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Report describing the stakeholders, experts
and refugees involvement in a local
workshop - Ljubljana

10 2019





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A. Workshop description

The workshop went well. It seemed that all participants/stakeholders present were satisfied in one way or another. As most of the people present already knew each other, except the representatives of institutions (Employment Service in Slovenia (ESS) and Ljubljana City Municipality), we have decided not to split into two working groups, and rather have a collective process. We followed the proposed agenda of the workshop by splitting the workshop into two phases: In the first, to do an overview of the current situation of integration into the society with an accent on labor market, and in the second phase to see where we can move forward, and what we can do together concerning the subject of the workshop. The first part was very successful as all the right people came to offer their perspective on the difficulties of migrant integration into the labor market and society.

The second part did not go as planned by the organizers, as for the majority of the participants it was more important to talk to the institutions which were present at the workshop about specific problems and solutions. So it became more of a question-answer dynamic instead of a more in-depth presentation of the current ideas from the representatives of refugees, activists, and NGOs (ideas of a social center in Ljubljana, a cooperative; a socio-economic organization) and a strategic and visionary debate on the horizons of economic and social integration. But this can be understood in the before mentioned acquaintance of the group and the presence of representatives of institutions, who can give actual answers to long-debated questions in the migrant solidarity scene in the previous years. So the debate in a way concluded with trying to get a space from the municipality. This is in line with the problems of integration expressed in the first phase of the debate and how their solution is intimately linked with the actuality of having space or not.



A.1. Agenda of the workshop

<i>Ura / Time</i>	<i>Opis dejavnosti / Activity description</i>	<i>Metodologija / Methodology</i>
10:00	Kratka predstavitev projekta SiforREF <i>- A short presentation of the SiforREF project (KD GMAJNA, ZRC SAZU)</i>	Predstavitev / Presentation
10:15	Predstavitev deležnikov delavnice <i>- Presentation of the stakeholders</i>	Predstavitev / Presentation
10:30	Prvi del delavnice: pregled stanja vključevanja beguncev in migrantov v družbo in na trg dela v Sloveniji <i>The first part of the workshop: overview of the integration of refugees into labor market and society in Slovenia</i>	Debata, vsi deležniki / Brainstorming, debate, all stakeholders
11:30	Pavza / Coffee break	
11:45	Drugi del delavnice: Oblikovanje priporočil, smernic, inovativnih pristopov ter povzetki posameznih mnenj in pogledov <i>- The second part of the workshop: Key findings of the workshop: guidelines, recommendations; innovative methods, approaches and summary of individual feedback</i>	Debata, povzetki, vsi deležniki / Brainstorming, summaries, all stakeholders
13:00	Kosilo / Lunch at Fari's Delice, Miklošičeva 38 (informal part of the workshop, introduction to Fari's business)	

Act
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A.2. Stakeholder list

1. Samer Arkawi, a refugee, international protection, student and an activist
2. Faramarz Ghobadian, a migrant businessmen, owner of the company, employer
3. Lana Zdravković, an employee of an NGO sector
4. Alaa Alali, a refugee, employee in NGO sector
5. Ognjen Radivojević, an employee in NGO sector
6. Lara Arzenšek, a student, active within the LIPa student initiative on local integration platform with/for refugees and asylum seekers
7. Jošt Žagar, an activist of InfoKolpa (informal activist group) and the representative of Kulturno društvo Gmajna, KDG
8. Blanka Rihter, ZRSZ, Employment Service of Slovenia, works daily with refugees registered there.
9. Sladjana Zarić, ZRSZ, Employment Service of Slovenia , Info Point for migrants – special service for foreign workers
10. Borut Jan, ZRSZ, Employment Service of Slovenia, Info point for migrants
11. Dejan Tešovič, Municipality of Ljubljana, Department of culture, City Municipality of Ljubljana

Also present, as organizers and observers

Aigul Hakimova, Kulturno društvo Gmajna, hosting organization

Ana Zupan, Advocate for the principle of equality, the project partner

Danilo Hovnik, Advocate for the principle of equality, the project partner

Lucija Klun, ZRC SAZU - ISIM, student

Špela Kastelic, ZRC SAZU - ISIM, project

partner Jure Gombač, ZRC SAZU - ISIM, project

partner Barbara Beznec, ZRC SAZU - ISIM,

project partner Arne Zupančič, KD Gmajna, host

Matej Kavčič, KD Gmajna, host



B. Key results

B.1. Findings of phase 1

Considering the context of asylum policy in Slovenia since its entrance into the European Union (2004) and the Balkan Route (from 2015) mass movement of refugees toward the northern part of EU, there is a growing number of applications for international protection since 2015, and consequently, the growing number of granted asylum protections. Although, the Slovenian asylum policy is considered as one of the strictest in the EU regarding the granting the international protection statuses.

Apart from refugees with statuses, almost 150 thousand foreigners are living and working in Slovenia. Approximately 700 international protection statuses were granted up to November 2019.

Main problems that we talked about by words of stakeholders:

- Employment office registers the unemployed refugees (general registration that gives refugees the right to apply for different types of social allowances from the state),
- Refugees have access to the labor market,
- There is a need to spread the information on self-employment,
- Some women have never been in labor relationship before their arrival to Ljubljana, how to help them,
- Asylum seekers and young refugees (up to 26 y.o.) who are enrolled in schooling, basic education process, have access to the labor market via the STUDENT WORK system,
- Working full time (especially afternoons) is a huge problem for women, man demand from them also to take care of children and house,
- There are incompatibilities with job-position standards, more high schools need to be involved to fill in the gap with learning new tools (using new machines, HACCAP, other criteria for job positions),
- Many programs from Employment Service are only in Slovenian,
- Lack of motivation, enormous bureaucracy,
- Lack of social life and social ties (refugees miss their way of socializing and sharing common goods and information), there is also only one-way sharing, no feedback
- Problems multiply faster then solved, from year to year
- Lack of cultural mediators (translators, interpreters, orientation workers)
- Recognition (nostrification) of diplomas is a serious problem, sometimes impossible



SiforREF

- Language barriers (fluent English is not enough, Slovenian should be spoken with bureaucracy)
- Third country nationals, refugees as well, can not open bank accounts easily, sometimes it is impossible, only a few banks (2) allows refugees to open bank accounts
- Bank loans are given mostly to citizens, most of the banks stopped giving small loans (consumer loans up to 8.000,00 EUR) to third country nationals two years ago, systematic discrimination, long term poverty perspective
- Highly educated persons with refugee statuses are considered as vulnerable group within the registered unemployed people
- Employment Service of Slovenia (ESS) is accomplishing a special program for refugees to integrate them into the labor market, 90 hours,
 - Training-on-the-job, this program will expire in November 2019, was launched 3 years ago, and devoted especially to refugees with international protection status, 6 months of training,
 - The level of written language, the reading skills are also important, not only conversational level,
 - Lack of realistic expectations from the side of refugees (said by ESS member),
 - Criteria for employment from the side of employers are growing each year, one bad experience is throwing a bad light to the whole community of refugees,
 - The knowledge of language is a private criteria of an employer, there is no such a law, for private job positions, requirement of the knowledge of the Slovenian language is coming from individual employers for specific job positions.



B.2. Findings of phase 2

By member of ESS, Employment Service of Slovenia:

– Asylum seekers and refugees form such a minor part of the unemployed population (70 thousand by 2019) that we cannot expect that the Employment Service of Slovenia will start creating some kind of extraordinary programs for such a small group of people (persons with international and subsidiary statuses).

By refugee:

– ON-THE-JOB-TRAINING: This institute was many times abused from the side of employers and the employees often get scammed.

By member of ESS:

– All of the participants of the program are encouraged that they report any kind of irregularity at the workplace. The problem is that the people don't report the problems and then they just leave the program, without consulting anybody. And that is a huge problem: if you sign a contract, it is a legally binding matter.

By member of the City Municipality of Ljubljana:

– Ljubljana doesn't have any tools, but there are three programs currently running
– ICORN, (International Cities of Refugee Network, for persecuted writers),
– A call-out for festivals, (through which NGO's ran workshops with refugees – with people from Asylum homes (puppet shows, workshops ...)
– Until 14th of October there was an open call-out on the internet site for suggestions that would be part of the cultural program Ljubljana – World Capital of Culture 2025. It is only the first round of applications for the cities, so we need only the basic things.

By refugee:

– Autonomous factory Rog (where Kulturno društvo Gmajna used to work on daily basis) is being demolished, we have presented three different initiatives that we need a place. We need a new place, and how can municipalities help us? We don't want to go into squat again since we need a long-term place for a long-term well being of new member of this society

By refugee:

– Refugees who were part of the Social center Rog (KDG headquarters before) are way more



aware of their situation in Ljubljana, they are better integrated, and the place really served its purpose.

By KDG member:

It is so important to have a daily center or place, where refugees and local people meet, where we can have different activities, where information will circle in a better way, where women and children feel better and accepted, not isolated, where we can generate ideas on solidarity activities, where we can help each other faster, where we can learn from each other and organize good public events for raising awareness. It is of a tremendous importance to have a socializing space, we are coming from cultures where individuality does not work well, where community takes responsibility to take care of its members, where different generations change their experiences. We need a space that will help us in the future to organize a cooperative or other form of social enterprise that would assist people to overcome the basic existential needs, especially in the beginning of new life. We need to have a meeting to discuss with the municipality the possibility of obtaining such a space.

By the city municipality member:

- I don't have the authority to give promises that I won't be able or others won't be able or willing to fulfill. I agree with the proposal of KDG that we first go on a meeting.
- About public spaces: there are not many that would be suitable for this kind of activities. In the field of culture a lot of people are asking for new, bigger spaces. For example in the field of contemporary dance, where except Španski borci (cultural center), we don't have any other new spaces
- We are ready to listen to your proposals and needs and not only complete our in advance written programs.
- The department for real estate is the right address for solving difficulties with space, places for activities that refugees and migrants need.

By NGO member:

- We need more space where people can spend time. Unlike other cities we don't have migrant quarters, so people are very isolated.

(summary of stakeholder notes on the process; Key findings of each group: guidelines, recommendations; innovative methods, approaches summary of individual feedback)



C. Résumé

The workshop turned out in the end as a tactical and practical tool for dialogue among different stakeholders, especially the conversation between the representatives of institutions and users, i.e. refugees, migrants, and small NGOs. The idea of creating a daily center (space, place) that prevent isolation and help people with the basic steps of integration (much-needed socialization) and further planning of a more autonomous economic well being was the core point of the second phase. Considering the local context, the state regulation of migration, including integration and education, which is too centralized, one of the innovative approaches in refugee policy could be the establishment of social daily centers that would enhance the quality of life for migrants by migrants themselves, taking into consideration different means of integration. A common social innovative approach in refugee policy, thus, creation of possibilities that would improve the employment of refugees through semi-formal, informal and horizontal institutions where a common space of communication and sharing is crucial for further steps. Actually, in this case, the social innovative point is not so new and coming from the side of many grassroots experiences, from small NGOs, activists, and refugees themselves.

(how can the findings of the workshop contribute to developing a transnational methodology for a common social innovative approach in refugee policy?)