation in education, work, and health care; but also in refugee organisations.
- Fostering a positive attitude towards refugees among local populations.
- Promotion of the development of Refugee Community Structures and Networks, the self-organisation and coordination between refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.
- Need for academic representatives that raise

and for this I will have to know how to write properly in Slovenian and I know I will have to make good first impression at an interview. I know many people will have all sorts of prejudices because I am black. I am a foreigner, but I want to work and be able to support myself and not take money from the government.
[AS&R person, Eritrea, Slovenia]

Last year (2017) I attended a training for entrepreneur, where I start reflecting about my skills and where I learned how to open a company... the problem is always... money.
[AS&R person, Nigeria, Italy]

To facilitate integration there must be true information about the country and the people.
[AS&R person, Eritrea, Portugal]

I have a good example about how the civil society can took care of us. When we arrived here my wife hadn't yet finished the University. Two families started supporting her to let her finish her studies. She reached to take degree at Venice University.
[AS&R person, Rwanda, Italy]



awareness of migrants/refugees/asylum seekers' situation while empowering them to claim their legal rights.

- Involvement of refugees in the education of other refugees.

I'm a basket player. I found by myself a team and I've started playing with them. The basket team was very important to making friends and to help me with the language.
[AS&R person, Senegal, Italy]

I tried very hard to get involved in society. Last year I was in the cycling network, where I worked three, four months as a bike servicer. You do not learn the language only at school. To learn the language, you have to talk, you need to get to know people and talk to them. You cannot learn Slovenian with just writing sentences in a notebook.
[AS&R person, Eritrea, Slovenia]



Recommendations from stakeholders

What do stakeholders recommend to address in the integration process of the asylum seekers and refugees?

- To provide more, better and more fitted language courses, interpreters and cultural mediation What do stakeholders recommend to address in the integration process of the asylum seekers and refugees? services.
- To improve the access and production of online language courses material.
- To allow the right to work for asylum seekers as soon as they apply for international protection.
- To allow family reunification in an earlier stage of the asylum request process in order to prevent isolation and loneliness.
- To create or increase the support for employment of refugees, entrepreneurial initiatives and start-ups.
- To provide updated and accurate information on employment, labour market and corporative culture in host countries to AS&R.
- To take into consideration the health issues AS&R face upon arrival.
- To provide health care materials translated to several languages.
- To extend the housing support and differentiate financial aids according to the city/region, since housing costs vary significantly within countries. To make sure that there is water and electricity available at the AS&R homes.
- To expand the job categories available for AS&R.

Migrants should be considered as a resource and not as a problem.
[Stakeholder, Italy]

It is definitely good the combination of publicly recognised language courses with informal forms of learning.
[Migration management and integration services representative, Slovenia]

We must create a more accepting and compassionate society.
[Stakeholder, Cyprus]

The perception is that they just want our jobs, but the fact is that they can contribute to our society in so many ways and we should affirm this more.
[International organisation representative, Croatia]

It is very important that professionals and



- To facilitate AS&R use of local transport.
- To inform, sensitise and train operators, public servants, officers, teachers, concerning AS&R rights and specificities.
- To develop coordination of different actors within education, health care, justice, social system and others.
- To increase the options in terms of learning opportunities, vocational, formal and informal training.
- To increase support to AS&R mothers.
- To promote activities in which both AS&R and local people participate. AS&R should be supported and encouraged to participate in events with the locals.
- To inform and sensitise the general public.
- To organise trainings and education programmes with interpreters and cultural mediators for refugees interested in such projects.
- To evaluate the quality of the integration work performed by the institutions. To monitor and learn from previous mistakes: the results and outcomes from all practices, projects, programmes, initiatives and activities should be constantly reviewed and evaluated in order to be improved.
- To improve responses to contemporary migration phenomena, by increasing the flexibility of the hosting practices and principles, in order to face the challenges brought by constantly increasing social changes.
- To promote volunteering to address asylum seekers and refugees' isolation and loneliness.
- A strong political commitment by EU should be made in order to stop persecutions and violence in countries of

operators of welcoming work in team.
[Stakeholder, Italy]

I think that a stronger collaboration between public and private sector should be implemented in order totally change the job placing system. This change is desirable not only regarding migrants, but regarding all jobless people.
[Stakeholder, Italy]

If responsibility is delegated to an institution, it's because that institution has the ability to guide this person towards a new life. And what is a new life? It means that the person becomes autonomous. So, if the institution wasn't able to do that with one person, wasn't able to do that with two persons and with three persons either, but it still keeps on trying to do it, then we know that it should or could stop trying.
[NGOs and civil society representative, Portugal]



origin.

Recommendations from local citizens

What do local citizens recommend to address in the integration process of asylum seekers and refugees?

- To provide language courses.
- To provide language support for children at school.
- To hire more professionals to fulfil AS&R' needs.
- To allow access to the labour market as soon as possible.
- Asylum seekers should know their rights and should feel encouraged to complain to the relevant authorities if their employers are not treating them fairly.
- To promote and support AS&R' self-employment and entrepreneurial initiatives.
- To provide incentives for hiring a AS&R.
- To facilitate and recognise the importance of a mutual understanding and adaptation host and AS&R cultures.
- To sensitise, educate and inform employers in private sector.
- To support housing within the community: near family and near people with similar background to avoid isolation; but avoiding segregation and ghettoisation.
- To renovate and equip abandoned buildings to provide housing to AS&R.
- To provide free access to art and culture activities to AS&R.

Municipalities should organise cultural events to promote the knowledge of refugees.
[Citizen, Italy]

I think that before investing... I think they should make a survey, an evaluation of the people that arrive and try to understand (...) what are their expectations, what are their wishes, what are their dreams, where do they want to go, where do they imagine themselves in 10 years, if they want to stay here... If we don't meet people's expectations, it's not worth intervening because we're only going to spend money... We have to know what are the expectations.

[Citizen, Portugal]

We should all treat each other with respect.
[Citizen, Cyprus]



- To survey asylum seekers' expectations and ambitions.
- To organise public discussions, exhibitions, cultural and sports activities.
- To include contents about respect, tolerance and diversity into the school system.
- To raise awareness of refugees (namely through media).
- Proactive interaction: creating situations, activities and programmes of mutual involvement (AS&R and local population).
- Citizens could organise support groups.

We should have more comprehensive look at all vulnerable groups, not only migrants and refugees. We should treat all vulnerable groups together. If one social problem arrives in Slovenia from elsewhere, it is exactly the same as our social problem.

[Citizen, Slovenia]

The voice of refugees should be more evident.

[Citizen, Italy]

Asylum seekers and refugees should be treated fairly.

[Citizen, Cyprus]



METHODOLOGY

The topic of our social survey is the integration of AS&R population. In particular, we focus on the subjective dimensions (positive and negative aspects of refugee experience); structural and legal dimensions (rights and citizenship; employment/work; housing; education; health care); and social dimensions (conviviality, relationships with local populations and other AS&R) of integration. The participants were also encouraged to suggest recommendations presented before to improve the conditions for integration of AS&R.

The survey was multi-sited and focused on the common experiences of integration in six cities in five European countries: Padua and Venice in Italy, Maribor in Slovenia, Zagreb in Croatia, Nicosia in Cyprus, and Lisbon in Portugal. The country-level research findings, based on field research for the five countries, were compiled and analysed for this report. The strength of multi-sited survey is its ability to show the transversal aspects of the processes involved in integration. Thus, data analysis in this report focused on the shared features of integration experience. It draws from the results of semi-structured interviews and focus groups with 148 participants, including asylum seekers and refugees, relevant stakeholders and local citizens.

The aims of the social survey were:

- To highlight AS&R population experiences, concerns and needs and allow AS&R' voice to be heard
- To contribute to the knowledge about the conditions of integration of AS&R
- To inform and improve public policies

The research questions were the following:

- what concerns, needs and expectations do refugees and asylum seekers have, regarding their integration?
- what do refugees and asylum seekers want society to know about them?
- what kind of concerns, needs and limitations the stakeholders have regarding the integration of asylum seekers and refugees?
- what perception and information about the integration of refugees and asylum seekers do the populations have?



- how do they react to the integration of asylum seekers and refugees?

Data collection

In order to collect data, interviews and focus groups were used. These are qualitative tools, which are compelling because they offer the possibility to allow informants to explain their experiences from their own point of view, based on their thoughts, feelings, beliefs and assumptive worlds. They help to understand the 'hows' and 'whys', and provide rich descriptions of the meanings that are attached to the personal experiences. They allow people to be listened to, even when it refers to issues that are problematic and disruptive (as in forced migration).

The survey process was performed by all project partners in the five participating countries, using common templates, according to a standard set of interview guidelines. The research design included three levels of analysis: refugees level, stakeholders level and local population level. Overall the total number of participants in the research was 148.

- 74 asylum seekers and refugees were involved in 4 focus groups and 59 individual interviews
- A total of 41 stakeholders participated in 5 focus groups (1 per country)
- 33 local citizens were included in 5 focus groups (1 per country)

Participants were selected using a purposive sampling, in which members of a particular group (AS&R, stakeholders and operators, or common local citizens) were deliberately sought and contacted through local organisations, reception centres, social media, and others.

Data collection took over an 8-month period between September 2018 and April 2019.



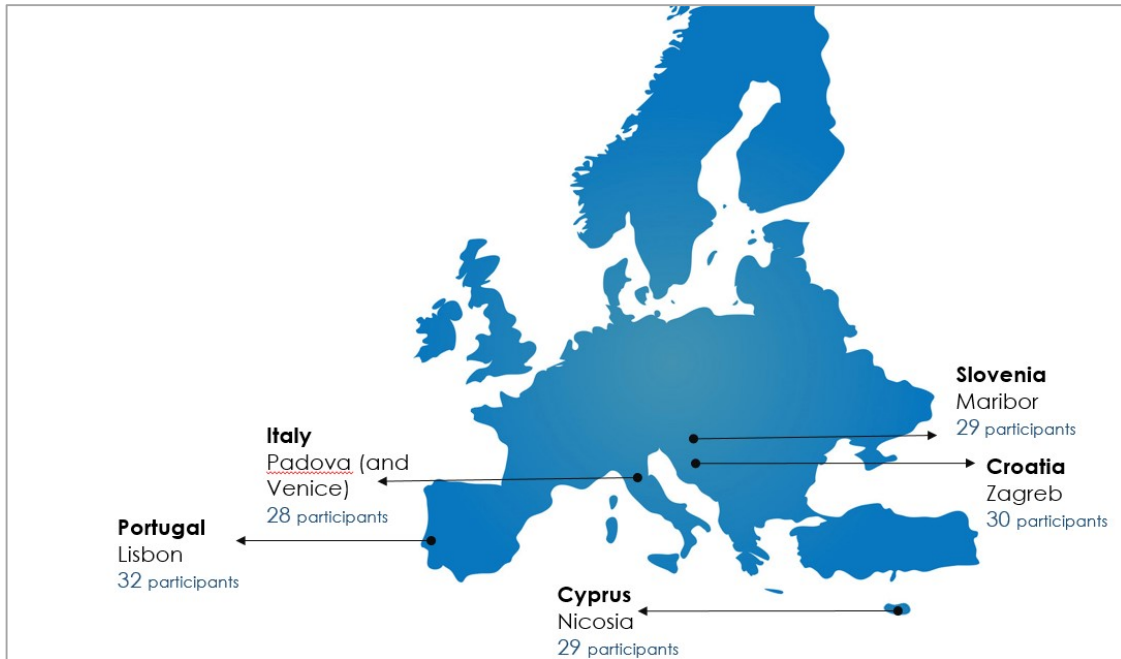


Figure 1. Survey Countries and number of participants

Terms used in the report

The concepts used follow the European Migration Network (EMN)³ glossary (EMN, 2018)⁴ and stem from Council directives, UNHCR and other relevant sources.

A **refugee** is, in the EU context, “either a third-country national who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that

³ The European Migration Network is an EU network of migration and asylum experts who work together to provide objective, comparable policy relevant information.

⁴ Most key concept definitions, unless with different indication, are retrieved from the glossary of the European Migration Network (EMN, 2018).

country”. The refugee status means “the recognition by an EU Member State of a third-country national or stateless person as a refugee”.

An **asylum seeker** is, in the EU context, “a third-country national or stateless person who has made an application for protection under the Geneva Refugee Convention and Protocol in respect of which a final decision has not yet been taken”. The **international protection** regards, in the global context, to the “actions by the international community on the basis of international law, aimed at protecting the fundamental rights of a specific category of persons outside their countries of origin.

The person eligible for **subsidiary protection status** is a third-country national or a stateless person who does not qualify as a refugee but in respect of whom substantial grounds have been shown for believing that the person concerned, if returned to their country of origin, or in the case of a stateless person, to their country of former habitual residence, would face a real risk of suffering serious harm.

From now on we will, for practical reasons, refer to people with refugee status, people under subsidiary protection, or asylum seekers as AS&R.

Integration, a classic concept in migration studies not free from controversy and complexity, relates to the engagement of asylum seekers and refugees, institutions and people among whom they live and contact. It encompasses the definition of EMN glossary, referring to it as a “a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of EU Member States”, but it goes beyond, as it includes institutions and relationships.⁵ As Farrugia (2009:53), we acknowledge that integration can be misunderstood as a kind of “forced assimilation” that violates some fundamental rights. As the author affirms, integration is also “the host community welcoming and adapting to the migrants. Well-planned integration policies are essential to social stability and to protecting the rights and dignity of migrants.”

⁵ To further knowledge on integration conceptualization specifically in integration of asylum seekers and refugees, see e.g. Ager and Strang (2008, 2010).

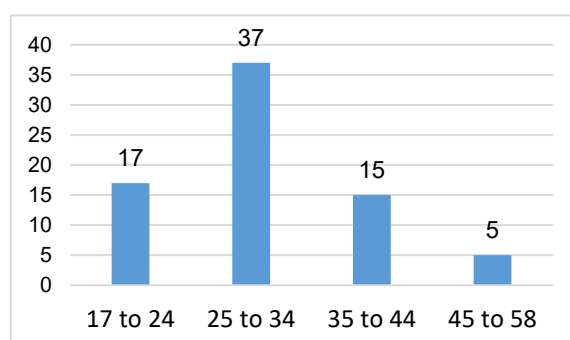


Field research

Three distinct groups of participants were involved in the field research with tailored guidelines, guiding questions and methods of analysis for each group: asylum seekers and refugees, stakeholders and operators as well as local citizens.

Asylum seekers and refugees

A total of four focus groups and 59 individual interviews were conducted with 74 asylum seekers and refugees, 17 female and 57 male (about 77%).⁶ All interviews were subject to informed consent from the interviewees, and were conducted under condition of strict anonymity and confidentiality. Ethical principles for involving vulnerable people in research were taken into account. The interviews were conducted either in English, the language of the country under study, or in other languages spoken with the support of interpreters.



⁶ Refugee flows across the Mediterranean have been heterogeneous despite often being represented as mostly male. Despite the efforts made, it was not possible to increase the number of refugee women involved in the research. The obstacles encountered are many, related to access, since women are less visible in the public space, and less present in refugee structures and organisations. Also issues related to patriarchal family structures and family and child care obligations, which creates inhibitions to participation.

Figure 2. AS/R by age groups

The overall age of the sample was relatively young. The range was between 17 and 58 years with the majority of respondents falling in the age range of 25–34 years.

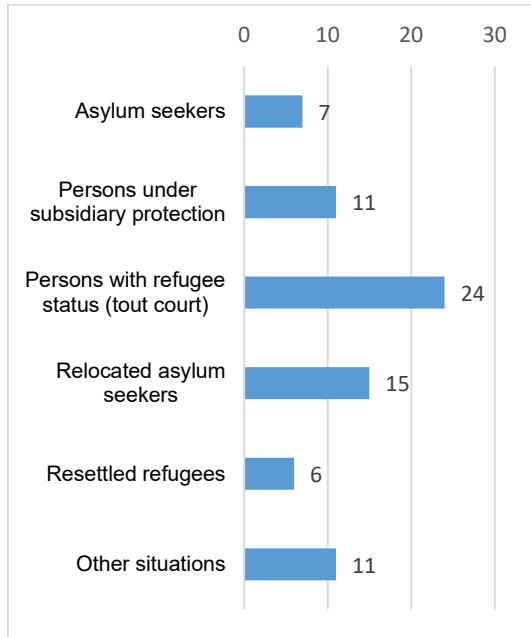


Figure 3. Status

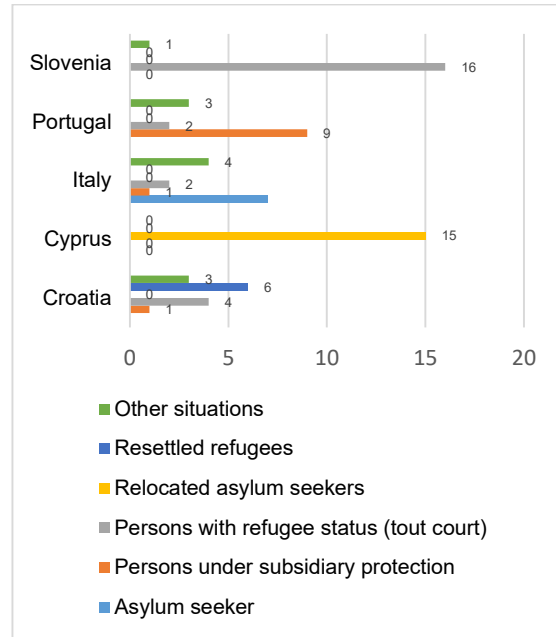


Figure 4. Status by country

Participants were from refugee backgrounds (22 with permanent protection visas), 6 resettled refugees, 11 people under subsidiary protection, 22 asylum seekers who were on temporary visas awaiting the determinant of their claim for refugee status, 15 of whom were relocated.⁷ The multi-sited approach setting allowed us to include various status and situations (Fig. 4). The “others” category refers to people under

⁷ Relocation refers to the temporary emergency relocation scheme established by two EU Council

Decisions in September 2015, in which EU Member States committed to relocating people in need of international protection from Italy and Greece to other EU countries. Resettlement means the transfer of people in need of international protection to a country where they will be admitted and granted the right to stay and any other rights comparable to those granted to a beneficiary of international protection.

humanitarian protection, an Italian specific status, and to 2 students of the Global Platform for Syrian Students, non-profit multi-stakeholders' organisation supported by institutional partners, as the Council of Europe, or the IOM.

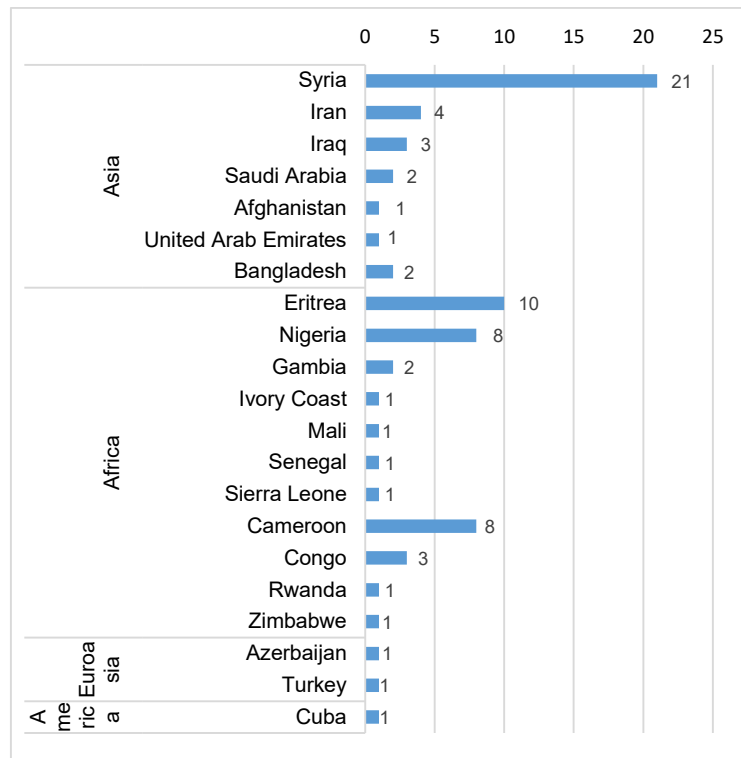


Figure 5. AS/R by country of birth

Participants originated from 21 countries. Common countries of birth include Syria (where 28% of the participants was born), Eritrea, Nigeria and Cameroon. Half of refugees came from Africa, and other 45% came from Asia.

Main reasons to leave home country were:

- **Non-international armed conflicts:** bombardments that destroyed homes; lack of security; violent revolutions; tired of living in war zones; civil wars resulting in exodus.
- **Oppression:** ISIS preventing certain activities (school, work, etc.); Dictatorship in the country of origin; Life full of fear and intimidation



- **Persecution:** for religious and sectarian differences; for political opinions; for sexual orientation; unfounded accusations
- **Desertion:** being considered a deserter due to a permit request to study abroad.
- **Military service:** conscription with indefinite term; compulsory enrolment in the army.
- **Other:** Family reunification; forced marriage; personal problems, namely with family and heritage; outbreaks; leaving first safe countries of refuge (often geographically closer to country of origin) due to labour exploitation and/or lack of legal rights recognition.

The majority of the interviewees left their home countries due to non-international armed conflicts. In most cases, the subjects' first choice was to move to a geographically closer country (what we might call a 'first country of refuge' / 'primary safe haven'). For Middle Easterners, these countries are usually Turkey (most frequent choice), Egypt, Lebanon and United Arab Emirates. Some of the interviewees claim that they did not want to move to Europe and that they tried to endure the conflict, but eventually there was a rupture point, an event (the arrival of ISIS or getting tired of living in war zones after prolonged periods of time), that triggered the decision to leave their home country.

Interviewees were often victims of labour exploitation while living in the geographically closer countries ('primary safe havens'). Absence of legal rights (sometimes also due to lack of documents), together with poor living conditions led them to move to Europe (usually Greece), in some cases by paying a smuggler.

They have been in Europe between less than a year and 29 years. The time of refugee flight or departure varies greatly (Fig.6). A few participants left before 2010. The majority, 56%, however, left their home country after 2015; some left in same year of the research, 2018. 40% have been living in the host country for less than a year, and 80% arrived less than 3 years ago (Fig. 7).

With regard to educational levels and pre-departure employment situation, participants are mostly highly qualified: around 70% have attained at least higher education, and



37% have a degree. About 16% have at most a basic level of education of 4 years; of these 12 participants, 4 did not attend school. Nearly 51% were unemployed at the time of departure.

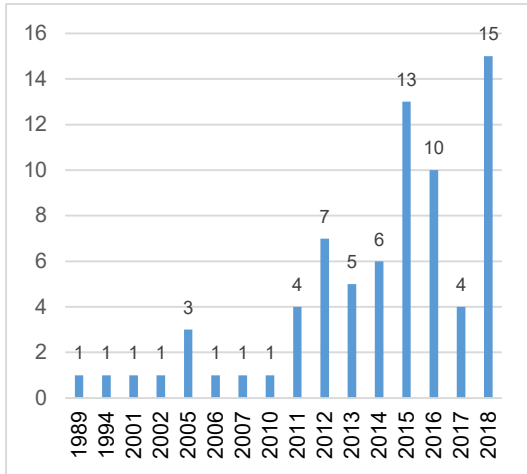


Figure 6. AS/R by year of departure

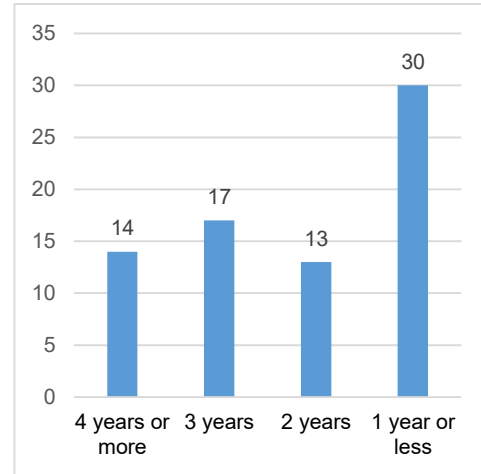


Figure 7. AS/R by number of years living in the country of survey

Stakeholders and operators

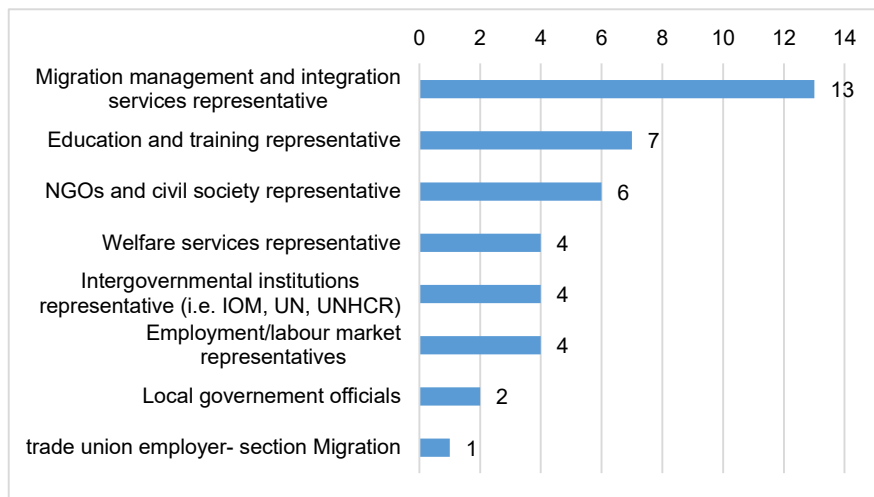


Figure 8. Stakeholders by profile



A total of five focus groups were conducted with 41 stakeholders and operators, 30 female and 11 male, including 32 institutions from the host society involved in the integration of asylum seekers and refugees (international agencies, national and local authorities, NGOs and civil society). Figure 8 shows the composition of the people interviewed in terms of organisation profile.

Local citizens

A total of five focus groups were conducted with 33 local citizens, 23 female and 10 male. The focus groups were targeted at “ordinary people” – local citizens of different gender, age, education, and type of occupation. The aim was to examine and explore the perceptions and representations that populations in general have about the integration of asylum seekers and refugees, and the reactions people have about the arrival and integration of this group, particularly in recent years.

Figure 9 and 10 below show the composition of the citizens interviewed in terms of age and educational level. Most of the interviewed citizens are between 24 and 40 years old, and hold a degree.

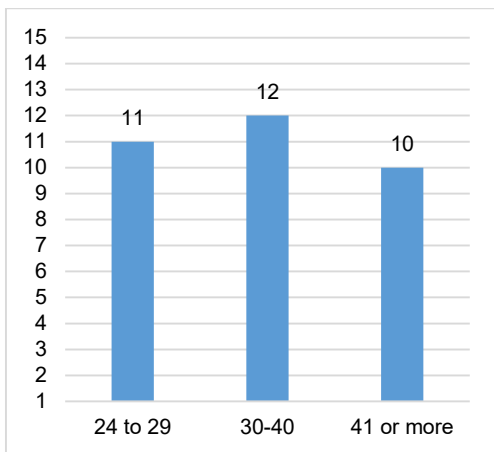


Figure 9. Citizens by age group

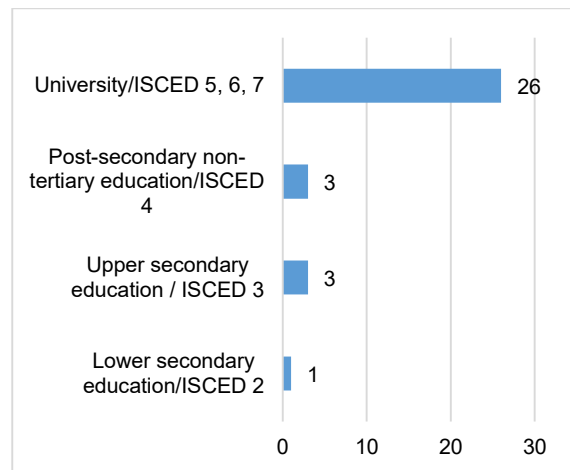


Figure 10. Citizens by educational level



FINDINGS

Part 1. Asylum seekers and refugees' experiences, concerns, needs and expectations

POSITIVE PERCEPTIONS

- General solidarity and hospitality of the local people
- Strong connections and relationships with volunteers and NGO workers
- Feelings of safety, freedom and entitlement in daily life
- Integration felt especially through family gatherings, social gatherings, sport and cultural activities
- Positive experiences with some organisations (they help & advise)
- In some cases, the positive experiences in the health care system
- In some cases, the beauty of the host country culture, nature and local weather

Most of participants believe that the host countries and local populations are supportive and generally show solidarity towards refugees.

Connections and relationships with NGO operators are also highlighted. Volunteers and operators from support organisations are essential links to the new reality. They frequently master the AS&R native language, are sensitive to

the refugees' difficulties and problems. They are a significant source of social capital in the host countries, and are crucial to reduce feelings of isolation. Operators are the first line of the local welcoming.

Other aspects are the feelings of safety, freedom and entitlement in daily life. Safety and security were a common theme emerging during the narratives. According to the interviewees, the issue of safety is one of the prevailing factors that affect the sense of integration to host countries. They feel that they have more freedom and rights than in home countries.

Lastly, integration is described as felt especially through family gatherings, social gatherings, sport and cultural activities. Socio-cultural integration and sense of belonging happens when having a positive social experience: being welcomed into a crowd, being recognised in a group, being able to participate, communicate, experience, exchange, despite the limitations.

Freedom...Here you can walk on the street and nobody harasses you...police respect you.

[AS&R person, Nigeria, Italy]

Safety! It's the best thing we were need and



we found it here.
[AS&R person, Syria, Portugal]

The most important thing is safety. And feeling safe that my kids can go and come back from school by themselves. And Croatian people are very warm and the way they treat me is very nice. And I have many friends, Croatian friends who help me. Until now, thanks God, I didn't face any problems in Croatia.

[AS&R person, Iraq, Croatia]

The climate, the weather is one of the positive things about Portugal (...) (and) another good thing is that Portugal is safe, no one tries to harm you in any way and he's saying that it's good that there is a certain degree of freedom, just a little bit

[AS&R person, Syria, Portugal]

Not everyone has the same ideology, but locals respect me. The landlord is like a father to us and people are polite. They are peace-loving people.

[AS&R person, Cameroon, Cyprus]

When we arrived in Italy we had a 5 months old baby. It was very difficult but people were sensitive. They helped us a lot. A family took us in charge during 6 month and later we were helped by a parrish. After 2 months of my arrival, I found a job so I could pay a small rent. After 3 months we had documents.

[AS&R person, Senegal, Italy]

The good thing is also I can learn Slovenian for free in a language school. People who are doing these programmes are all very nice and helpful. What I miss is company from locals, where I could meet Slovenians and talk about different things. This is for now the only thing I miss.

[AS&R person, Eritrea, Slovenia]

If you have the roof that can live under and if you have room you can sleep, if you have bathroom you can take a shower - so it's okay. The condition is not good maybe. Not so good. But it's enough for me.

[AS&R person, Turkey, Croatia]

When I arrived I felt very uncomfortable with Italians...now I've learnt from them, I dress as them, I talk as them. Many Italian now think I was born here.

[AS&R person, Senegal, Italy]



CONCERNS AND NEEDS

RIGHTS AND CITIZENSHIP

- Problems in exercising basic rights.
- Discrepancies between the rights that are written, and the ones that are applied.
- Misinformation & expectations not met.
- Discrimination.
- Welcome systems not suitable for families.
- Need of basic economical help (allowance)
- Systems and operators are not prepared for AS&R.
- Lack of information and knowledge about rights.
- Absence of clear information about national systems (health care, education, work...).
- Lack of privacy and limitation of freedom.
- Lack of consistency in the programmes and opportunities available.
- Excess of dependency of professionals and NGO employees in the social inclusion process.
- Fear of withdrawal of support services.

- Low quality of the support services available.
- Institutional disengagement from the behalf of many hosting organisations and the governments.
- Differences in rights between refugee and family member of refugee.
- In some cases, bad experiences with police.

Refugees do not know what to do in order to pursue their own interests. This situation is even worse for those cases in which asylum seekers are hosted by an inefficient organisation or/and have few social connections.

At the same time, official and governmental institutions have highly outdated systems, unprepared to meet the challenges of integration of foreign population.

The asylum system is problematic, it hampers the claim for international protection, it takes too much time to process the claims, and legal instruments of the Common European Asylum System are not applied and guaranteed uniformly.

Participants also face problems in the process of family reunification.

There is a clash between their expectations while waiting in home countries or transit countries, and the reality when they arrive in host countries. In particular, the difficulties of finding a job and supporting a family.



There is a lack of information or there is unreliable information regarding the hosting country. This situation often leads to a significant discrepancy between expectations and reality. In some cases, subjects are handed a “welcome guides” containing generic information about the country (there is no practical information about AS&R associations nor organisations dedicated to their cause, no significant legal rights that they are entitled to, etc.). In other cases, they are given persuasive information that is not really useful at the time of arrival.

For now, I don't get it - just ID. I don't have other rights.... Because now we are waiting, we are [with] limited rights here. Yeah. [laughs] Free transport, free lunch, free dinner, free breakfast, like that...but, actually, now, we don't have any rights.
[AS&R person, Turkey, Croatia]

We moved from Africa to find better things but what we found is not very good
[AS&R person, Congo, Cyprus]

We go to organisations, they gave us book for children rights, and we read it, the children should be happy and go to school, but everything is a dream, nothing real.
[AS&R person, Syria, Croatia]

Life in my country was very difficult; police looked after me and they betrayed me a lot of time...I was shot. [...] Even here in Italy, when I see the police machine I feel shocked.
[AS&R person, Nigeria, Italy]

Public servants don't have that much

experience with refugees. They are experienced in working with foreigners but not with refugees. What makes it worse is that they don't speak the same language as refugees, so they have a problem communicating and that causes him problems finding a job.
[AS&R person, Iraq, Portugal]

I'm the first refugee in [name of the city]. They don't have experience. Police station, social centre, medical centre. They want to help me, but they don't have experience.
[AS&R person, Syria, Croatia]

I don't know my rights, but I try to behave well, to follow the rules.
[AS&R person, Ivory Coast, Italy]

They said «We have accepted the asylum, now you just need the card. Wait one or two months and you'll have it». It's been one year now. They have no system; you know?
[AS&R person, Syria, Portugal]

Freedom...we can say that we have freedom in Italy but there is some place where freedom is limited.
[AS&R person, Nigeria, Italy]

Before he had this residence card, he had a temporary residence permit for 6 months that didn't entitle him to many things. Although he was allowed to work, he couldn't get a social security number, he couldn't open a bank account. Many institutions didn't even recognise the document.
[AS&R person, Iraq, Portugal]

It is difficult to follow the rules if you don't have money. For example, if you take the bus but you don't have a ticket they ask you to pay 50 euros and you can't because you



don't have money...If you don't follow the rules they can push you back in your country. Many people are worried about it.
[AS&R person, Nigeria, Italy]

Before studying rights, I felt that I couldn't do anything. No job, no study. I thought that only refugees (5 years' residence permit) can have paid jobs
[AS&R person, Ivory Coast, Italy]

Documents are very important, even in Senegal. I always had document with me. If you have documents, you are more respected. If you are undocumented you are more exposed and they cannot respect you.
[AS&R person, Senegal, Italy]

Media narrative is very negative. I would like to be an ambassador of refugees, in order to explain people why people arrive to Italy. I never give up.
[AS&R person, Gambia, Italy]



WAITING TIME⁸

- Severe institutional delays regarding the examination and drafting of legal documents.
- Extreme vulnerability and sense of waiting too long and wasting (precious) time.
- Feelings of demotivation, frustration, of senselessness.
- Uncertainty concerning the near future.

When you are in the camp someone is taking care of you. But if you have a document, or if you have 2 negative (appeal) they can ask you to run...and where do you go? What do you do? You have document, but you don't have a job or nothing to do, and you cannot take care of you. People are often very worried about what will happen, and they cannot learn anything.

[AS&R person, Nigeria, Italy]

I don't know why they don't give me documents; since I arrived here, I behaved very well, I never fight, I follow the rules...I have a job. I don't understand why they don't want to give me papers...

[AS&R person, Italy]

it is not good for anybody to sleep from morning to evening... Sleep sleep sleep... If you so it in your country your mother will tell you "go and look for money". Nooo, sleeping form morning till night is not good at all. We cannot live like this for too much time. I can understand people who need help... People who have serious health problems. It makes sense for them... But not for me, I'm very strong and I would do everything for myself if have the opportunity.

[AS&R person, Nigeria, Italy]

For now, [here in Croatia] is good. But is not very well. I'm scared about my future.

[AS&R person, Syria, Croatia]

It's not easy to sit at home.

[AS&R person, Cameroon, Cyprus]

It kills me that I am not doing anything.

[AS&R person, Cameroon, Cyprus]

⁸ The waiting period or "suspended time" is widely reported in AS&R studies, and has been analysed as an intentional dismissive policy (Kobelinsky, 2014).

LANGUAGE

- Difficulty in communication.
- Difficult languages to learn in the host countries.
- Difficulty in language support and training.
- Language course structures and levels are problematic: too basic; too advanced; classes not properly organised; arbitrary structure of the classes.
- In some cases, the available language courses are paid.
- Gender gap: additional obstacles for women with children.
- No link between host country language classes and job preparation.
- Need of financial support: free courses or being paid to study the language.
- Need of information: regarding free classes and how to access them.
- Institutional collaboration: more agreements and protocols between organisations to provide language offers.
- Promptness is important: starting to have classes as soon as possible.
- Need to practice speaking with locals.

Poor language knowledge is a barrier to access rights and services, and to participate in the host societies.

Combined with the other obstacles and barriers encountered, the difficulty in communication can seriously hamper integration processes. Difficulty in learning a new language are among the most debated topics.

Available courses are either too basic or too advanced. Sometimes the way in which the courses are structured, due to the high heterogeneity of the class (different nationalities, different literacy levels, different language levels, etc.), does not promote an engagement from the behalf of students leading to a loss of interest or a growing sense of frustration. For instance, attending a language course with illiterate people hinders a faster progress and vice versa.

Women face a double barrier since they spend more time with their children and have no support.

Engaging AS&R in learning the language of the destination country empowers people and enables them to grow resilience.

There are not enough jobs, so it is difficult to find one, but the main problem is language barrier.

[AS&R person, Eritrea, Slovenia]

Italian is a very difficult language. If you want to learn and to talk, you need to have rest of mind...everybody is thinking about paper, about job.

[AS&R person, Nigeria, Italy]

There are some things that politicians need to improve. For example, learning the Portuguese language. And it can't be just 150



hours and say «That's enough» or wait until they find a teacher... 4 months, 6 months, 1 year without having language courses. I think that's wrong. Integration starts with learning Portuguese language. A person that doesn't speak Portuguese is never going to be integrated in local society.

[AS&R person, Eritrea, Portugal]

It's not enough for refugees to be prepared for the job market and life in general. Specially because they don't teach you Portuguese right from the beginning. It's only at the very end – in the last 3 months – that they teach you and it's only for 3 months.

[AS&R person, Syria, Portugal]

I would like that I would have a teacher, an individual teacher - a woman individual teacher - who would at the same time- the teaching, it would be translated at the same time, so I would understand. Because our teacher is Croatian and then she would translate in English and I don't speak either Croatian or English and that's the difficulty I face during the course.

[AS&R person, Iraq, Croatia]

I study today and I learn everything very well. Today I know...but tomorrow...everything is canceled!

[AS&R person, Nigeria, Italy]

There was no maternal support for mothers as refugees. For example, she couldn't study Portuguese for a year and a half because she had a daughter and the organisation didn't agree to put her in a day care. She couldn't attend courses until her daughter was a year and a half old. Their contract is going to finish in 2 months and she just started learning Portuguese now. It doesn't make sense because by the end of the contract they are supposed to be independent, she's supposed to speak Portuguese.

[AS&R person, Syria, Portugal]

The course was a joke because of the differences between the people who were learning. Some of the families couldn't even read or write, they didn't even speak Arabic and the teacher had to spend a month and a half just on teaching the alphabet.

[AS&R person, Syria, Portugal]



EMPLOYMENT/WORK

- Finding an occupation or a job according to qualifications and interests.
- Limitations to use existing qualifications and skills.
- Difficulty in facing family responsibilities.
- Inefficient systemic policies towards employment.
- Salaries are quite low.
- Gender gaps.
- Exploitation (low payment for many hours of work).
- Discrimination (especially directed at black AS&R).

Participants struggle to provide for a family with the financial aid or with the salary of the available jobs.

Other issue is finding an occupation that fits personal qualifications and interests. Not having professional experience recognised is a major difficulty that refugees face, since it limits the access to certain jobs that would otherwise be in conformity to the subject's own qualifications.

Also, situations in the labour market are often stalled because of bureaucratic complications, lack of information from the behalf of asylum seekers/refugees, institutional idleness and hosting organizations' sloppiness in terms of integration.

The inability to reconcile working schedules (such as having to work on night shifts) with other commitments (like having children to take care of) are often a problem when it comes to entering the labour market. Since it seems that these situations are often (if not always) related to motherhood, it could be assumed that women are usually in a bigger disadvantage comparing to men.

Some people left the school because they tell you that if you go to school and learn the language you find a job...so you go to school, go to school...but we know people who did everything and speak Italian very well and they have not found any job.
[AS&R person, Gambia, Italy]

"I wanted to work in my professional field. Now I'm working... Yes, my salary is very good and it's even more than the average salary, but I'm not working in my field. I'm not working in the field that I would like to. For example, I wanted to work in my field but the companies' mentality is «OK, you have a master degree but you have to start as a cleaning employee, or waiter». There's no difference between having a master degree or a high school degree.
[AS&R person, Palestine, Portugal]

"What is happening now with refugees? I'm accepting you, hosting you, I give you a pocket money per month. What I give you, in my word as an NGO, is a Portuguese course, if you need, a help with the legal documents and so on. Where will you be after one year and a half as a refuge? You will speak a little bit of Portuguese and you're going to find, in my opinion, a normal job with a salary of five or six hundred euros in some supermarket or restaurant."
[AS&R person, Syria, Portugal]



I haven't had [negative experiences]. But I think that majority has. E.g. If you are asylum seeker and you have work permission, you will get minimal wage. People are being exploited. On the same job Croatian citizens get 5000 HRK, asylum seekers 2.500 HRK.

On the same work place.

[AS&R person, Iran, Croatia]

In my country I was a mechanic and here I've submitted a lot of cv...but nobody calls me because here all is different...so I wish I can learn a job.

[AS&R person, Nigeria, Italy]

He had a lot of interviews but from the moment employers knew that he didn't speak Portuguese and that he wasn't Portuguese, they wouldn't give him the job.

[AS&R person, Iraq, Portugal]

Albanian, Moroccan, Pakistani...they are more dangerous than we, blacks, but they can easily find a job...let me say... because of their skin.

[AS&R person, Gambia, Italy]

Nowadays employers don't want to have problems. They prefer Italians, or people with long-stay document. They are afraid to lose job if they take a black.

[AS&R person, Rwanda, Italy]



HOUSING

- Short housing protection.
- Accommodation in reception centres is not suitable (no privacy, strict house rules).
- Conditions of the housing solution: some of the participants did not have a bed or the heating system did not work.
- Very little participation in choosing housing solution.
- In some cases, costs of heating.

Refugees stressed the need of private accommodation. Many participants spent time (longer than expected) in reception centres, experiencing lack of basic privacy and autonomy.

In the second phase, they also need longer housing protection, particularly in cities that are experiencing local housing shortages.

The majority of the interviewees reported the same difficulties. The most common ones are the lack of possibilities in terms of finding a guarantor, the language barrier and the cost of housing.

Not knowing what to do after the end of the contract with the hosting organisation is also a common source of fear and anxiety. Asylum seekers/refugees feel that they do not have enough resources (social, economic, cultural) to be autonomous.

This was quite difficult thing to do since not many owners want to rent an apartment to a foreigner, especially a black person. It took us several months to find a place which was in a good state, accessible location and affordable. [AS&R person, Eritrea, Slovenia]

Without the help from social workers, without the help from responsables that speak Portuguese, it's hard to find housing, very hard.
[AS&R person, Eritrea, Portugal]

Even if now I have a work residence permit, it is very difficult to me to find a house. I reach to rent the house only because I have a guarantee from an Italian woman.
[AS&R person, Nigeria, Italy]

One of the biggest concerns since refugees arrive here is what will happen after their contracts end and where they'll go. Specially in terms of houses. The organisations never have an answer for refugees and neither does *Segurança Social*⁹. So, in their case, the organisation helped them. For 6 months they looked for a house and the organisation helped them but not because they wanted to, it was just because they wanted to get them out of the house.
[AS&R person, Syria, Portugal]

Imagine you're a refugee in Syria. I keep giving you a programme for 2 years and every month I come to your house, give you the money and after 2 years I tell you «Your programme is finished, you must leave the house». What did you do for me? Just give me the money? OK, it helps but it doesn't

⁹ Institute of Social Security.

enable me to do something for myself.

[AS&R person, Syria, Portugal]

Winters here are pretty cold here in Slovenia and heating costs are really high. Sometimes 200€, 300€ or even more. All that we save is spent on costs.

[AS&R person, Syria, Slovenia]

Some migrants live in bad conditions and keep the house very bad... But not all! Owners' mistrust. I remember that when we start living in the apartment, the owner came every day to see us and to know if everything was ok. I never realised that he was controlling us. He told us later, and he recommended us to the parish.

[AS&R person, Italy]

I've changed many houses: 2 refugee's camps, 1 SPRAR House, 1 community's apartment, friend's apartment and finally a shared apartment where I live with two Italian friends. It was really changing!

[AS&R person, Mali, Italy]



EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- Access to education, academic opportunities, and vocational training is not guaranteed.
- Difficult access to certified professional courses.
- Difficult access to the university (process, language barrier, financial limitations).
- Lack of conditions to study (not knowing the language in which classes are taught, not having diplomas recognised).
- Difficulty in the recognition of education in case of the undocumented people.
- Absence of tests to verify the knowledge and skills.
- Usefulness of education is sometimes questioned by AS&R and their peers.
- Difficulty in reconciling studies with work or children.
- Need of systemic support for integration of AS&R children at schools.
- Scarce economic conditions to be able to invest in education.
- More opportunities to access scholarships, namely in higher education.

People could say they are doctors but without papers and evidence it is impossible to see if that is true. But maybe there could be some organisations or bodies who would make tests to check the person's knowledge and skills.

[AS&R person, Eritrea, Slovenia]

I have my formal education only that it doesn't mean anything here because I don't have any papers or certificates that prove that.

[AS&R person, Eritrea, Slovenia]

Yes, the problem is, if I'm going to study I need to have conditions, and having conditions means having a scholarship. Otherwise, it's not worth it because I live out of occasional work.

[AS&R person, Cuba, Portugal]

I was enrolled in school directly, without knowing the language. Without any course.

[AS&R person, Iran, Croatia]

It is very difficult to convince people about the importance of studying. Many classmates make fun of me, they say that I want to become the mayor of Padua. People who cannot read and write are really desperate and this condition make any effort to sort of this condition useless.

[AS&R person, Mali, Italy]

For recognition of education I know it is difficult if a person doesn't have any papers.



HEALTH CARE

- Access to Health Services is not guaranteed (namely mental health protection).
- Difficulty in accessing dental services in public health institutions.
- No or low financial support in terms of medicine expenses.
- Discrimination and language barriers.
- Long waiting lists, appointments scheduled for over 6 months from date of request.
- Underestimation asylum seekers/refugees' health problems.

who understands us and who knows the system here.
[AS&R person, Syria, Slovenia]

All refugees have health needs when they arrive here (...) like having an appointment with a doctor to run some tests (...) some people need psychological support, others don't (...) because when people left their own country, they left because of the war, because of the conflict, because of many difficulties and many problems.
[AS&R person, Eritrea, Portugal]

Whenever she went to the organisation to see a doctor or to go to the doctor, the employees, or the person responsible, would immediately say «oh, I have the same problem» or «my son has the same problem», «we're all like that, don't worry», and try to play down the problem as something that anyone here has, it's not a special case or anything.
[AS&R person, Syria, Portugal]

I feel very bad and nobody take me seriously.
[AS&R person, Gambia, Italy]

Sometimes doctors and nurses don't speak English nor any other foreign language.
[AS&R person, Palestine, Portugal]

There is some cultural difference; for example, something that often happened in Bagnoli during medical control was that people refused to give blood. They thought blood to be given to others. (...) In Gambia blood is very important. People don't want to give blood, and there are people who die for this reason. The traditional mentality blocked people's mind.
[AS&R person, Gambia, Italy]

I think translators are not paid by the government but are part of different organisations and you don't know when or if they will be available. And sometimes they are very busy because it is too many people and too little translators.
[AS&R person, Syria, Slovenia]

We have a female translator, which is very important, especially when I have gynaecological examination. It is very important that we have a female translator



SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

- Racism and discrimination, feelings of hostility in the community or working environments.
- Isolation and lack of communication between refugees and locals.
- Difficulty in developing friendships due to language barrier; not willing to chat or speak more than just a few words.
- Lack of general culture, information and knowledge about refugees and situations in their home countries.
- Lack of trust towards the others.
- Dangers of exposition on social media, since some of the participants received threats and unpleasant messages through social media.

We think too much...maybe you passed the commission...negative...and you think. Or have no job and you think...you go to school and then go back and start thinking again... Loneliness kills someone a lot.
[AS&R person, Gambia, Italy]

For me it is also a bad communication between people, there is no real communication, I miss talking to people. Sometimes they avoid you. It is difficult to make friends.
[AS&R person, Eritrea, Slovenia]

Locals are not really hostile, but they do not mix.
[AS&R person, Cameroon, Cyprus]

Just don't go to media or some newspaper. Don't give your picture. If you give your picture, then everybody will know you. Then you will have problem.
[AS&R person, Afghanistan, Croatia]

At home I feel safe. But outside I keep attention... I keep attention to cars and to people, because Media talk a lot about accidents happened to blacks... I always go straight and walk quickly.
[AS&R person, Ivory Coast, Italy]

I feel safe, nobody has never said or done something bad, but I can't say I feel very welcome.
[AS&R person, Eritrea, Slovenia]

How can I get a chance to meet Croatian people? It's impossible.
[AS&R person, Croatia]

He can't get to know Portuguese society the way he's supposed to because he doesn't speak the language. He also thinks that the isolation that refugees are suffering since they arrive here, is an imposed isolation because of the language. This gradually becomes a habit and even as the refugee learns the language, later on he continues with that habit of being isolated. In his case, for example, if he knew the language he would immediately start a conversation with the neighbour, but since he doesn't know it, he got used to the idea of not interacting with neighbours.

The majority of Cypriots are racist.
[AS&R person, Cameroon, Cyprus]



[AS&R person, Syria, Portugal]

It is hard to get friends. For children, it is very easy to find friends, but when you are 25, 26 or 28 years old it is a little bit harder.

[AS&R person, Iran, Slovenia]

There are big cultural differences. For example, in my country you are ought to say hello to elder people. If you don't do it, they can say "Do anybody teach you education rules"? But here, if you say hello to elder people that don't know you, they think that you want to damage them, they are afraid of you.

[AS&R person, Mali, Italy]



Part 2. Stakeholders concerns and needs regarding the integration of asylum seekers and refugees

PERCEPTIONS

- AS&R population is very diverse and have diverse needs.
- Attitudes towards AS&R are considered mostly positive.
- AS&R are affected by the same social, educational, economic and health issues that affect local populations.
- Distrust and fear from the local population.
- The existence of anti-immigration and anti-refugee media.
- Rare xenophobic attacks.
- Misinformation & false expectations from AS&R.

African narrative about Europe is very important; Europe is imagined as a Paradise, where you can easily work and earn money; people arrive here thinking that all will be easy. Reality is different: asylum seekers' professional skills are always too general and too basic for European jobs world, but few of them can have access to professional training.

[Stakeholder, Italy]

Asylum seekers are men and women who escape from war, violence, poverty. They all are looking for a better life in Italy and for job.

[Stakeholder, Italy]

The neighbours of one family, who just moved to the centre of Maribor, were so excited about newcomers that baked some biscuits. However, on the other side I have heard that one family was not nicely accepted. Experiences are very different.

[Migration management and integration services representative, Slovenia]

Media have a big responsibility in increasing discrimination and racism.

[Stakeholder, Italy]

Asylum seekers are struggling with problems-language, health, education, and black market, that means we have integrated them perfectly into our society, as all these problems are present to us every day.

[Public institutional representative, Croatia]

Asylum seekers and refugees have different education experience; some of them are illiterate, some others are very educated. I've met a refugee, a University teacher, that two years before was candidate to Nobel Prize!"

[Stakeholder, Italy]

I feel very safe, because I work with them, and proximity makes all become normal, familiar.

[Stakeholder, Italy]



ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES

[Stakeholder, Italy]

- Lack of communication, articulation and coordination between entities.
- Legal rigidity.
- Lack of communication between AS&R, operators who work in the field and institutions.
- Difficulty in contacting applicants (process is sometimes problematic either because the applicant changed location, phone number or address without informing the institutions).
- Incoherence in the support systems.
- Indirect production of illegality – very few people receive refugee status.
- Unawareness, resistance and fear from AS&R: difficulty in building trust relationships.
- To understand the limits and dangers of co-national association.
- Lack of volunteers to cover the demand.

The volunteer needs are great. There are many of them in our institution, but refugees are still asking for them to get help with learning and studying every day for two or three hours. They say that it could take several hours each day; it does not matter how many hours - just to learn.

[Migration management and integration services representative, Slovenia]

Many asylum seekers carry with them a fear of the police. If they see a policeman or a man with uniform, they start mistrusting and feeling unsafe. Sometimes they don't want to talk and to tell their history because of this.

[Stakeholder, Italy]

Many of them arrive from Country where you cannot say freely your opinion...it is very difficult for them to start talking.

[Stakeholder, Italy]

Some asylum seekers/refugees avoid co-national association, in particular if they belong to a national minority.

[Stakeholder, Italy]

We have many good practices but we lack a central coordination. [Stakeholder, Italy]

When asylum seekers arrive, they are totally out: they don't know the language and they don't know

anything about their rights. Most of them arrive from countries where right does not exist. So, they don't have the concept of right, there is a cultural gap on it.



NEEDS AND CONCERNS

- Excess of centrality/dependency of professionals and NGO employees in the social inclusion process.
- Excess of bureaucracy may obstacle the respect of certain rights.
- Duration of procedures.
- The need to resort to temporary, contingent solutions.
- Statutory vulnerability of Asylum seekers.
- Lack of economic conditions from the behalf of refugees in order to reunite with their families.

Generally, bureaucracy is the reason why the asylum request procedure and integration plan is slower and longer. AS&R have to wait many months, sometimes even years before receiving a final decision regarding their requests. Bureaucracy may obstacle the respect of certain rights.

Asylum seekers are living “suspended lives” due to the long-time waiting for a decision regarding their asylum request. These situations have a great impact on the possibility to plan the future since the result is unknown. Therefore, their uncertainty about the possibility of staying in the country for a prolonged period of time. This often results in situations of frustration, anxiety, idleness and lack of motivation.

Asylum seekers who have their request denied are more vulnerable, because

they automatically become irregular migrants and, as such, have no support of any kind.

I think we offer them a lot. On the other hand, they do not have any social network to be able to get involved. There is a little more difficult for them, because they do not have someone who could help them or explain things. [Migration management and integration services representative, Slovenia]

We can't develop intervention plans that contemplate all stages of integration because we don't know what will be the final decision [Migration management and integration services representative, Portugal]

But the truth is that the bureaucratic processes keep on hindering the access to rights and to obstacle solutions that could solve certain problems. [Researcher, Portugal]

A refugee once told me something that stuck to my head and I never forgot about it ever since: «the migrant, often the economic migrant, has a dream yet to come true. And the refugee, often has a destroyed dream, that has to be restored». And that's why the legal process, even if they can work, is always hanging, there's always a process hanging above their heads that is: «This isn't over yet». [Hosting Centre coordinator, NGOs and civil society representative, Portugal]

The condition of asylum seeker is a precarious and provisional condition, that makes very difficult to set objectives and a clear life project. [Stakeholder, Italy]



LANGUAGE

- Language courses need to be improved and more appealing.
- The access to language courses should be easier and quicker.
- Implementation of courses should be monitored and results as well as outputs should be publicly available and transparent.
- Illiterate and non-educated AS&R need special language courses.
- Gender challenges.

Existent language programmes are insufficient and are not developed properly and regularly.

Courses should be custom-made in order to be more appealing. Moreover, asylum seekers should start learning the local language as soon as possible since it is an important factor that will determine their success in being integrated into society.

The most difficult situation is reported with illiterate and non-educated refugees.

Cultural sensitivity is required in the organisation of courses: problems in organising courses only for women.

We should think about better ways of making language courses more accessible and, above all, more attractive. Maybe more flexible to people's schedules.

[Asylum and refugee office, Migration management and integration services representative, Portugal]

It is important to take care of people with more difficulties to learn, in order to enhance motivation. Motivation to learn is very important also for working inclusion.

[Stakeholder, Italy]



EMPLOYMENT/WORK

- AS&R not being able to work in the first few months.
- Scarce job offers to the most qualified AS&R.
- Companies' prejudices and lack of awareness.
- Absence of professional experience recognition.
- Low wages, exploitation and working in unhealthy conditions in the labour market.
- Fear attitude towards refugees.
- Unrealistic ideas about work, self-employment.

Not having professional experience recognised limits the access to certain jobs that would otherwise be in conformity to the subject's own qualifications. Often AS&R do not have an official recognition of academic qualifications.

I think I can do more damage to a person, if I send him to work too quickly, when he does not even find himself in the environment
[Employment/labour market representative, Slovenia]

Many people are not aware of what it means to have an own business and how much knowledge, time and commitment you need for this. Even if they have a great idea of what it means, they do not realise how much you have to invest, how much you earn and this ...

this is a problem.

[Employment/labour market representative, Slovenia]

From the moment people have a temporary residence permit they can work, they are equal to a national citizen in terms of possibility to work, access to professional training (...) But the truth is that this equality is only theoretical because there's the language issue. They don't master the language and that's an obstacle to access the labour market. Then there's the issue regarding the qualifications recognition.

[Recruitment agent, Education and training representative, Portugal]

Those who are dentists, they were dentist at their country, they are willing to work as an assistant dentist in order to do that they have to pay, something like 10000 euros and do the tests in Croatian in order just to become an assistant. And in Germany for example they can do that in English. What a waste of potential.

[Public institution representative, Croatia]

In my experience problems in work access depend on the companies' lack of awareness; employers consider difficult to involve asylum seekers, because they don't know the regulation, and think they are undocumented. This attitude is very negative for asylum seekers because they cannot prove their skills, even if job is available; indeed, it is very difficult to find Italian workers available to do certain kind of jobs.

[Stakeholder, Italy]



HOUSING

- Expensive real estate.
- Difficulty in finding housing.
- In some cases, there are gaps between housing state supports and its effective uptake, affecting landlords and AS&R.
- The housing funding which is normally given to asylum seekers is not enough even to afford rent, in some cases.
- Rent allowances do not match the rent prices of the current market.
- Difficulty in finding affordable housing solutions is not only directly related to financial factors but also to mistrust. The majority of landlords do not want to rent an apartment to refugees.

Most often, there are not the owners of apartments who would be disturbed by them, but they are worried about what neighbours would say.

[Migration management and integration services representative, Slovenia]

If they look like average Mariborian, then it's OK; they can hide. However, if they stand out in appearance, it is very difficult to get an apartment for them. [Migration management and integration services representative, Slovenia]

There are no houses, no guarantors and nobody that can help refugees finding a house.

[NGOs and civil society representative, Portugal]



EDUCATION

- Certification of skills and levels of education of the undocumented.
- Undocumented AS&R children and adults are not able to continue their education, especially secondary schools and higher education.
- Children are enrolled in classes that are not appropriate for their age.
- Vocational training and professional courses are insufficient.
- Recognition processes are difficult, long and expensive.
- Issues in access to further education after compulsory education.
- Teachers are not trained or prepared to work with AS&R population.
- Lack of education programs and support for teachers working with AS&R population.

Other than Greek language courses and some workshops on interview skills, asylum seekers do not have any other opportunities to update their skills and knowledge.

[Stakeholder, Cyprus]

There are still many flaws and (...) specially in matter of qualifications recognition (...) It's already difficult for any other citizen from a different country who has documents – and the whole process is very expensive – so imagine for these people (refugees), that are undocumented and have no means to prove their qualifications, it's even harder.

[Recruitment agent, Education and training representative, Portugal]

HEALTHCARE

- People under international protection have issues exercising their right on health care.
- Access to health care is complex, difficult and sometimes expensive.
- Many of AS&R have suffered from physical pain before or while escaping, and they have several health care issues that are not easy to identify.
- Workers in health care system are not familiar with AS&R specific regulations (including doctors).
- In some cases, lack of economic safety for pregnant women as they do not have right to maternity benefits and are not able to work.
- Lack of appropriate response on psychiatric issues and cases.
- AS&R that were victims of human trafficking do not receive enough attention from health care services.

We feel that our national health system and all its operators don't always have proper training, lack sensitivity towards refugees and aren't aware of the fact that their access is supposed to be free. (...) Apparently this information isn't accessible to all operators who work at health facilities. So these people charge them (refugees), because they aren't informed.

[Social service technician, NGOs and civil society representative, Portugal]



Italian health system presents many fails: long time for visits, complex bureaucracy, and it is very difficult to know where and who can give you information!
[Stakeholder, Italy]

Some asylum seekers who had serious psychotic problems, suicidal and aggression and eventually the emergency was called (...). Normally they should be there [in the hospital] for two or three day as some minimum. The next day the police came for this person and took them out. This person is doubled traumatised because the police came for them in (...) so he doesn't want to go back to (...) where he needs to find help and so it is snowball effect.
[NGO representative, Croatia]

Asylum seekers need psychological support. They all suffer, they are traumatised, they all are shocked, but this pain is not enough taken in charge. Psychological support is active only for people who have mental problems, but it should be available for everyone. They suffer and they are not supported in processing this pain. I see many people who start an integration process and give it up after a while.
[Stakeholder, Italy]

In Africa we go to the doctor when we feel really very very bad...many asylum seekers address to emergency when they feel really bad.
[Stakeholder, Italy]

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

- Isolation.
- After leaving the reception centres, and once international protection is achieved, isolation can increase.
- But micro-reception or widespread reception are also considered more useful to create relationships.
- Lack of social networks.
- Men are more outgoing and active in social interactions than women so it is easier for them to integrate.

The permanent delay of asylum process makes very difficult to build a network, because of the precariousness of asylum seekers' life. Many of them consider Italy a transit country and reception contest is not enough supporting their real needs. Moreover, native's attitude, not really welcoming and inclusive, discourages inclusion even for skilled people.
[Stakeholder, Italy]

Arriving at a new country and not knowing anything. We might have a whole network to receive people but these people are still lonely (...) due to the fact that they left their families behind (...) and not knowing anyone else, even if they have an institution to turn to, they are far away from everyone.
[Hosting centre coordinator, NGOs and civil society representative, Portugal]



Part 3. Citizens' perceptions on the integration of asylum seekers and refugees

PERCEPTIONS

- AS&R generally are not perceived as treat.
- General lack of information about refugees' issues concerns and needs.
- The media exaggerates negative news.
- AS&R benefit from support: housing support, transport support and other benefits.
- AS&R share problems with local populations, as the difficulty in access to housing, unemployment and low wages.
- AS&R are vulnerable, they cannot choose and accept things that locals do not accept.
- AS&R should have more self-determination.
- Local people do not have much contact with AS&R.
- Consideration that AS&R have more needs than migrants and, consequently, in terms of institutional integration support, migrants have less privileges than refugees.

- Asylum seekers live in poor house conditions, camps and sometimes slums or squats.
- In some cases, risks of AS&R taking advantage of privileges.
- In some cases, the perception that AS&R do not want to integrate.

I think that our country has the duty to ensure certain rights to people that run from war zones, that were risking their lives... Apparently that works reasonably.
[citizen, Portugal]

Cyprus has a very low crime rate, so they must feel relatively safe here.
[citizen, Cyprus]

I know because I have a friend who is a social worker and works with refugees and she tells me about some experiences she had, but I never met any refugees...
[citizen, Portugal]

I think that refugees don't have any major problems in our environment. I think that they are well accepted and that we do not make such differences as the media are publishing.
[Citizen, Slovenia]

Camps' management goes against the development of personal autonomy; when asylum seekers leave camps they are unable to move in the society. [Citizen, Italy]



It is difficult to integrate them, if they do not know the language. They feel lost, but so do we.

[Citizen, Slovenia]

When you come as a foreigner, I just have to adapt.

[Citizen, Slovenia]

(speaking about the relocation of refugees throughout the interior of Portugal) "There you go, that's also imposed. A person doesn't have to necessarily go to live to the interior. (...) Because a person might not want to live in the interior. I can understand that those who have a refugee status must... The basic needs, right? And survival and the need to survive physically. But you cannot force me, take me, and oblige me to go and live in Celorico da Beira (a remote town in Portugal).

[citizen, Portugal]

Asylum seekers are more keen to accept bad jobs.

[Citizen, Italy]

I haven't met anyone who had personal experiences with refugees and has a negative attitude.

[Citizen, Croatia]

Through history we can see that Slovenes has accepted all people. Now, some of the media want to show us differently.

[Citizen, Slovenia]

Asylum seekers don't speak Italian because they don't want to integrate. [citizen, Italy]

Some dudes, because here they have rights that they did not have at home, they feel more powerful here and take advantage of this.

[Citizen, Slovenia]



FEELINGS TOWARDS AS&R

Participants identify a range of feelings that host populations may experience towards AS&R:

- **Mistrust:** local population does not trust AS&R.
- **Xenophobic:** including feelings from the behalf of other migrants.
- **Grievance:** asylum seekers aggravate the situation of the unemployed; asylum seekers have benefits that disadvantaged natives do not have.
- **Curiosity:** if asylum seekers arrive in small numbers.
- **Fear:** if asylum seekers arrive in big numbers.
- **Fear of losing certain western values** such as the liberal, the democratic and the secular; and individual freedom.
- **Cultural justification:** to explain to certain asylum seekers negative attitudes/behaviours.
- **Stereotypes:** cultural prejudices.

Owners are reluctant because they don't trust asylum seekers and refugees. You rent to one Pakistani and after a while you found 20 Pakistanis living there.
[Citizen, Italy]

Because they are presented as a problem, people are being xenophobic and they have this one-sided approach, simply out of fear. Such a behaviour makes refugees feel unacceptable and in this way their feelings become negative to our city, people that live here. When a group of people behaves as if you are unwanted, of course you will feel unwanted and you will not have good feelings towards these people.
[Citizen, Croatia]

For Asylum seekers and refugees is very hard to find a job, as they don't have the culture of job. They are not used to work as in Italy, and employers mistrust them. [Citizen, Italy]

The general attitude of Italian society towards migrants got worst according to a worst political background...nevertheless I see many families and single persons that are actively involved in helping migrants.
[Citizen, Italy]



CONCERNS AND NEEDS

- The lack of proficiency in the language of the host country is a major barrier to integration.
- Concern regarding the fact that some asylum seekers are just idling at the hosting centres due to the absence of proper integration plans from the behalf of the organisations.
- Suffering ghettoisation: AS&R placed in the periphery of the host cities.
- Reception centres location isolates AS&R from local populations.
- Xenophobic atmosphere in cities of destiny.
- AS&R Difficulty in finding jobs in weak economies.
- The importance of having qualifications recognised.
- Lack of materials and textbooks to teach host languages as foreign languages.
- The slowness of the paperwork and application processes.
- The perception that there is a lack of coordination and systematisation of approaches to respond to the arrival of AS&R.
- Accommodation model in reception centres is not adequate.
- Inefficiency of states and the institutions responsible for integration.

- Financial aid is considered to be poorly managed and it is believed that there is a gap between what organisations receive from states for each asylum seeker they host and what each asylum seeker receives.
- AS&R need orientation and support in the job market at arrival.
- AS&R expose and reveal weaknesses and problems of local populations.
- AS&R public policy should not be specific for refugees, but its goal should be to improve the life of all.
- There is no systemic support for integration of AS&R children at schools.
- The need for peace and a peaceful life, for security and inclusion.

If they don't have support, they'll be buried there... That's the impression that I have... If only our services weren't so sluggish...
[citizen, Portugal]

Xenophobia will not disappear so easily, and it will not disappear if people will be on the periphery and not be available to the community.
[citizen, Croatia]

Citizen should be more open towards asylum seekers and refugees; they should try to involve them in daily activities in order to promote a better inclusion.
[Citizen, Italy]



Learning Portuguese is even more important than money.

[citizen, Portugal]

process, I think it's much more difficult if they are not included in an organisation.

[Citizen, Slovenia]

Needs depend on the primary environment. If they come from war zone, their needs are basic.

[Citizen, Slovenia]

It is extremely difficult to support or advocate some public policy specific for refugees when we have programmes like Workplace training without a work contract for our young people who are educated and cannot find a job. And if the government does not care for young people in general, for workers in general, then there needs to be a wider campaign for dignified work in Croatia regardless of nationality or status.

[citizen, Croatia]

Housing is, like language, problem for all other Croats, too. I have a problem to live, and with a couple of jobs I hardly survive so I do not even know how they live.

[citizen, Croatia]

I used to give voluntary Italian class, and I can say that there are many difficulties... Many refugees are illiterate, and this is a big obstacle to learning, because they never went to school. Some others are educated but they are closed...Nigerian, in example, are very closed to Italian language...

[citizen, Italia]

At the beginning, any work, as long as it is carried out in accordance with all regulations, is very welcome. There they get to know the existing cultural norms and rules in this society.

[Citizen, Slovenia]

The problem is, especially in children aged between 14 and 15; because they could go to a normal elementary school, but they are sent into an elementary school for adults, where they are completely excluded from the company of their peers and do not even have the opportunity to meet new friends.

[Citizen, Slovenia]

Integration is easier for children because they are involved in the education process. For those who are already out of the education



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Pre and Post – Arrival Schemes
to facilitate inclusion and prevent xenophobia and radicalization