

INTEGRATING REFUGEES THROUGH YOUTH WORK ACTIVITIES

Research on youth work role in supporting
social integration of refugees



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ABSTRACT

There are thousands of forced migrants arriving every day on Europe's shores and most of them are young. In the first seven months of this year, 67 percent of arriving refugees were between the ages of 14 and 34.¹ The international community and local authorities are taking various measures to address the challenges that are arising as a result to the unpredictably high numbers of refugees. These include the policies of housing, economic support, legal support, and social integration. As the numbers of migrants are higher than usual, the regular integration programmes need to focus more on the formal issues of accepting refugees while the social integration is left on the periphery. Youth work as a mean for social inclusion and cohesion and its role in integrating refugees into the societies is taken into consideration. The research was conducted in order to examine the potential of youth organizations, youth workers and youth centres to target the inclusion of refugees into the activities of the organizations and to ease the integration into new communities. The **aim of research** is to examine the possibilities of integrating refugees through youth work activities in Lithuania and Latvia (research countries). **The research comprises of the following parts:**

- » Overview of existing researches and legal basis on social integration of refugees, statistical data from research and other European countries;
- » Investigation of existing practice on state and NGO levels of integrating refugees in new communities in Lithuania and Latvia;
- » Exploring the opinions of young people and youth workers from research countries on the possibilities to include refugees into daily activities of youth centres and youth organizations;
- » Investigation of the opinions of refugees on involvement into youth work activities;
- » Analysis of collected data is made and proposals for social integration of refugees through youth work activities are formulated.

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The project is coordinated by Association „Active Youth” (Lithuania) and is implemented together with: Brodoto d.o.o. (Croatia), Institute for Policy Research and Analysis (Lithuania) and NGO „Integration Centre” (Lithuania).

The opinions expressed in this publication, conclusions and recommendations do not necessarily coincide with the position of the European Commission.



Erasmus+



¹ This percentage refers to the number of the people from ages 14-34 who applied for asylum in the EU28 in the first 7 months of 2015. European Union's Eurostat database, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

Introduction

In recent years, migration has put a huge pressure in many European countries. The movements include men, women, boys and girls; young and old; singles and whole families. The international community was caught unprepared for such large numbers of people. The large – scale arrival of migrants has put a strain not only on individuals but also on the common European system as a whole. Faced with domestic and budgetary pressures (including security concerns), countries along the transit route are challenged to implement a coordinated response that addresses the humanitarian and protection needs of refugees and migrants in line with international standards and obligations. So far these short-term approaches are more visible.

There is also emerging reflection on how to ensure a faster and more efficient integration of the immigrants. Youth sector has the challenging task to develop mid to long-term responses to help the big proportion of migrants, who are young people themselves, integrate in their new communities and participate actively in public life. Some activities under Erasmus+ Programme are already focusing on integration of young refugees. One of the projects, financed by this Programme, “Together: refugees & youth” (TRY) aims to create a special programme in which youth workers would include refugees in their work. Special attention is given to situation of Lithuania and Latvia. Project has two-way orientations. The way the youth would get a chance to develop in a multicultural environment – thus building up their tolerance and increasing multilingualism. Another, the refugees would integrate into the society, since the youth would help them with the local language, culture, traditions, etc.

In order to implement TRY project successfully, research is made, to provide related evidence for enhancing youth work practice, to understand better the current reality, the potential of youth work in coordinated intervention of social integration of refugees in new communities. The **aim of research** is to examine the possibilities of integrating refugees through youth work activities in Lithuania and Latvia (research countries). **Objectives of research:**

- » Overview existing researches and legal basis on social integration of refugees, statistical data from research and other European countries;
- » Investigate existing practice on state and NGO levels of integrating refugees in new communities in Lithuania and Latvia;
- » Explore the opinions of young people and youth workers from research countries on the possibilities to include refugees into daily activities of youth centres and youth organizations;
- » Investigate the opinions of refugees on involvement into youth work activities;
- » Analyse collected data and formulate proposals for social integration of refugees through youth work activities.

First part of research is focused on present situation of research countries, existing researches and practices on social integration of refugees on European level. Interviewing youth workers and young people, as well as the professionals who are actively working with refugees and the refugees themselves follows the literature overview. In the second part, gathered information is analyzed and recommendations are made.



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Research epistemology

According to Bryman (2012), there are 2 possible ways to create knowledge: 1) positivist; 2) subjectivist – interpretivist. While “positivism is an epistemological position that advocates the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social reality and beyond. <...> **Interpretivism** is a term that usually denotes an alternative to the positivist orthodoxy that has held sway for decades. It is predicated upon the view that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action². Bearing in mind the set objectives of the study, interpretivist position is chosen which allows the researcher to get a grip of how do the people who are involved or not involved into certain activities or processes make sense of the reality they are in, what kinds of solutions do they see, etc.

Research ontology

Constructionism (Bryman, 2012) is an ontological position (often also referred to as constructionism) that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors. It implies that social phenomena and categories are not only produced through social interaction but that they are in a constant state of revision. In recent years, the term has also come to include the notion that researchers’ own accounts of the social world are constructions. In other words, the researcher always presents a specific version of social reality, rather than one that can be regarded as definitive. Knowledge is viewed as indeterminate, a position redolent of postmodernism. This sense of constructionism is usually allied to the ontological version of the term. In other words, these are linked meanings. Both meanings are antithetical to objectivism, but the second meaning is also antithetical to realism. The first meaning might be thought of usefully as constructionism in relation to the social world; the second as constructionism in relation to the nature of knowledge of the social world (and indeed the natural world).

Research methodology

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, **qualitative research strategy** is chosen. In qualitative studies the social reality is understood as a result of meanings and contexts that are created during social interaction (Flick et al. 2004).

Data collection

1. **Literature review.** Aim – to gather information about integration of refugees, good practices (programmes, projects, priorities, etc.), challenges, main institutions and other players who are and can be involved into the processes of their integration. Literature involves already done research on integration of refugees as well as documents and strategies applied on the European level (European Commission, Council of Europe, etc.). Overview of practices and strategies applied in European countries will complement the literature review with real practices and examples. Different European countries are overviewed with the main focus on Lithuania and Latvia.
2. **In-depth interviews** helped to investigate existing and possible practices of integrating refugees on state and NGO levels in Lithuania and Latvia.
3. **Focus groups** allowed gathering together the opinions, views and ideas from young people in Latvia and Lithuania.

2 Bryman, 2012, p. 28-30.

I. REFUGEE SITUATION REVIEW: STATISTICAL DATA

Over one million refugees and migrants (1 015 078) have made the perilous journey across the Mediterranean into Europe in 2015. The majority (850,000) has crossed from Turkey to Greece through the Aegean and Dodecanese seas³. Situation in 2016 is staying similar - 289 374 arrivals by the sea, 3 173 dead/missing⁴. This movement constitutes one of the largest movements of displaced people through European borders since World War Two. In 2015, 59.5 million people are displaced around the world, an increase of 8.3 million since 2014. This represents the highest number of people displaced since the Second World War. Globally, one in every 122 humans is now either a refugee, internally displaced, or seeking asylum. Since early 2011, the primary reason for this acceleration has been the war in Syria, now the world's single largest driver of displacement. On average, every day last year, 42,500 people became refugees, asylum seekers, or internally displaced, a four-fold increase in just four years. Meanwhile, decades-old instability and conflict around the world, for example in Afghanistan and Somalia, means that millions of people remain on the move or – as is increasingly common – stranded for years on the edge of society as long-term internally displaced people or refugees.



Yet the movement is also becoming increasingly diverse. While 91 per cent of those arriving to Greece from Turkey are from the top ten “refugee-producing” countries, people of other nationalities have increasingly joined the flow. A small but growing number of individuals from South West Asia, North Africa and West Africa are also moving along the same route in an attempt to reach Europe (Countries of origin include the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Bangladesh, Morocco, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria, among others⁵. There are thousands of forced migrants arriving every day on Europe's shores and most of them are young. In the first seven

3 Figures valid as of 31 December 2015, available at <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/country.php?id=83>

4 Figures valid of August 2016, available at <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>

5 Regional Overview of the Inter-Agency Portal, available at <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>

months of this year, 67 percent of them were between the ages of 14 and 34.⁶ While some fear these youth are a threat – to Europe’s security, economy and culture – world leaders must get past the rhetoric, learn who these refugees actually are and design policies accordingly.”⁷

Departures to relocation countries remain slow, which increases the length of time the asylum-seekers are spending in the accommodation places, puts pressure on the accommodation capacities and increases the costs per person. According to Eurostat⁸, the number of persons seeking asylum from non - EU countries in the EU-28 during the first quarter of 2016 reached 287 100. This was 97 500 more than in the same quarter of 2015. Out of the 299 400 total asylum applicants (i.e. including repeat applicants), 287 100 (96 %) were first time applicants. The highest number of first time asylum applicants in the first quarter of 2016 was registered in Germany (with almost 175 000 applicants, or 61% of total applicants in the EU Member States), followed by Italy (22 300, or 8%), France (18 000, or 6%), Austria (13 900, or 5%) and the United Kingdom (10 100, or 4%). These 5 Member States together account for 83% of all first time applicants in the EU-28.

Situation in Latvia

Statistical data available for the period from 1 January 1998 to 30 September 2014, provided by UNHCR and OCMA⁹ show that, from 1998 to 2007, the number of asylum applications submitted annually ranged from a low of five in 1998 to 34 in 2007. In 2008, 51 applications for asylum were filed. 2009 saw 52 new asylum requests, and 61 persons applied for asylum in Latvia in 2010. A sharp peak was observed in 2011, when 335 asylum-seekers sought international protection in Latvia, while the figure dropped to 189 and 185 respectively in 2012 and 2013. The total number of persons seeking international protection in Latvia over the first nine months of 2014 is 290 – a relatively large increase compared to the two preceding years. Between 1998 and September 2014, 63 persons have been granted refugee status and 99 alternative statuses, making up a total of 162 beneficiaries of international protection in Latvia. Situation has been changed due to refugee’s crisis. Statistical data available at Eurostat shows that asylum applicant (including first time asylum applicants) in Latvia was 330 persons in 2015 and 220 in 2016 (till June). Five main citizenships of first time asylum applicants (1st quarter 2016, Eurostat) are from: Pakistan (29 %), Russia (14 %), Armenia (14 %), Syria (14 %) and other (29 %). There were 65 first instance decisions made in 1st quarter 2016, but only 25 were positive, out of which only 15 for refugee status.

6 This percentage refers to the number of the people from ages 14-34 who applied for asylum in the EU28 in the first 7 months of 2015. European Union’s Eurostat database, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

7 Mercy Corps (2016) Behind Them, a Homeland in Ruins: The Youth of Europe’s Refugee Crisis. Available at https://d2zyf8ayvg1369.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/The%20Youth%20of%20Europe%27s%20Refugee%20Crisis%20Report_0.pdf

8 Asylum quarterly report. Eurostat. Available at <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/asylum-and-managed-migration/publications>

9 Integration of refugees in Latvia: Participation and Empowerment. Understanding Integration in Latvia through the participation of refugees, integration stakeholders’ experiences, and research. October 2014 – January 2015. Available at http://www.unhcr-northerneurope.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Documents/PDF/Latvia/2015-Latvia-Integration-Report.pdf

Situation in Lithuania

Lithuania, as Latvia, receives relatively few asylum-seekers compared to other countries in Europe and the number of recognized refugees and persons granted subsidiary protection has decreased in recent years. According to UNHCR annual statistics¹⁰, which are based on information from the Migration Department (in regard to decisions taken on first asylum applications), the total number of individuals granted international protection in Lithuania between 1997 and 2013 was 916 persons, originating from 28 countries. About 80% of all persons granted international protection in Lithuania are of Russian (mainly Chechnyan) origin or Afghan nationals: Russian nationals comprise 64% and Afghan nationals 17%. In 2012, Lithuania received 526 applications and in 2013 only 275 applications were registered. The decrease, compared to 2012, was primarily due to a significant drop in applications from Georgian nationals, who have constituted the largest group of asylum-seekers since 2009.. Only 13 persons in 2012 and 14 persons in 2013 were recognized as 1951 Convention refugees, 37 (in 2012) and 38 (in 2013) were granted subsidiary protection status, 321 persons were rejected in 2012 and 110 persons – in 2013, and 278 applications in 2012 and 2013 were (otherwise) closed. There were 74 asylum applications pending in the Migration Department by the end of 2013, of which 20% were from female applicants. Statistical data available at Eurostat shows that asylum applicant (including first time asylum applicants) in Lithuania was 315 persons in 2015 and 130 in 2016 (till June). Five main citizenships of first time asylum applicants (1st quarter 2016, Eurostat) are from: Ukraine (25 %), Russia (25 %), Azerbaijan (13 %), Afghanistan (13 %) and other (24 %). There were 40 first instance decisions made in 1st quarter 2016, but only 15 were positive, out of which only 10 for refugee status.



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10 Integration of refugees in Lithuania. Participation and Empowerment. Understanding Integration in Lithuania through an age, gender and diversity based participatory approach. October – November 2013. Available at http://www.unhcr-northerneurope.org/uploads/tx_news/UNHCR_Integration_of_refugees_in_Lithuania.pdf

II. KNOWLEDGE BACKGROUND¹¹

There are general studies, mostly based on each country situation on integrating asylum seekers. One of the specific studies on integration of young immigrants was made by FutureLab Europe in April 2015. In a report “Creating a common European future: integration of young migrants in Europe”¹² investigated practices of the European Integration Fund (EIF) in four EU member states (Finland, Germany, Romania, and Spain, virtually covering Northern, Continental, Eastern and Southern Europe) are presented. The study was a result of a qualitative research based on the findings that emerged from 10 interviews with NGOs based in the case study countries and co-financed by the EIF, and a questionnaire filled out by 125 migrants who took part in EIF funded programmes. The study highlighted that a large number of migrants experienced discrimination in all the case study countries. Migrants put a very high emphasis on language, stressing that it is the most important factor for integration and called for a higher involvement of local NGOs and host societies to promote successful integration. In general, the programmes benefited from good communication: in the four focus countries, over two-thirds of the respondents thought that the EIF-funded programmes they took part in were easily accessible and over half of them knew that the programme was funded by the EU. NGOs called for less stringent eligibility criteria for EIF-funded programmes so that they could include different types of migrants, including those without a regular resident permit, or foreign-born spouses or children who hold the citizenship of the host country and are therefore excluded from integration programmes. On the basis of these findings, FutureLab Europe participants developed a number of policy recommendations to the EU, national and regional authorities and NGOs. Main focus of these recommendations is how to make NGOs efforts more efficient. Some of the recommendations are relevant for this study as well¹³:

- » National institutions should ensure the support to the NGOs that are working on the integration of migrants.
- » Youth dimension should be reinforced. Significant impact can be reached by developing programmes directed specifically toward young migrants, keeping in mind that many migrants are young people who are hoping to become an integrated part of the host society.
- » Work with mixed groups (migrants and non migrants) should be implemented, with involvement of schools as these are the places where migrants and non-migrants and their parents get together.
- » NGOs can offer the tools for civic and democratic participation by empowering the migrants and allowing their voice to be heard in civil society organizations and in the decision-making processes. Good examples at the local level, such as training on civic participation, meetings with local deputies, excursions to city hall etc. should be further developed.
- » NGOs can involve migrants as project leaders. More projects dealing with the integration of third country nationals should prepare and encourage migrants to become project leaders as they are often the most appropriate persons who can help other migrants to

11 This research did not encompass an analysis of all previously conducted studies on social integration of immigrants, or seek to list all publications on the topic. The intention was rather to review and provide examples of relevant studies, which could inform the analysis of the findings and formulation of proposed recommendations in this research. Main focus was given to review existing research in Latvia and Lithuania.

12 FutureLab Europe, April 2015, available at http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub_5495_fle_publication.pdf

13 FutureLab Europe, April 2015, available at http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub_5495_fle_publication.pdf

understand both the culture of the country of origin and of the host country.

- » Exchange of best practices among NGOs should be fostered. Some projects run by NGOs are more successful than others. Integration workers should build partnerships with other NGOs (also located in other member states) so that they can learn from each other.

Existing research review in Latvia

Study on access to social assistance and services by persons with alternative status from 2012 by the Office of the Ombudsman of Latvia¹⁴ aimed to map relevant normative acts and their compliance with international standards, as well as the availability of social assistance and services in practice. The study reveals that recipients of alternative status experience significant income, housing and employment insecurity. In the report were are presented recommends to relevant normative acts, which would provide persons with alternative status to obtain language barrier, which hampers access to professional education and training, access to the labour market.

Building on the findings of above presented study, the Annual Report of the Office of the Ombudsman from 2013¹⁵ outlines the results of a Roundtable among institutional and non-governmental stakeholders, such as the MoI, OCMA, the MoC, the MoW, the Municipalities of Riga and Ropaži, LCHR, PDM and the Latvian Red Cross, held in February 2013. It notes that the participants of the Roundtable emphasized the need to establish a continuous and sustainable integration mechanism as well as a specialized centre for integration, staffed with trained social workers. They also called for changes to the normative base and integration policy for persons with alternative status, as well as for the availability of earmarked funding. The report highlights that the international protection afforded to individuals in Latvia only effectively amounted to physical safety.

The report “Integration of new members of the society”¹⁶, commissioned by IOM and conducted by Quality Research Studio in 2008, maps the opportunities for and barriers to the integration of refugees in Latvia, as well as public attitudes towards integration. The results of the survey reveal that the perception of the general public is that refugees experience challenges integrating into Latvian society, owing mainly to cultural differences as well as unwelcoming attitudes on the part of the receiving community. The survey also notes that a significant share of respondents does not support cultural diversity; and that views on refugees originating from Chechnya and those of Muslim faith are particularly negative. In-depth interviews with experts confirm that the overall attitude of the general public towards refugees is negative or intolerant. The study also reveals that stakeholders from relevant institutions and non-governmental organizations do not agree on the overall success of the integration policy in Latvia. While public authorities maintain that the needs of refugees are met at an adequate standard and underline that refugees must themselves take a proactive approach to exercise their rights, NGO workers note that a lack of understanding and a humane attitude hampers the translation of applicable legal provisions into effective protection and assistance. Among the specific challenges faced by refugees when attempting to forge a new life in Latvia, the report singles out post-recognition access to housing. Institutional stakeholders also point to the importance of

14 Office of the Ombudsman, Study on access to social assistance and services by persons with alternative status, 2012. Available at <http://www.ombudsman.parliament.lv/resources-and-publications/corporate-documents/annual-reports>

15 European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, Directive 2011/95/EU on standards for the qualification of Third-Country Nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (recast),¹³ December 2011, Article 22, available at: <http://goo.gl/wNGZcS>.

16 Office of the Ombudsman, Annual Report 2013, 2014, p. 92-94. Available at <http://www.ombudsman.parliament.lv/resources-and-publications/corporate-documents/annual-reports>

knowledge of the Latvian language when enabling refugees to access the full range of their rights. The report therefore recommends that a differentiated case-by-case approach has to be adopted to provide all refugees in Latvia with equal access to integration opportunities.

Integration into Latvian society is unpacked also by the study “Social integration in Riga”¹⁷ from 2010. While the study does not single out refugees in particular, they appear to be pooled under the broader group of migrants. The report notes that the experts consulted for the purpose of this study recommend that migrants with a permanent resident status should benefit from services related to housing, primary education and health care under the same conditions as the general public. The report also reveals that, while the experts do not consider issues related to immigration particularly topical in Latvia, they nevertheless acknowledge that measures should be taken to include immigrant children in the educational system and that conditions should be created for the full participation of the immigrants in society, except for political rights.

The report from 2010 “How Integrated Is Latvian Society? An Audit of Achievements, Failures and Challenges”¹⁸, by the Advanced Social and Political Research Institute of the University of Latvia, explores the development of policy and practice with regard to social integration in Latvia. Among its conclusions, the report notes that the inevitable flow of immigrants, asylum-seekers and refugees in the future will render integration one of the most important preconditions for sustainable development in Latvia¹⁹.

A study “A summary: Citizenship, language and participation of minorities in Latvia”²⁰, made in 2012 looks at applicable rights in terms of language and education, as well as the political and socio-economic participation of representatives of minority groups in Latvia. The report concludes that the residents of Latvia do not enjoy equal access to full participation in the society. For example, political participation is limited for non-citizens. While there are no legal obstacles to the participation of minority groups in the socio-economic life of the society, the report concludes that minorities tend to be under-represented in the public sector.

Existing research review in Lithuania

The “Assessment of Social Integration Programme of Foreigners Who Have Been Granted the Refugee Status or Temporary Protection in the Republic of Lithuania”²¹, conducted by the Institute of Social Studies in Lithuania in 2007, concluded that integration is facilitated not only by personal characteristics and how much support the refugees receive, but also by the social environment in which the refugees find themselves. The assessment of the feedback provided by refugee respondents reveal that the key factors preventing refugees from successful economic integration and employment

17 Riga Municipality, Social Integration in Riga, 2010, available at <http://goo.gl/srIXbj>

18 University of Latvia, Advanced Social and Political Research Institute, How Integrated Is Latvian Society? An Audit of Achievements, Failures and Challenges, 2010, available at <http://goo.gl/kRMcmV>

19 Rozenvalds, K., The Soviet Heritage and Integration Policy Development Since the Restoration of Independence in N. Muiznieks (ed), How Integrated Is Latvian Society? An Audit of Achievements, Failures and Challenges, University of Latvia, Advanced Social and Political Research Institute, 2010, p. 59, available at <http://goo.gl/oZVPaq>

20 Providus, Citizenship, language and participation of minorities, 2012, available at <http://goo.gl/A8cPNJ>

21 Institute for Social Studies and Lithuanian Adult Education and Information Centre "Assessment of Social Integration Programme of Foreigners Who Have Been Granted the Refugee Status or Temporary Protection in the Republic of Lithuania," 2007 Report, Vilnius.

opportunities, which forces individuals to take up unqualified or low salary work, are an inability to speak the Lithuanian language, older age and/or gender. The assessment revealed that refugee women experience greater challenges in integrating into the Lithuanian labour market and other sectors, such as health care and/or education of children, due to post-traumatic stress syndrome and the family situation (e.g. the number of children in the family). In addition, 1/3 of the respondents noted the negative attitude of Lithuanian employers as a barrier to integration. The analysis of the surveyed data indicated that even though Lithuanian companies experience a shortage of labour force, the majority of employers are not willing to employ asylum-seekers and/or refugees. The assessment concluded that employers were influenced by xenophobia and negative stereotypes about other nationalities, and tended to request more information about job-seekers of foreign origin when recruiting personnel.

The publication "Lithuania has become home to them"²², a collection of stories describing successful refugees in Lithuania was published by the Department of Supervision of Social Services under the MSSL in 2013. This publication was published to sensitize the general public to the plight of refugees and help the host society overcome fear and distrust. The publication comprises four "success stories". The intention behind telling their stories is to break the myth that it is difficult for foreigners to settle in Lithuania.

In 2012-2013 within the European Refugee Fund (ERF) - funded project "Support for the Foreigners Granted Asylum – New Perspectives",²³ implemented by the Refugee Reception Center, publication contains interviews with refugees and representatives from various institutions responsible for facilitating integration, who share their views on the social integration program, and on the impact of the support provided. This publication contains a number of recommendations, which correspond to findings from the present refugees' integration opportunities and challenges in Lithuania. The publication identifies a number of necessary improvements, such as the need to stimulate the integration of refugees into the labour market, to find mechanisms to motivate employers to recruit refugees, and the need to organize more events to facilitate the contact between refugees and the communities and youth, in particular with a view to promoting tolerance and reducing xenophobia.

During implemented project "Įvairovė.lt", the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman ordered a public opinion and market research in 2013. The aim of the study was to investigate the Lithuanian public opinion on discrimination in various social groups. According to the survey, 43 percent foreigner's respondents said that ethnic minority face discrimination in Lithuania. However, only 7 percent Lithuanian respondents recognize this kind of discrimination. The main reason for discrimination against the people is lack of awareness and ignorance (22 percent.), another faith or religion (17 percent.), problems arising from not knowing the language of (16 percent.). The main obstacle to employment of ethnic minorities is insufficient knowledge of Lithuanian (53 per cent of all the respondents, 62 percent of foreigner's respondents). The opinion about ethnic minorities is formed mostly by media (56 percent) and personal experience (22 percent). Friends, colleagues, relative's views on ethnic minorities are affected - 17 percent of respondents, and the school - only 5 percent. In 2015 study "Bullying on the various identity signs in schools of Lithuania" was conducted²⁴. It was highlighted, that the problem of bullying among children and young people is directly related to widespread discrimination in society, stigmas and prejudices of gender, disability, social status, sexual orientation,

22 Department of Supervision of Social Services under the MSSL, MSSL and RRC "Lithuania has become home to them." (Lietuva jiems tapo namais), 2013, available at: <http://goo.gl/rwKdQv>

23 „The life of refugees in Lithuania: impressions of the country, aspects of integration and future plans“, Refugee Reception Centre, 2013. Available at http://www.rppc.lt/files/323/ruklos_knyga-LT-En.pdf

24 Study "Bullying on the various identity signs in schools of Lithuania", 2015. Available at: <http://www.lygybe.lt/data/public/uploads/2015/12/patyciu-del-ivairiu-tapatybes-aspektu-paplitimas-lietuvos-mokyklose.pdf>

ethnicity or religion, and many other signs of identity. Results of the study confirms that common forms of discrimination and manifestations are supported damaging, deep-rooted social attitudes, which continue to operate in the growing generation, shaped by their provisions and relationship with others.

In 2016 Civil Society Institute conducted a survey on public attitudes “How Lithuania determined to help refugees?”²⁵. According to this survey, opinion of Lithuanian public spilt almost in half: 46 percent of respondents totally disagree with admitting refugees, 49 percent agrees under certain conditions, 5 percent agrees unconditionally. Most of those who agree to receiving refugees under certain conditions, draw attention to the fact that they should be war refugees or under persecution, but not economic refugees (77 percent), and should express a desire to join - learn the language, know the culture, to achieve integration (70 percent). The disapprove to receiving refugees does not relate to cultural factors, but mainly on economic injustice (state support expenditure, competition for jobs - a total 44 percent of opponents), and security challenges (increased terrorist threat and the crime rate - 43 percent of opponents). Holders of such opinion are between 46 - 55 and 56 years old, with low income (earning at up to 200 Euros per family member per month), the unemployed and pensioners, who live in cities and regional centers (especially), as well as people living in rural areas. Positive attitude is among those, who have lived abroad, have mixed marriages with foreigners, holders of foreign nationality are in their close environment (friends, relatives, at neighborhood or workplace, etc.), their relatives have emigrated.

Most respondents of the survey said that they would agree to help the arriving asylum seekers by donating items, contributing financially (35 percent), encouraging neighboring to be tolerant (33 percent), teaching them language, profession or craft (16 percent), by providing free services (15 percent) or organizing leisure time activities (12 percent). More intensive commitment forms, as helping asylum seekers to get a job (2 percent) or accommodation are less popular (1 percent). These numbers show that Lithuanians have a quite positive attitude. However the fact is that most of respondents do not know how this could be implemented, were they should apply to offer their assistance (depending on the form of the aid, from 41 to 71 percent).²⁶



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25 Survey „Kiek Lietuva yra nusiteikusi padėti pabėgėliams?” http://www.civitas.lt/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Kiek.Lt_nusiteike.padeti-pabegeliams_santrauka.pdf

26 Survey „Kiek Lietuva yra nusiteikusi padėti pabėgėliams?” http://www.civitas.lt/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Kiek.Lt_nusiteike.padeti-pabegeliams_santrauka.pdf

III. Legal basis review

As some European countries tighten border controls or close borders completely, it is becoming increasingly difficult for people to identify safe routes and secure options for migration and settlement. Political leadership is vital now in the discussion what could be improved (youth policy focus from youth employment to inclusion) in the fight against discrimination, exclusion, racism and Islamophobia. Upholding human rights and humanitarian values, along with our collective international obligations for people seeking protection, is critical at this time.

The Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy (2004) and the vehicle for its implementation, the Common Agenda for Integration (2005) form the basis upon which migrant integration in the EU is formulated, and view integration as comprising the following:

- » a two-way, dynamic process;
- » implying respect for EU values;
- » employment forms a key part of integration and is central to participation;
- » knowledge of the receiving society's language, history, and institutions is integral to successful integration;
- » education, which is critical for active participation;
- » access to institutions, goods and services on the same basis as nationals is fundamental to integration; interaction between migrant/citizen;
- » practice of diverse cultures and religions to be safeguarded;
- » participation in the democratic process
- » mainstreaming integration policies;
- » clear goals, indicators and evaluation mechanisms to adjust integration policy.

Recognizing the primary leadership and responsibility of host governments, the strategic goals of Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Europe²⁷ are:

1. To design and implement a response that supports, complements and builds Governments' existing capacity to ensure effective and safe access to asylum, protection and solutions in relevant countries, as well as manage migration in an orderly and dignified manner while protecting the human rights of all refugees and migrants.
2. To ensure that refugee and migrant women, girls, boys and men have access to protection and assistance in a participatory manner, with particular attention to specific needs. Protection-centered assistance should be delivered in a manner that respects the principle of non-discrimination; age, gender and diversity; is appropriate to the specific characteristics of the movement; and takes into account the needs of the local communities.
3. To strengthen national and local capacities and protection systems and ensure safe access to longer-term solutions for refugees and migrants who may become stranded, may want to apply for asylum, or may want to return voluntarily to their countries of origin. This includes a robust and protection-centred relocation scheme, as well as reinforced alternative legal pathways to protection, such as family reunification and resettlement.
4. To strengthen partnership and coordination within the humanitarian community and with governments, both in setting common goals and in establishing national-level coordination structures and information analysis, that ensure an efficient and coordinated response, including coordinated channels for citizen engagement to support the reception and integration of refugees and migrants.

27 Eastern Mediterranean and western Balkans Rout. January - December 2016. Available at <http://reliefweb.int/report/world/regional-refugee-and-migrant-response-plan-europe-eastern-mediterranean-and-western>

The response strategy is in line with the '17-point plan of action' agreed at the Western Balkans Route Leaders' Meeting on 25 October 2015. It recognizes that, while significant numbers of men, women, boys and girls will make the journey into Europe from Turkey, a coordinated and comprehensive response is required. It also recognizes that while legal and physical restrictions will increasingly be put in place at borders along the route, the motivation of refugees and migrants to reach further into Europe will not abate. There are therefore considerable risks that stranded people may approach smuggling networks to facilitate their onward travel, further exposing them to human rights violations and exploitation. A nuanced and flexible approach is needed to ensure refugees and migrants have access to appropriate protection and assistance, while legal alternatives to irregular dangerous journeys are made available. In light of these challenges, the strategy aims to protect and assist refugees and migrants, while at the same time supporting governments in further developing and operationalizing a sustainable, comprehensive and cooperative framework for concrete action in the areas of refugee protection and migration management. This in turn will foster greater responsibility-sharing, reinforcing trust among States and public confidence on the capacity to manage the situation. The refugee and migrant crisis is fast moving and dynamic. This plan is built upon a '6+6' model, whereby the one-year time frame is divided into two six-month periods, with an in-depth mid-year review.

Access to the territory also forms an important part of the right to asylum as guaranteed under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Legal Basis in Latvia²⁸

The Latvian Asylum Law, adopted in 2009 and last amended in 2013, establishes the asylum procedure and reception conditions for asylum-seekers, as well as some of the content of the protection granted. It guarantees equal rights for refugees and persons with alternative status to information (Art. 34), while the rights granted to the respective groups differ in regard to residence status (Art. 36), social benefits (Art. 37(1)(2)), and family unity (Art. 38(1)(3)). While the Latvian Asylum Law states that the granting of temporary protection and its content shall be regulated by the Cabinet of Ministers in cooperation with OCMA, it nevertheless establishes a set of minimum rights that beneficiaries of temporary protection would be entitled to, such as access to information, emergency medical care, family reunification and access to education for minors.

Additional provisions relevant to the integration of beneficiaries of international protection are laid down in the Immigration Law of the Republic of Latvia, adopted in 2002 and last amended in 2014. In line with the Latvian Asylum Law, Articles 23(13) and 24(9) of the Immigration Law provide for different residency types for persons with alternative status and 1951 Convention refugees and their family members in Latvia, whereby the former group are entitled to temporary residence permits and the latter to permanent residency permits.

28 Integration of refugees in Latvia: Participation and Empowerment. Understanding Integration in Latvia through the participation of refugees, integration stakeholders' experiences, and research. October 2014 – January 2015. Available at http://www.unhcr-northerneurope.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Documents/PDF/Latvia/2015-Latvia-Integration-Report.pdf

Legal basis in Lithuania²⁹

The Law on the Legal Status of Foreigners No IX-2206 (“Foreigners Law”) has only a few articles of relevance to the integration of refugees. First, it stipulates that the state of Lithuania shall provide conditions for foreigners holding a residence permit to integrate into the political, economic and socio-cultural life of the state in accordance with the procedure established by laws. Second, it provides for the allocation of state funds for the implementation of a national policy in the area of refugee integration alongside the resources provided by international organizations, EU structural funds, humanitarian aid foundations and NGO’s. The provision of state support for the integration of refugees in Lithuania is coordinated and supervised by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. Thirdly, the Foreigners Law singles out the areas of state funded integration support. They encompass language training, education, employment, provision of accommodation, social welfare support, health care, and the provision of information to the general public about the integration of foreigners. In line with the Foreigners Law, state support for the integration of refugees is to be regulated in detail in a by-law. The Order on the Approval of the Description of the Procedure of Rendering Lithuania State Support for the Integration of Foreigners Granted Asylum in the Republic of Lithuania (“Social Integration Order”) has been approved by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. It describes the organization, implementation and administration of the State support for refugee integration.

IV. Youth work and refugees

Youth work in Europe

Youth work is defined differently in European countries, is taking different forms and is implemented via different activities. A Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council on youth work is offering a definition of youth work that summarizes the experiences of 27 members of European Union: “Youth work takes place in the extracurricular area, as well as through specific leisure time activities, and is based on non-formal and informal learning processes and on voluntary participation. These activities and processes are self-managed, co-managed or managed under educational or pedagogical guidance by either professional or voluntary youth workers and youth leaders and can develop and be subject to changes caused by different dynamics.”³⁰ According to the reports from 27 European Union countries, “Youth work is also defined by its broader more **societal** aims which are participation in democratic societies, prevention and **social inclusion and cohesion**: even though some youth work activities are more focused on certain broad objectives than others. For example, some youth work activities put more emphasis on the aims of emancipation, empowerment and participation, whilst others are more focused on prevention.”³¹ The variety of youth work activities allows young people to get involved according to their interests as well as the youth workers or youth leaders to be flexible in

29 Integration of refugees in Lithuania. Participation and Empowerment. Understanding Integration in Lithuania through an age, gender and diversity based participatory approach. October – November 2013. Available at http://www.unhcr-northerneurope.org/uploads/tx_news/UN-HCR_Integration_of_refugees_in_Lithuania.pdf

30 Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council on youth work, Brussels, 18 and 19 November 2010.

31 Dunne, A., Ulicna, D., Murphy, I., Golubeva, M. (2014). *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union*. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/youth/library/study/youth-work-report_en.pdf

changing the scope of their work according to the needs of young people who are joining the youth centres or youth organizations. Usually the activities “include the methods of non-formal/ informal learning, experiential pedagogy, mentoring and/or peer support and relationship-based activities (reflecting the nature of learning as a social activity). Many organisations strongly underline that these activities are based on young persons’ needs and interests, rather than on a pre-defined programme. The fact that youth work activities must be enjoyed by young people to have the positive outcome hoped for, is emphasised in many case studies on specific youth work activities.³² In the recent years the focus of youth work has shifted from leisure activities that are aiming at fun to more of the educational activities or impact making initiatives. The popularity and coverage of the forms of youth work depend on the country, it’s history and history of youth work there. Dunne et al. (2015) summarize the European context of youth work: “Youth work is delivered or facilitated by a range of organisations. Some of them work primarily with young people while others also have different target groups. One organisation can engage in a range of youth work activities and work with different objectives depending on the type of young people. Overall the following main types of youth organisations have been identified based on the review of literature and confirmed by the country reports:

- » Youth clubs / positive activity provision – these are ‘drop-in’ youth clubs open to all in the evenings / at weekends / during holidays with a variety of positive activities on offer. This form of youth work provision is usually well established and can be found in all countries studied.
- » Youth work providing additional / specialist support within an existing (formal) service / institution, such as schools, libraries or hospitals. Activities in a school environment might include mentoring and counselling; detached work’ around corridors, cafeterias, common rooms and play areas; work with school newspapers or school councils and forums; homework and study support clubs; holiday schools and provision; work with young people experiencing difficulties around schooling; and pastoral and personal support.³³ By working with young people in schools or hospitals, youth workers are able to help young people to make better use of those services, and in some cases, enable the services themselves to become more responsive and effective.
- » Outreach / detached youth work (sometimes also referred to as ‘street work’) is focused on the need to engage the ‘hard-to-reach’ young people. It entails youth workers walking the streets / visiting places that are popular among local young people, mobile provision, and/or conducting home visits with a view to recruiting young people to participate in youth activities or providing on- site support.³⁴ There has been an increase in this type of youth work in a range of European countries as part of a wider shift away from longer-term, area-based, projects, towards short-term work with particular high-risk groups or on particular issues³⁵, or as a result of recognition of the fact that mainstream services do not reach many of those young people. Outreach work is also increasingly taking place

32 Dunne et al (2014).

33 Smith M. (1996). Youth Work in Schools. Available at: <.: <http://www.infed.org/youthwork/b-ywscho.htm>>.

34 The debate about this type of youth work in today’s climate is that it has the potential to be youth work on young people, rather than with young people, [online] Available at: <.: <http://www.infed.org/youthwork/b-detyw>>.

35 Rimmens, D., Factor, F., Jeffs, T., Pitts, T., Pugh, C., Spence, J. and Turner ,P,

Reaching socially excluded young people: A national study of street based youth work, JRF, 2004; See also: Smith (2005) Detached, street based and project work with young people, [online] Available at: < <http://www.infed.org/youthwork/b-detyw>>;; and Fletcher, A. and Bonell, C., Detaching youth work to reduce drug and alcohol related harm, Public Policy Research, December 1, 2008.

online instead of on the streets.

- » Outreach work can be connected to more youth work that takes places in more defined settings such as youth clubs.
- » One-stop-shop approach includes the provision of information, advice, guidance and practical support from a range of providers, sometimes situated within one building or setting to provide easy access to all those who need it. This is an increasingly popular model of delivery in a number of countries across Europe, including Sweden and the UK. Such models have been developed as a response to the fact that the (re-) engagement process of an excluded young person can be complex, involving a range of public authorities. For example, social agencies may deal with benefit arrangements, education and labour market authorities are typically in charge of financing or organising the training opportunities and health agencies may also be supporting the young person. Thus some countries, cities and regions have responded to this challenge by setting up 'one-stop-shop' types of centres which provide a broad range of services to young people.
- » Organised youth associations are the cornerstone of youth work in many countries, with such associations and their activities being based on young people's own involvement and organisation. They may range from the very local entity up to pan-European youth organisations such as the European Youth Forum. They adopt multiple roles, with the roles depending on their funding, including the level of state support as well as their involvement in the delivery of services and project-based opportunities. Many youth associations are also involved in lobbying and driving forward the youth work or the youth political agenda. Many deliver international youth work and provide young people from different countries, ethnic backgrounds and cultures with opportunities to meet each other and to widen their cultural knowledge and enhance their personal skills (i.e. interaction, communication and understanding).³⁶

The use of online information and advice services is now considered a core element of the youth service offer in many European countries. As well as signposting young people and providing information, advice and guidance services, online portals can also provide information on education, training and employment opportunities and easy-to-use interactive assessment tools, to assist young people in making decisions about their careers. Most of the platforms are universal services rather than facilities targeted at vulnerable groups of young people. While they in many ways prove popular among young people and can be perceived as more accessible than actual physical one-stop-shops, they do rely on young people having access to computers and therefore may not be as effective with dealing with complex problems.

Awareness raising / publicity campaigns – youth work may also involve awareness raising and publicity campaigns, run either by the public sector, interest organisations or by young people themselves. Many such campaigns deal with health or substance abuse issues, but they can also deal with issues around rights and citizenship.

Youth work provision may vary also in the extent of adult involvement, which may range from largely adult-governed youth work (especially for the youngest ones) to completely self-determined youth work carried by young people themselves (generally young adults).³⁷

36 The Socio-economic Scope of Youth Work in Europe. Final Report. Study commissioned by the partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth and conducted by the Institute for Social Work and Social Education.

37 Dunne et al (2014).

Impact of youth work

Impact of youth work is still being in question in Europe as both the scholars are and practitioners are unable to find reliable tools to measure the impact. Although there are existing studies claiming that:

- » findings show that young people believe youth work to have positive outcomes for them as individuals, in terms of increased confidence and self-esteem, new friends, new skills, information and advice and enhanced opportunities, including increased employment prospects.³⁸
- » through (sustained) engagement in youth work, young people: Develop certain skills and competences; Strengthen their network and their social capital; and Change certain behaviours.”³⁹
- » Positive relationships with others are seen by researchers as a key aspect of youth development and youth work can facilitate the creation of such relationships.⁴⁰
- » Positive bonding with peers and adults is not only a contribution to young persons’ well-being, but it also acts in preventing anti-social behaviour.⁴¹
- » Youth work programmes not only affect young people’s skills and their social capital, but they also have a positive influence on their behaviours.⁴²

Youth work as a tool

Even though the youth work providers are choosing the field of work and main topics to be addressed according to the region they are based in or the target group that they are working with, youth work is also used as a tool to address various social issues that are identified on the national or European level. An example of it is the NEET youth (not in education or employment) agenda and the Youth Guarantee initiatives that are implemented in different European countries. The Youth Guarantee was presented as „a new approach to tackling youth unemployment which ensures that all young people under 25 – whether registered with employment services or not – get a good-quality, concrete offer within 4 months of them leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. The good-quality offer should be for a job, apprenticeship, traineeship, or continued education and be adapted to each individual need and situation.”⁴³ In implementing the Initiative of EC, youth work (youth centres, youth organizations, youth workers) played a crucial role in approaching young people, presenting them with the opportunities, providing support, etc. The competencies of youth workers were sufficient to tackle the challenges that the young people were facing as youth workers already had experience in individual work with young people, consulting, informing, mentoring, etc. Examples as such give background and reasons to claim that youth work with the main principles, approaches and activities is capable to address other social challenges faced by the young people who in the frame of this research are also young refugees.

38 Devlin, M., Gunning, A., (2009). The Purpose and Outcomes of Youth Work: Report to the Youth Services Interagency Group. Available at <http://www.ycni.org/downloads-publications/NSETS/PurposeOutcomesYW.pdf>

39 Dunne et al (2014).

40 McLaren (2002) Youth Development Literature Review: Building Strength

41 Dunne et al (2014).

42 Dunne et al (2014).

43 The webpage of European Commission. Available at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079>

Youth work and Refugees

One of the core and thematic priority areas identified across government youth policies and funding programmes is targeting disadvantaged young people.⁴⁴ As young refugees are falling into the category of being disadvantaged and are qualifying as young people, they are becoming a concern of youth policy that is targeting different areas of social life. Young people with migrant backgrounds are one of the target groups that are not sufficiently reached by youth work. According to the report on youth work by the European Commission, “Participation in the activities of organisations that work with young people is linked to the (peer-) culture and the image of the organisations working with youth. Certain forms of activities tend to be associated with youth from certain socio-economic and cultural background. Some country reports note that the more ‘traditional’ and long established forms of youth work struggle to reach out to the target groups that do not share the same cultural references as the majority population. This is in particular highlighted when it comes to young people with migrant backgrounds or different ethnic origins (noted in country reports of French Speaking Community of Belgium as well as the Flemish speaking community, Czech Republic, Finland, Ireland, Poland, Spain, and UK-Scotland)”⁴⁵ This is the reason why youth organizations and youth centres should look into the activities that they are proposing and critically evaluate the suitability of the activities to vulnerable groups (as refugees) as well as the accessibility of it to more various groups.

Measures

As the problem of insufficient integration of all the youth groups into youth work activities is well known and, according to the European Commission study, is reported in most of the European countries, measures are being taken: The Erasmus+ programme in the field of youth promotes fairness and inclusion for participants from disadvantaged backgrounds and with fewer opportunities (such as migrants or refugees) through specific support, priority setting and targeted use of funds. <...> Erasmus+ opportunities for youth and youth workers can encourage intercultural dialogue and intercultural learning. Tolerance, mutual understanding and the fight against racism and xenophobia are important objectives for Erasmus+.⁴⁶ Is written in the webpage of European Commission. Erasmus+ programme and the former Youth in Action (2007-2013) and Youth (2000-2006) programmes are contributing to promotion of tolerance and intercultural understanding among the participating countries and has had a tremendous impact on young people all over Europe in giving the opportunities to meet and learn about and with people from different cultural backgrounds. The fact that one of the priorities of the current programme is the integration of young refugees, gives prospects to a successful integration. The priorities set by the Erasmus+ programme is already reflected in the topics of current projects that are organized all over Europe by different youth centres, youth organizations, NGOs, etc. Various training courses for youth workers are being organized in order to reflect challenges and opportunities for youth work and to equip youth workers with competencies that could be valuable in the changing demographic realities. Non-governmental organizations or associations of youth workers or youth organizations have also started to address the challenges that the “refugee crisis” is bringing to European youth work: writing about the topics that need to be discussed with young people, publicizing the views of young people on current situation, etc.

44 Dunne et al (2014).

45 Dunne et al (2014).

46 Webpage of European Commission http://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/implementation/migration_en.htm

V. Examples of best practices

So far the short-term approaches are more visible, with emergency work coordinated by UN agencies, stricter border control and security responses seen in European political documents. There is also emerging reflection on how to ensure a faster and more efficient integration of the immigrants, recognizing their skills and qualifications, providing language courses, introductory courses to European values and how things function, intercultural dialogue initiatives, as well as offering skills training, apprenticeships and employment opportunities. Housing and integration of refugees in communities is seen as a challenging issue. In this part of the study are presented some examples (projects, programmes, etc.) from countries on social integration of refugees.

TURKEY. Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ASAM) projects are covering almost all the refugee problems, including integration. ASAM works in close cooperation with Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), Provincial Directorate of Migration Management (PDMM), Governorships and other NGO's as well as United Nations (UN) Agencies (i.e. UNHCR, UNICEF, UNFPA, IOM). ASAM provide language classes to refugees, it gives them the chance to express them in Turkish and socialize with local people. Especially women, who cannot write or read in their mother tongue, started to read and write.

GREECE. Two dedicated asylum programs are in operation in Greece. The support to the First Reception Service (FRS) screening centre operations at Fylakio, at the land border between Turkey and Greece and Lesbos, one of the main island entry points for migrants, is helping the Greek authorities to manage the influx and improve reception. NGOs are running reception centers. As well as basic welfare, the centers offer education activities, psychological support, medical care and legal assistance.

IRELAND. A hierarchical international protection system is now emerging in Ireland – resettlement from outside of the EU, relocation of asylum seekers from within the EU (both in the new Irish Refugee Protection Programme, IRPP), and the older system for people seeking asylum (part of which is Dispersal and Direct Provision (DP)). Ireland's resettlement programme has been in operation since the 1950s.

BELGIUM. Born out of a movement of solidarity between Belgians and refugees coming from Rwanda and Burundi during the 1994 events, Convivial aims at helping the integration of refugees in Belgium in a spirit of listening and commitment from both sides. Convivial accompanies refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and asylum seekers on the whole procedure, from their first settling up to their integration into society and the labour market in Belgium. Convivial also raises awareness among the general public about the reality of refugees and promotes interactions between Belgians and refugees. Main activities: a global and tailor-made guidance of refugees in their research of solutions to their needs throughout the settlement and integration process; specialized services that adapt continuously to the needs of refugees; a combination of individual and collective support systems; a structure co-created by refugees and Belgians which still involves refugees at every level; every beneficiary is welcomed in a familiar language thanks to multilingual team that gathers more than 25 nationalities; an integration policy through employment offering each year the opportunity to get involved to around 30 people.⁴⁷

NORWAY. The aim of Norway's integration policy - enable newly-arrived immigrants to participate in the labour market and society as quickly as possible. Refugees and family members, between 18 and 55 years, have the right and obligation to participate in the Introduction Program.

Full-time program - for up to 2 years. The content of the program is adapted to the individual participant's needs. The Main Components of the Introduction Program: Norwegian language training; social studies; measures to attain skills for labour market participation/continue education.

Since 2003, the Norwegian government has contracted IOM to develop and implement the Norwegian Cultural Orientation programme (NORCO). This pre-departure programme provides a four-day CO programme for adults (16 years and older) and a two-day programme for children (8-15 years). The training sessions are learner-centred and emphasize direct participation of refugees in activities including role-plays, case studies, problem solving, games and debates. Video clips and presentations are used to elaborate specific CO topics, and participants are each provided with reference handbooks. The NORCO programme is delivered by a bicultural trainer, from the same or similar background of the refugee group, who speaks the language of the cultural orientation participants and who has lived in Norway for some time. The use of a bicultural trainer means an interpreter is not required and communication is thus more direct. The trainer can also represent a role model for refugees, as he or she has learned Norwegian and managed to professionally establish him/herself in Norway.

On the southern tip of Norway, the Municipality of Lindesnes, with a population of 5,000, has a refugee office that is active in getting the community involved on many levels. Duties have been shifted from the local government offices and the professionals and turned over to residents. When refugees come to Lindesnes, earlier newcomers and peers are often linked to them as contacts. Each refugee also gets his or her own Norwegian volunteer contact in the local community.

AUSTRIA. In a number of Member States, so-called "Refugee Buddies" take care of refugees. They engage voluntarily at a variety of organizations, and meet regularly with one refugee, in order to establish personal relations. This is all the more important as a large number of refugees are unaccompanied minors, who have left their families behind. Buddies could also act as advocates in order to improve the image of refugees in their country. In order to facilitate the integration of highly-qualified migrants, the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber has developed the programme "Mentoring for migrants", which has been extended to highly-qualified refugees. Mentors are people who are well-integrated in the Austrian labour market and who support the migrant during their job search by providing information or even access to their own professional network. This programme also helps to avoid cultural misunderstandings. Project aims to place young refugees in unfilled apprenticeship places with the support of the public employment service and coaches. A traineeship period may precede the signing of a formal apprenticeship agreement. Furthermore, the Austrian Federal Train Service (ÖBB) started the "Diversity as Chance" ("Diversität als Chance") project and offered 50 unaccompanied refugees between 15 and 17 year old apprenticeships. Open youth centres in Austria are actively working with young refugees by involving them into daily activities or "offers" as it is common to say. Young people from refugee background are approached through school and invited to join open youth centres. "Some of the young refugees are now active in the solidarity movement and they support volunteers and young refugees that come here and I'm really proud of them", says a youth worker from Vienna.

FRANCE. Main actors: Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, French Office of Immigration and Integration (OFII), French Office for Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA), Forum Réfugiés-Cosi (FRC), France Terre d'Asile (FTDA), Adoma, Entraide Pierre Valdo, IS-ARD-COS, selected regional and local authorities. On arrival into France, all resettled refugees attend an interview with OFII, at which their oral and written French ability is tested. If the refugee's level of French is deemed insufficient, they are obliged to attend a maximum of 400 hours of free French classes. All refugees must attend "Living in France", a single civic orientation class (6-7 hours) focusing on the values of the French Republic (secularism, gender equality, fundamental freedoms, and education system) and the organization and functioning of the French State and institutions. At the end of the interview, refugees must sign a reception and integration contract with the French state

confirming that they will attend specified language classes and the civic class.

DENMARK, FINLAND, NORWAY and SWEDEN have developed holistic integration models which encompass legislation, funding and institutional structures where immigrants and refugees have access to mainstream services, social support and education after recognition and can access help as any other citizen. In addition to this, refugees receive targeted post-recognition support during a transition period which helps them access the mainstream services and right in practice, as this will prove difficult directly upon arrival without possessing the native language and with limited knowledge about society.

A number of NGO's receive funding to provide much needed welfare and integration support for asylum seekers and refugees. Here are some best examples from NGO's.

CZECH REPUBLIC. The campaign „Express your solidarity with refugees!” is promoting tolerant debate around refugees. It calls on citizens not to be silent and publicly denounce racism and xenophobia. A debate organized as a part of project led to a “Migration manifesto”, which addresses the entire spectrum of Czech migration, asylum and integration policy.

POLAND. In the Pomorskie Province in north-central Poland, a network has been set up to support its growing migrant population. Eighty people from organizations as diverse as the Red Cross, the police, legal advisory services and migrants themselves are involved in the coordination team. Successes include the establishment of volunteer network to teach Polish as a foreign language in schools and a self-help group for female immigrants.

HUNGARY. The increase in migrant numbers and inflammatory debate around the refugee situation has led to growing prejudice against foreigners. To tackle this, the „Welcome Migrants“ project is producing short documentary clips featuring four well-known public figures welcoming a migrant in their home for a week. The aim is that this will lead to social media campaign connecting people who want to rent their apartment to migrants who are finding it difficult to find somewhere to live.

LATVIA. Since 2008, the responsibility for the provision of non-state post-recognition integration assistance to refugees in Latvia has been placed solely on one NGO – PDM. On a project basis, PDM has organized basic level Latvian courses and a conversational Latvian club for refugees. In addition, PDM has provided refugees with the opportunity to receive professional training and assistance in the search for housing and jobs, as well as general information on Latvia, available state-managed services, the educational system, the labour market and the health care system. PDM trains the staff of local governments, with the aim of increasing the preparedness of regional municipalities to serve refugees more effectively. On an on-going basis, PDM organizes consultations for refugees with social workers and with lawyers specializing in employment, education and housing matters, and in other legal aid issues such as preparing appeals for status change.

GERMANY⁴⁸. Local sport clubs are responsible for organizing activities for immigrants since 1989. The aim of the programme “Integration through sport”, which is sponsored by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, is to allow immigrants to participate in the life of various different associations and in training and competitions over the long term. A wide range of sporting and leisure programmes is offered by the clubs: in addition to volleyball, handball, basketball and gymnastics, there are also specialist courses such as sambo, boxing and wrestling. In conjunction with other organizations, events are organized such as street football tournaments, midnight sports, indoor tournaments, intercultural parties and holiday leisure events.

48 More information available at http://www.integration-durch-sport.de/fileadmin/fm-dosb/arbeitsfelder/ids/images/2014/Flyer_Programm_ENGLISCH.pdf

MACEDONIA⁴⁹. Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA) is implementing project “Legal Assistance and Representation of UNHCR’s Persons of Concern”. Activities of the project are designed to strengthen and improve the quality of the legal representation in the national asylum practice, enhance fundamental human rights and strengthen the principle of rule of law in the country. Additionally, the project actively seeks to contribute to the establishment of positive practices and trends in the country regarding the state policies towards the mixed migration movements and persons of concern.

SWEDEN⁵⁰. The Wallenberg Foundation is implementing support education and training activities for young people and refugees from disadvantaged areas. A ten-year education and training initiative is being supported by the Wallenberg Foundations and will be carried out by various qualified organizations. The main organizations involved are the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, the Royal Swedish Academy of Engineering Sciences and the Swedish Academy. The initiative includes summer schools in scientific subjects, intensive courses in Swedish, and tutoring for students who have recently arrived.

NEMO⁵¹ - Network of European Museum Organizations. Some of their members are working to submit an application under the Erasmus+ or the Creative Europe programme to identify how museums can work in partnership with other agencies to provide skills, education and employability skills to help disadvantaged young people, in particular young migrant/ immigrants/ refugees/ asylum seekers aged 16-26.



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49 More information available at <http://www.myla.org.mk/index.php/en/news/238-myla-annual-report-2015>

50 More information available at <http://www.efc.be/news/wallenberg-foundations-launch-initiatives-support-integration-young-refugees-education-training/>

51 More information available at http://www.ne-mo.org/fileadmin/Dateien/public/Documents_for_News/NEMO_collection_Initiatives_of_museums_to_integrate_migrants.pdf

VI. Empirical research: opportunities and challenges identified by youth workers, young people, people already working with refugees and refugees

Implementation of research was done by 2 researchers, who at the same time were over-viewing existing research and data as well as organized and performed in-depth interviews and focus groups. In – depth interviews were conducted with the following groups:

- » **Representatives of the organizations** that are working with refugees on daily basis. Two types of organizations were chosen: state institutions and NGO's. The aim of these interviews was to examine what kind of strategies, programmes and long – term projects are implemented, what elements are successful, which are not, what challenges are faced, how they are dealing with them, etc. 8 interviews were conducted:
 - 2 representatives from state institution in Lithuania;
 - 2 representatives from state institution in Latvia;
 - 2 representatives from NGO in Lithuania;
 - 2 representatives from NGO in Latvia.
- » **Youth workers**, working in youth centers in different regions of Lithuania and Latvia. Youth workers were selected according to their working experience (not less than 3 years of direct work experience with young people). The aim of these interviews is to collect opinions and proposals on if and how young refugees could be involved into youth work activities, types of activities that would be feasible and the readiness of the youth workers to take over new activities or to adjust old ones. 6 interviews were conducted: 3 with youth workers from Lithuania and 3 with youth workers from Latvia.
- » **Young refugees**. Aim – to investigate the opinions and points of view regarding involvement into/ through youth work and youth activities. Young refugees were asked for their opinions about the proposed activities. Questionnaire for young refugees was made based on the proposals of youth workers; youth centre users and youth NGO representatives. It gives a little bit more focus on proposed activities and helped finding out which activities might be interesting for young refugees. 6 interviews were conducted: 3 with young refugees in Lithuania and 3 with young refugees in Latvia.

The participants of the study were chosen based on purposive sampling that was complemented by snowball sampling. In order to achieve better geographical coverage Skype (video call) interviews were conducted as well as the live meetings with participants of the study.

- » **Focus groups** were organized with 2 different groups: youth centre users (14 - 21 years old) and young people from youth NGOs (17 - 29 years old). 4 focus groups were organized in total (2 in Lithuania and 2 in Latvia). The aim of the focus groups was to learn how the young people approach the integration of young refugees into the activities of youth centres and NGOs. Young people were asked to describe their usual activities, to brainstorm for the ideas how the young refugees could be integrated into societies and if/how they could be included into common actions.

Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed using **thematic analysis**. “Unlike content analysis, which begins with predefined categories, thematic analysis allows categories to emerge from the data”⁵². As in this study it is important to understand the true feelings and opinions about the integration of refugees and the evaluation of possible means that would be applied, the researchers will analyze the data according to what is said by the participants of the study, not what is written or predefined in the literature or previous researches of similar topics. Kvale, Rubin & Rubin, and van Manen attest that through carefully planned questioning techniques, participants construct the meanings of what the researcher is trying to explore: “the interviewer does not uncover some pre-existing meanings, but supports the interviewees in developing their meanings throughout the course of the interview”⁵³. Themes should be stated as simply as possible during the first cycle of analysis for “meaning condensation,” then woven together for “meaning interpretation” to “explain why something happened or what something means”⁵⁴.

Thematic analysis is chosen for the data analysis in current study as the topic of refugees in the context of youth work especially in the rather new EU countries (Lithuania, Latvia) is not explored in depth, so there are no pre-defined categories of how the integration is functioning or should function. Therefore it is important to extract the meanings from the narratives of people who are closely related to the field of investigation.

Ethics

The main principle of ethics that the researchers were working according to is the **no-harm** principle to the participants of the study and their professional groups. The participants of the study were informed about the main topic of the study prior to the interview itself. The participants were informed that the interviews will be recorded and where the results of the interviews will be used. Agreements with the participants of the study were made in writing, which is exceptionally important in the case of underage participants.

Transcribing of the interviews and focus groups was done word for word by the researchers and include no interpretation. In the transcription phase all the proper nouns (names of cities, organizations and people) were coded so the possibility to track the participants of the study would be minimized.

The results of the study are verified by the researchers. The process of research is described in detail so that the findings of the study would be transparent. The report is focused on constructive ideas for integration of young refugees and development of positive actions towards it through youth work.

Limitations

Chosen research tool – in-depth interviews gave a lot of rich information and empowered us (the researchers) to make conclusions not based on the literature or presumptions, but to learn the real opinions of people who were interviewed. Though it is important to stress that the information received during the interviews cannot be generalized and can only be taken as one of the possibilities.

52 Ezzy, 2002, p. 83.

53 Kvale, 1996, p. 226.

54 Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 57.

Though since the aim of research was to generate proposals and recommendations, the chosen tool allowed doing it.

As refugees related issues are “the hot topic” recently, the institutions and refugees themselves were reserved regarding the interviews and were referring to the fact that they have spoken to a lot of people already.

Representatives from public institutions or NGOs, working with refugees, focused on the main activities implemented by their organizations and kept in line with the information that is provided on their websites.



VII. DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

Representatives from public institutions and NGOs

People who are working or used to be working (more than 10 years of experience) in one of the few institutions or organizations dealing with refugees were interviewed regarding the work that is done. The interviewees presented their experience in working with refugees and overviewed what is being done by their organizations. The common themes that were appearing the most were the integration problems of refugees because of the stereotypes and prejudice that are vivid in Lithuania and Latvia, the language barrier, lack of financing, time and human resources.

Both the public institutions and NGOs have a lot to do with the documentation, formalities and basic integration of refugees: providing legal advice, social assistance, ensuring health care, the possibility for the children to attend kindergartens or schools, solving issues or conflicts appearing in schools, are monitoring if the children are attending school, dealing with their integration into labour market etc.

Social integration of refugees. Basic criteria for successful social integration of refugees are their motivation to stay, which is influenced by several factors. Social ties are the key factor of successful integration, say the interviewees. If refugees manage to make friends in the city or town where they are located, it helps them to feel social safety and even helps to find accommodation and work. Some of the organizations are implementing a mentoring system where former refugees are helping with settling in a new environment. The lack of socialization is also identified as one of the main reasons why refugees leave: "If several families of relatives are living in Germany or Sweden, the motivation to stay here (Lithuania) is very minimal." Even though the concern with socialization of refugees is big, representatives of organizations are acknowledging that there is a lack of time resources to ensure it 100% and a lot of responsibility is left for the foreigner him/herself. There are proposed and ensured activities and services by the Refugees Reception Centers, for example: language classes, professional orientation courses, learning about the culture, consults with psychologist, medical services, library, gym, etc. Most of these services are within the Centers, which leads to the refugees socializing in the inner circles and have very little interaction with the locals.

The interviewees understand that the given time (which is described in integration systems), that is dedicated for the refugees to integrate to a new society is not enough and at the same time they know very well that the resources cannot be extended. One of the issues, which were stressed by interviewees - given financial support is not enough. It is not fair to compare social integration of citizens and refugees, and to give the same amount of social benefit to create a new life. Refugees are dealing with harmful background and first what they have to deal is to reclaim the psychological balance.

Individualization. The people working directly with refugees are expressing the need of closer cooperation with other organizations and social partners as the NGOs are also working as mediators between the refugee and institutions. As a personal (individual) approach to each refugee is needed (social integration works best), volunteers are welcome to join the organizations and assist foreigners with daily issues.

When asked if there are some extra activities or programmes for **young people**, the interviewees acknowledged that there are no such programmes and the refugees are less divided by the age groups, but more according to the gender: special activities are organized for moms with kids, some arts and crafts, cooking activities. Sports activities were mainly organized for male part of the refugees who are the majority (in Latvia) of the refugees in general. By the interviewees it was mentioned

that the success of integration and creating social ties are a lot more frequent among young people. An analogy was drawn to the local societies and it was stressed that a young person learns a new language much faster than a grandmother, so a full integration cannot be expected from everyone. The starting point for all the refugees is the same and everyone is given equal support that does not depend on the needs of foreigners. Though according to the social workers, the support should be individualized as the success of integration depends on the race, education, age, sex, family composition. "If a young single person, who is 25 years old arrives and is ready to work full-time and can support himself. Or if it is single mother with three kids and the youngest one is 1,5 year old, then how should she become a part of labour market, then the kindergarten can accept him only from 3 years old."

Youth workers' approach

Experienced (at least 3 years of experience working directly with young people) youth workers from Latvia and Lithuania were interviewed regarding the possibilities to include refugees in the activities provided by youth centres. During the in-depth interviews the following themes were covered: the activities of the youth centres, the activities that the youth centres could offer the refugees, preparation that is needed for the youth workers in order to work with a different target group, opportunities and challenges that the youth workers see in the integration of young refugees.

The youth workers from Latvia and Lithuania were asked about the activities that are usually implemented in the youth centres that they are working in. A variety of **activities** were presented:

- » Hanging out and communicating;
- » Board games;
- » Foosball (table football);
- » Watching YouTube videos;
- » Watching movies;
- » Celebrating birthdays and holidays;
- » Cultural evenings (telling about the country, culture, customs, singing songs, dancing, cooking traditional dishes);
- » Cooking;
- » Quizzes;
- » Sleep-overs;
- » Crafts;
- » Robotics;
- » Programming;
- » Creating websites (learning how to do it);
- » Playing musical instruments;
- » Break dance lessons;
- » Sports (football, volleyball, basketball);
- » Trips;
- » Experiential hikes;
- » Camping;
- » Orientation games.

As the interviewees were asked which of the regular activities would be suitable for refugees, the most common answer was "all of them". It was also stressed out that working with young refugees should be started with simple socialization activities like board games or sports, which should lead to learning more about the needs and interests of young people and address those needs in the future.

Challenges. The youth workers have also mentioned that in order to run some of the activities, a longer preparation would be needed and the activities would take more time because of the language barrier, but the interviewees were strictly against organizing separate activities for the young people who are already attending the youth centres and for the newcomers.

Dealing with challenges. The interviewed youth workers put their focus on the matters of preparation of youth workers, community and the refugees for interaction and working together. Prejudices were mentioned many times and presented as problematic of the communities. The youth workers mentioned the importance of the participation of refugees in the events at the communities as “it is important for the community to see how the refugees are, to talk to them” and to break stereotypes that are formed mainly by the medias (in Lithuanias case – newsportal). While the youth workers stressed many times that they would be glad to work with a more diverse group as they see plenty of educational opportunities in it: addressing diversity, more topics for discussions, young people could broaden their minds, appreciate the differences.

Youth workers were asked if they find any kind of preparation prior to working with refugees relevant. Mostly youth workers replied that they are already working with different young people and are capable of adjusting to cultural differences and variety in a group. Although few proposals for **preparation of the youth workers** were made:

- » Intercultural learning and diversity training. Raising awareness of youth workers and communities about the refugees is crucial as “if there is even one employee in the centre that has negative views towards refugees, those young people will feel it and will never come back again”;
- » Learning about the cultures and norms of the countries the refugees are coming from. The youth workers strictly required information about the social norms of the countries: “some aspects of cultures differ significantly and there can be misunderstandings simply because of not knowing both from youth worker and from the refugee <...> it would be good that there would be some trainings, but not how we are all different, but actually the same, but to the point about that culture”;
- » Work with groups. Though it is important to mention that work with groups is or should be a basic competence of a youth worker.

In general youth workers took the idea of working with refugees positively, some said that if not the youth workers, then who else could take over this mission to contribute to integration of refugees to the society, others mentioned the educational potential of people with different background joining the youth centre as “there would be new topics to discuss with young people: diversity, tolerance, stereotypes.” To sum up, youth workers are claiming that the best way of integration is to treat the refugees as any other young people who are coming to the youth centre. Youth workers are a little bit cautious that new attendants of youth centres would result in new challenges as well as the ability of each and every youth worker to take on working with a more diverse group and seek for more targeted training.

Young People’s Approach

Young people were interviewed in focus groups: 2 groups were formed from young people aged from 14 to 21 years old who are attending youth centres; other 2 groups were formed from young people aged from 17 to 29 years old who are members of youth NGOs. Main themes that were addressed in these focus groups were the following: stereotypes and prejudice about the refugees, the role of media in forming the public opinion about refugees, activities of youth centres and youth organizations, possibilities to include refugees into the regular activities or organizing new ones, in-

terests of young people, possibilities of cross-institutional cooperation.

The main issues raised by young people did not differ in regard with their age group or the organization (youth centre or youth NGO) they were identifying their selves with. The opinions and proposals of young people from Lithuania and Latvia also did not differ significantly. For these reasons we are presenting the findings from all 4 focus groups that included 35 young people aged from 14 to 29 years.

Knowledge of the refugee situation. Young people demonstrated a broad knowledge about refugees and refugee situation in their countries. Discussions were ongoing about the reasons of leaving the countries of origin, differences were drawn between refugees and migrants, and sensitivity to the position of refugee was expressed. Young people knew the organizations who are working with refugees in their countries: some were negative - “there are some organizations where they are keeping the refugees, I have heard that it is like a prison and the refugees do not want to go there;” and some were positive - “I have read that someday centre is searching for volunteers to work with refugees and I wanted to volunteer there, but then I realized that I don’t have any more time.” Young people spoke about the role of media in how much they and the communities know about refugees and were evaluating the issues addressed in the media critically: “In the news you can’t see anything good about them. That’s why I think people are scared of them in my country mostly. They don’t know. They just see news: another bombing, another shooting and that’s why we have this bad idea of them. That’s why people are scared in my country and that’s why we don’t want them.”; “not necessarily they die [while traveling from the countries of origin to Europe – authors remark], there is a lot of internet and television who are transforming the information the way they need.” Young people spoke about the need for more positive information about the refugees in the medias in order to form a more welcoming and open environment in the communities.

It is important to note that when asked about the refugees young people are mainly talking about the refugees coming from Middle East in the past year. Though in some groups it was noted that there has always been refugees coming from different countries, but since now the numbers are higher and it is all over the media, the term refugee mainly is associated with Syrian or Muslim refugees.

Role of community. Young people have covered the topic of the differences between communities in the big cities and in the smaller towns while speaking about the common opinions of people and the possibilities to change them into more positive ones. Young people did not see a problem (or at least saw it as a smaller one) for refugees to integrate in bigger cities that already are becoming more diverse as more different types of foreigners are visiting or living here – tourists, migrants, exchange students, EVS volunteers, etc. But a huge issue was raised talking about smaller towns that have more closed communities and do not meet or know anyone who is a foreigner. Young people who originated from smaller towns or villages are claiming that opinions of people are formed by TV, radio, Internet portals, and church. “I can give an example about my parents and grandparents who are very religious and are basing a lot of their decisions on religion. We have a church in our village, but the priest comes from a bigger town once a week. The priest is over 60 years old and when during the mass he says “God, save us from refugees, because the plague will start”. Old people believe in him. They applaud him in the middle of the mass. I believe that the priest has a bigger impact in forming these peoples’ oppinion than the TV”. While the young people themselves are stressing that Christianity is about accepting people, helping them, etc. Religion as an important part of the culture was covered by many interviewees.

Culture. Cultural differences came up in the focus groups as the refugees are exclusively thought to be of Muslim religion. Young people were cautious about the different norms that exist in the societies and if the refugees would be able to adjust to the rules and laws of Latvia or Lithuania. Respect of cultures was mentioned plenty of times and the need for it to be both-sided: “It is a huge challenge to get to know, to understand what is happening how, because the cultures differ. I don’t

know. For example, maybe it's not the best opinion, but I think that a refugee should at least a little bit to accept the culture that is in our country. Because if a refugee comes and tries to rewrite it, I wouldn't feel comfortable, because it is my culture, I have lived with it for many years. So I would like the person to integrate a bit. I will accept his culture, I will help, I will tolerate, I will say nothing, but again, he should accept my culture and respect it." On the other hand, young people are very curious about the cultures of the people who are coming to their countries and are expressing their positive attitudes towards variety and learning about them. Meeting people from different countries and knowing them is considered enriching, mind-broadening, and interesting.

Activities. Young people were asked what could refugees do in their youth centre or their organizations and 3 types of participation were distinguished:

1. Young refugee as a **service user**. Representatives from youth NGOs were first proposing to attend events organized by their organizations or to come for consults regarding adjusting to a new city, knowing the opportunities for studies or work. So to be a kind of customers. Representatives from student unions mentioned that "with refugees there probably would be as much work as with Erasmus students" and the refugees have the right to be represented as any other student. Since none of the youth NGOs (that were interviewed) are focusing their work on integration of refugees (yet), they did not propose any special activities that would be exclusively for young people of refugee background, but are considering the refugees as any other foreigner.
2. Young refugee as a **resource** because of the difference. Young people both from youth centres and youth NGOs were very fast to indicate that it would be very interesting to know more about the cultures of refugees and to involve them into the events as special guests or if the refugees would decide to join the NGO, to have him or her use their knowledge and experience to help other refugees or to organize special events for them.
3. Young refugee as a **member or co-worker** of an NGO or an **attendee** of a youth centre. Young people stressed that their organizations and youth centres are open and they would be glad if more various people would join them in the regular activities. As young people presume that the refugees speak English or will know some Lithuanian or Latvian, they can easily join the organizations and be accepted.

The same as the youth workers, young people mainly mentioned that all the regular activities of the organizations or youth centres are suitable for all the people and refugees should join according to their interests: "when we're talking about refugees, we're talking about a group of people, but we are forgetting that they have different characters, likes and dislikes. These are the aspects that need to be taken into consideration before planning the activities." Young people discarded the idea of organizing activities exclusively for refugees and pointed out that youth organizations or youth centres are a great platform to start integration in a new country by finding friends, learning about cultures, norms, daily life.

Cooperation. Some of the focus groups went into discussion on how to invite refugees to the youth centres or youth organizations. It was decided to approach the organizations that are specializing in working with refugees and discuss possible cooperation.

Preparation of communities. The issue of preparing communities for receiving refugees was addressed. However, the main discussion was regarding the question, which group should be worked with first – the communities of the refugees. It was also emphasized that it is difficult to prepare the community when it comes to the situation of refugees in the abstract. It was suggested, that work, which is already being done by youth NGOs should be continued to lay the foundation for the social integration of refugees.

To sum up, young people have mainly positive attitudes towards refugees, they do understand the difficulties that the refugees are facing and are keen on meeting them, learning about countries and cultures that are unknown to them. At the same time there is an open question about cultural differences that need to be addressed.

Thoughts from refugees

Lists of proposed activities were provided to the refugees (6 respondents) via the social workers that are working with them directly because of the current circumstances that were also described in the previous interviews or focus groups – refugees are presented negatively in the media and refugees do not trust people from outside as their words are majorly misinterpreted. List of activities was provided from proposals, gathered from interviews with youth workers and focus groups with young people. Respondents could choose which activity they would like or dislike.

The following activities were chosen to be interesting to the refugees:

- » Hanging out and communicating;
- » Board games;
- » Foosball (table football);
- » Watching movies;
- » Cultural evenings (telling about the country, culture, customs, singing songs, dancing, cooking traditional dishes);
- » Cooking;
- » Crafts;
- » Creating websites (learning how to do it);
- » Playing musical instruments;
- » Sports (football, volleyball, basketball);
- » Trips;
- » Participating in events;
- » Getting consultations and relevant information on the topics that is interesting.

A lower threshold activities were chosen by the refugees that were aged 18 to 27 years old. It is presumable that some of the activities were not chosen as interesting, because of a too short description or a lack of clarity by what is included in a certain activity. Sports activities were popular as well as cooking or trips.

It is important to note that the refugees would like to be invited to join the organizations of youth centres as they are aware of the public opinion and do not feel too confident to simply appear at a youth centre or youth organization.

Their willingness to join offered activities depends on their situation: if they are single, do not have psychological problems, already are studying or working, have no problem with housing, etc. “First they need to do everything to survive” – say the interviewees, who are working with integration of refugees. Participation in proposed activities has to have a clear added value for their integration in order to support their motivation to be active.

We accept **#refugees**

VIII. Concluding remarks regarding refugee integration opportunities and challenges

1. *Youth workers understand the challenges of refugees joining the youth centres and at the same time are very keen on including them in the daily activities of youth centres.*

Challenges, which might be faced in using this opportunity:

- » The real challenges might be different and more complex than the ones that the youth workers can foresee;
- » Daily activities carried out by the youth centres or youth organizations might not be interesting or relevant to refugees;
- » Young people with migrant background are already reported to be one of the groups that are least involved in youth work, so the approach “if they will come, we will be glad to work” does not lead to more inclusion and extra efforts to make the activities of youth centres or youth organizations more accessible to refugees need to be put;
- » Studies and polls are showing that negative opinion about refugees is strong in the communities. That might lead to young people who are currently visiting youth centres, to quit or change the organization.

2. *Refugees are accepted as any other young person, without special treatment. Youth workers say that young refugees need to be treated as any other young people who have their interests, opinions, problems, etc. Young people support this opinion. They question the interests of the refugees and refuse to offer the activities that would be suitable for refugees saying that it all depends on the interests of a person and people cannot be generalized.*

Challenges, which might be faced in using this opportunity:

- » Refugees are coming from different background, have difficult experiences and are facing more complex challenges that need to be addressed individually. Local youngsters might not be able to relate to the issues, which would complicate the equal treatment.
- » In case of the last refugees’ flow that is coming mainly from Muslim countries, cultural differences need to be taken into account, e.g. separate activities for girls and boys have to be offered.

3. *Youth organizations are open for new members or new employees with migrant background, and see them and their experience as valuable recourse.*

Challenges, which might be faced in using this opportunity:

- » Active participation in civic life might be not attractive if young refugees do not have similar experiences in their native countries.
- » Foreigners first have to guarantee their financial stability, take care of their families and joining NGO is not on top of their priorities.
- » Different working culture.
- » All information about organization, all documentation and activities are held in national

language.

- » If the organizations will not assign mentors, refugees might end up being passive viewers of activities in youth organizations.

4. *Youth centres and youth NGOs are a space to improve national language.*

Challenges that might be faced in using this opportunity:

- » Some activities can take longer to explain or to implement. Some youngsters can be unsatisfied about this situation.
- » Some activities will have to be adapted to the special needs of foreigners.

5. *Young people from youth NGO's see themselves as a resource to raise awareness of refugees in their communities.*

Challenges that might be faced in using this opportunity:

- » Organizations might be losing their regular scope of activities;
- » Refugees don't want to be public and want their privacy to be respected, so they might refuse to cooperate.
- » Communities in small towns can be reluctant.
- » Because of the negative opinions in the communities, relatives of young people might encourage them to quit initiatives that they have started.

6. *Prejudices and stereotypes existing in the society can be changed through interaction with young people. Young people are curious about the refugees (their culture, countries, etc.).*

Challenges, which might be faced in fulfilling this opportunity:

- » Refugees don't want to be public and want their privacy to be respected, so they might refuse to cooperate.
- » Young people who have more international experience might not be interested in activities such as cultural events where foreigners present their cultures and countries.

7. *Youth centres and youth NGOs are offering space and different possibilities for refugees to build social ties in local communities.*

Challenges, which might be faced in using this opportunity:

- » Bullying is a possibility, so the youth workers or youth leaders need to prepare in advance.
- » If the first contact is negative, future interaction would be a lot more difficult to encourage. For both sides.
- » Language barriers.
- » Cultural differences.

8. *Youth NGO's as a platform to implement ideas and receive support.*

Challenges which might be faced in fulfilling this opportunity:

- » Complexity of such activities is requiring having similar experience and high motivation.
- » Cultural differences.

9. *Youth organizations can provide various services: legal, psychological, academic and etc. consultations.*

Challenges, which might be faced in using this opportunity:

- » Language barriers.
- » Doubts about professionalism of provided services.

10. *Youth workers have most of the competences to work with refugees. Investment in their training would be smaller than training someone new to work with groups, individual work with young people, methodologies, main principles of youth work, etc.*

Challenges, which might be faced in fulfilling this opportunity:

- » Lack of attention for special training.
- » In the process new challenges can appear and youth worker might not get relevant support.

11. *Youth sector is open for cooperation with other organizations.*

Challenges, which might be faced in using this opportunity:

- » Difficulties to find common ground for cooperation between different sectors (work culture, attitudes, aims, measures, norms, etc.).
- » Different expectations of cooperation and its results.
- » Project based/ short-term cooperation.
- » Time consuming.
- » Cooperation understood as an aim itself.

12. *Youth organizations can be a key actor for different initiatives with media on refugees in trying to change the media coverage to a more positive one.*

Challenges that might be faced in fulfilling this opportunity:

- » Refugees don't want to be public and want their privacy to be respected. In that case they can refuse to cooperate.
- » Lack of good examples.
- » Communities in small towns can be reluctant.

13. *Internet consultations on various topics are useful and efficient way to help refugees in the way of settling in a new country.*

Challenges, which might be faced in using this opportunity:

- » Lack of interpersonal communication will not lead to socialization.

**WE WELCOME
REFUGEES**

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Studies have shown that the consequences of a non-effective or a non-existent integration of refugees or minorities into the societies are resulting in plenty of social problems including the recent issue of radicalization which in many cases is an outcome of being misunderstood in a country of residence or alienation. This is one of the many reasons why a closer cooperation between youth NGOs, youth centres and the organizations that are in charge of the socialization of refugees in the country needs to be encouraged. While the “organizations in charge” are swamped with documentation, legal aid, formal requirements and lack of human resources, youth centres and youth NGOs could involve people of migrant or refugee background into activities where they could meet and socialize with locals. Using already existing activities young people should contribute to building up the social ties between refugees and the local community.
2. Youth organizations and youth centres are welcome to approach organizations that are working directly with refugees and discuss possible cooperation regarding:
 - Inviting refugees to join youth centres or youth NGOs;
 - Planning new possible activities and initiatives that would be valuable in order to improve the refugee situation.

Youth centres and youth NGOs can bring added value to already existing integration measures, for example - to be a space for young refugees to improve national language or to implement their ideas and receive support to do it. Or to implement new actions, which other actors in the field do not cover.

3. Two-way integration models have to be implemented. There are two groups of beneficiaries: those who are refugees or asylum seekers and those who are members of the local community. The main problem, mentioned by almost every participant of the research was the stereotypical thinking and the prejudices about refugees that are rather strong in Latvia and Lithuania. NGO's should be working towards local communities to be more tolerant to this special and vulnerable group. It is important to keep in mind that cultural differences, respect, intercultural learning and integration questions should be addressed in work with young people as the need for refugees “to live by the norms of the countries who are accepting them” was expressed intensively. The topic is sensitive, so it would be necessary to discuss integration, assimilation and do these words mean to young people.
4. Youth organizations should join other actors in the field and provide services for young refugees, such as psychological or academic consultations. It is important to involve target group of proposed services in constructing such services in order to meet their needs. The importance lies in acknowledging all relevant touch points in the service, and how the users interact with elements of the service.
5. Open youth centres, focusing on the social work with young people, are contributing a great deal to the integration of socially vulnerable groups in different cities and towns; they can be one of the key actors in socialization of young refugees. Before starting work with them, each element must be well thought out. It should start with the simplest activ-

ities, giving them time to do nothing, not to put pressure and high expectations.

6. Youth centres and youth NGOs, before starting work with social integration of refugees have to assess their own capabilities, resources, etc. Organizations shouldn't depart extremely from what they do the best. "Hunting for finances", were additional funds are allocated can lead to distortion of institution.
7. Youth workers need to receive training on working with young people from refugee background and including them into activities with local youth. The training should include intercultural learning, human rights education, diversity, work with groups, conflict management, and interfaith.
8. The organizations that are already working with refugees do not have an interest or see any point in putting effort to influence the media coverage of the refugee's topic. As young people and youth organizations do see that the media makes a huge impact in forming a negative opinion about refugees, an initiative of positive news coverage about refugees or work with medias could be introduced. The actions could be started with approaching the young journalists from special news portals in the countries who are writing about youth related topics.
9. Both in Lithuania and Latvia the statistics show that there is a small number of refugees in these countries and the youth workers are not faced by the challenges to integrate young refugees and to broaden the scope of their work. Nonetheless youth workers should take into consideration that even though they do not have to "put out the fires" now, they should be dedicating the time and start preparing young people for interaction and living with others. In order to do that, more cooperation should be encouraged between youth centres and youth organizations and/or NGOs that are working on human rights education, tolerance and intercultural learning.



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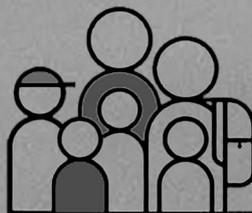
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