

DELIVERABLE D.T1.4.2

Comparative report on best practices in all
the central European regions

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1. INTRODUCTION

This deliverable provides a comparative report on best practices in central European regions. Starting from the evidence collected in D.T.1.4.1., best practices had been are put in a data-base and categorized according to different typologies.

This deliverable is part of the Activity A. T. 1.4. “Mapping and analysis of current policies on refugee reception and integration in Central Europe”, that contribute the aim of the WP1 (that is, to set up a method for measuring the social innovation capacity in the area of refugee integration). It starts from the evidences collected in previous Activities, in particular the mapping of refugee policy in Central European regions, and the co-creation of a transnational strategy for a common social innovative approach in refugee policy. Moreover, these best practices are preliminary to the last Activity of the WP1 (A.T.1.5), being they following used as case studies in order to build a set of indicators for measuring social innovation capacity. This comparative report had been done by UNIVE.

For the purpose of this Activity, we can define good/best practices as experiences or initiatives that are working well and can be replicated elsewhere, considered to be effective in contributing to refugee integration, and therefore deserving to be proposed to other regional/local contexts. Best practices can be regarded both as processes or interventions that would be easily transferred (better if the bottom-up ones), and with positive effects as concern refugee integration (labor market integration, and/ or housing integration, and/or social integration).

Following this definition, SiforREF Consortium had been invited to collect the highest number of best practices, not only in the four Central European Regions involved in SiforREF, but also in other ones. The 16 best practices collected have been individually described in previous D. T.1.4.1 (by following the same structure/analytic grid). Starting from the evidence previous collected, this comparative report provides an overview of the policy recommendations emerged after having identifying common



threads. In addition to this introduction, this deliverable is divided in 7 sections, that present: a comparative overview of the general information of the 16 selected best practices (Section 2); the reasons for choosing the practices and the main results achieved (Section 3); the partners implementing the initiative and target groups (Section 4); the success factors and innovativeness (Section 5); the main challenges and solution (Section 6); the possible scalability (Section 7); or upscaling (Section 8) of these practices.

2. GENERAL INFORMATION

The 16 best practices selected were focused on different aspects of immigrant integration. Specifically, the majority of these practices were aimed at *job market integration* (69%, i.e., 11 out of 16) and/or *social integration* (63%, i.e., 10 out of 16). Also, one third of the practices had a focus on *housing integration* (31%, i.e., 5 out of 16), whereas three of them (20%) also had other kinds of objectives. As for their geographical location, the best practices were carried out in four countries, more precisely in the areas of Bologna (Italy), Milan (Italy), Wien (Austria), Ljubljana (Slovenia), and Berlin (Germany). They had different geographical scopes, with practices implemented at the local (38%, i.e., 6 out of 16), regional (38%, i.e., 6 out of 16), and national level (19%, i.e., 3 out of 16). The overwhelming majority of the practices (82%, i.e., 13 out of 16) were initiated during the 2010s, and especially since 2015 (63%, i.e., 10 out of 16)—possibly indicating that the so-called European “refugee crisis” played a decisive role in the emergence of these initiatives. One third of them (63%, i.e., 10 out of 16) were still ongoing at the moment of the analysis (end of 2019). Finally, as for the type of organizations crafting the best practices, a few of them were either public (19%, i.e., 3 out of 16) or private actors (6%; i.e. 1 out of 16), whereas the majority were public-private partnerships (69%, i.e., 11 out of 16). *Table 1* provides a comprehensive overview of these general information.



Table 1. General information on the best practices

Name of the initiative	Aspects of immigrant integration	Country	Level of practice	Geographical coverage	Start date	End date	Type of activity
Vesta	Housing	Italy	Local	City of Bologna	01/10/12	31/12/19	Mixed
Salus Space	Housing	Italy	Local	Metropolitan area of Bologna	01/11/16	31/07/20	Mixed
SKUHNA	Labour market	Slovenia	Regional	Region of Ljubljana	01/01/12	Ongoing	Public
Zona 8 Solidale	Labour market; Social; Housing	Italy	Local	Neighborhood ‘Ghisolfa’, in the city of Milan	28/09/16	18/12/17	Private
School4job	Labour market; Social	Italy	Local	Metropolitan area of Bologna	01/11/18	01/11/19	Mixed
CIAC	Social; Housing	Italy	Local	Province of Parma	01/01/2015	Ongoing	Mixed
“Živa knjižnica” (The Human Library)	Social; Housing	Slovenia	National	Slovenian larger cities and towns	12/01/07	12/01/18	Public
Haus AWAT - Betreute Wohnintegration von Flüchtlingen [House AWAT - Sheltered housing integration of refugees]	Labour market; Social; Housing	Austria	Local	Metropolitan area of Wien	22/03/17	31/12/20	Mixed
Stand 129 der Caritas Wien - [Booth 129 by Caritas Vienna]	Social; Other	Austria	Local	Favoriten, 10 th district of Wien	01/09/13	Ongoing	Mixed
Everest	Labour market; Social	Germany	Regional	Berlin State	01/10/16	Ongoing	Mixed



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Frauenloop gUG	Labour	Germany	National	Germany	01/01/16	Ongoing	Mixed
market; Social							
Bridge – Berliner Netzwerke für Bleiberecht	Labour market	Germany	National	Berlin and Germany	10/07/15	31/12/20	Mixed
BACK on TRACK	Labour market; Social	Germany	Regional	Berlin State	15/04/19	31/01/21	Mixed
Work for Refugees	Labour market	Germany	Regional	City State of Berlin	01/10/15	Ongoing	Mixed
WELCOME CENTRE BERLIN	Labour market; Social; Housing; Other	Germany	Regional	Berlin State	01/08/16	Ongoing	Public
Initiative for Self-Employment of Immigrant Women (I.S.I. e.V.)	Labour market; Social	Germany	Regional	City State of Berlin	01/01/90	Ongoing	Mixed

3. REASONS FOR CHOOSING THE PRACTICES AND MAIN RESULTS

The reasons behind the selection of the best practices are manifold, but have some common threads that can be subsumed under the heading of “social innovation.” First, they were all aimed at producing tangible improvements in the lives of target groups, which were not involved as “passive beneficiaries,” but rather as owners and agents of change that engage in policy formulation and/or implementation. This often implied a holistic approach to labour, housing, and social integration, based on the assumption that integration is a process unfolding in the medium/long term, entailing assorted aspects of everyday life, and through which cascade effects can be begotten. Relatedly, all the practices had the aim of benefiting not only on the target groups, but also broader sectors of the population, in the perspective of a mutual exchange that can strengthen social cohesion for the community as a whole. These actors include local families



(Vesta project), residents whose neighbourhood has been renovated (Salus Space; House AWAT) or where new social and economic activities have been initiated (SKUHNA; Zona 8 Solidale; The Human Library; Booth 129; I.S.I.e.V.), youngsters accessing the job market (School4jobs; Everest), teachers and academics (Back on Track), and local businesses (Frauenloop; Bridge).

The best practices were selected also in the light of the relevant results that have been achieved. Thanks to these initiatives, target groups have often accessed the job market and/or acquired skills and certificates that are fundamental for this purpose, found decent and affordable housing solutions, and built bonds of solidarity with the rest of the local communities. In many cases, this also prevented the emergence of social conflicts that might be related to the settlement of high numbers of newcomers with diverse cultural backgrounds. The actors involved not only gave material and moral relief to the target groups, but also attempted to not “victimize” them – ultimately boosting the prospect of self-determination and spreading a positive vision of immigration across the public. Last but not least, many of these initiatives emerged from the grassroots thanks to activists and volunteers who possibly found the support of public institutions. This allowed them to achieve results notwithstanding the retreat of the (central) state from its responsibility in the realms of reception and integration policy-making – a capacity that can be referred to as “resilience” in face of an adverse environment.

4. PARTNERS IMPLEMENTING THE INITIATIVES AND TARGET GROUPS

As mentioned above, most of the promoters consisted of partnerships between public and private actors. Public institutions (foremost local government welfare agencies) often played a decisive role in driving the initiatives and coordinating assorted participants. For instance, the three best practices implemented in Bologna (Vesta; Salus Space; School4jobs) were all crafted by ASP Città di Bologna, a welfare agency



operating at the metropolitan level. It provided its financial resources and technical expertise to other public actors, as well as various civil society organizations, including local high schools and universities, social cooperatives, and philanthropic institutions. Similarly, the two Wien-based best practices (House AWAT; Booth 129) were designed and implemented by two NGOs (Caritas Wien and Hilfswerk) in cooperation with, and through the financial support of, public actors at different levels, such as the Municipality of Wien, the Government of Austria, and the EU. Similar kinds of arrangements were at play also in the case of the best practices implemented in Germany and Slovenia. For most of these initiatives, volunteers played a crucial role, of course. But this is especially the case for the only “purely private” initiative analyzed, named Zona 8 Solidale (Milan). This was carried out by assorted civil society organizations, such as NGOs (e.g., Emergency), trade unions (e.g., CGIL), parish churches, social centres (e.g., Il Cantiere), and individual volunteers (e.g., retired teachers). These actors mobilized precisely to fill in for the voids of Italy’s asylum system, namely by expanding the set of services provided in a state-managed reception centre. Zona 8 Solidale succeeded in improving the condition of roughly 300 asylum-seekers through a holistic approach to labour, housing, and social integration. Also, the initiative succeeded in prompting a sympathetic response by the Milan’s city government, which endorsed and expanded the demands coming from this neighbourhood committee. Finally, the three best practices enacted by public institutions (Skuhna; The Human Library; Welcome Centre Berlin) were nonetheless founded on cooperative arrangements with non-state actors, such as philanthropic organizations and volunteers. As for the target groups of the best practices, unaccompanied minors and young adults were supported through initiatives focused on education and job market integration, including Vesta, School4jobs, and Everest. Female asylum-seekers and refugees also represented a relevant target group due to their gender-specific needs and vulnerabilities. For instance, the Frauenloop project aimed at the job market integration of female migrants with an expertise on information technologies. Most of the best practices, however, concerned social needs that are



shared by the entire population of asylum-seekers and refugees, and sometimes by the “native” population, too.

5. SUCCESS FACTORS AND INNOVATIVENESS

While success factors and innovativeness found in the 16 best practices are manifold, some common threads can be identified, and that, also in this case, can be subsumed under the heading of “social innovation.” According with Vitale (2009, 172), in fact, in some cases SI can be driven by citizens and the civil society, in others the public actor is at the forefront, albeit in a dynamic of unavoidable mobilization of the local community: in the first place, those initiatives that are capable of creating strong methods of bottom-up coordination, but at the same time are guaranteed “from above”, both financially and legally, have a longer-lasting success. [...] Secondly, and closely linked to the first point, the most successful initiatives seem to be those able to constantly work on public action, growing within it by taking with them the network of bottom-up initiatives they are connected to (Vitale 2009, 172). These elements had been found in our best practice collection, as concern the analysis of both success factors and innovativeness.

As concern the success factors, a first common thread concerns the characteristics of the governance system established to both create and manage the practice. In the quasi totality of the best practices selected, in fact, the success factors can be traced back at the presence of a big local support network to realize the activity with participatory method, including the involvement of voluntary families. The establishment of a similar big local support network – that include civics, public and private actors, and NGOs – is able to reinforce solidarity and social capital among actors involved, with these values that become additional success factors of these practices. Examples of that are Skuna and Zona Solidale. The former is successful because of joint innovative and persistent work of NGO people and refugees, asylum



seekers (they are offering fresh new sorts of World cuisine for affordable prices but also cultural and educative events, with a very focused agenda to promote intercultural values). The most important success factor of the practice “Zona Solidale”, instead, was the pre-existence of a strong and dense solidarity network in the neighbourhood, being this initiative an expression of social capital accumulated in this territory over the decades. A second success factor is the institutional support that these had practices received during these years. By way of example, the Initiative “Haus Awat” had received a strong institutional support by Hilfswerk and Fonds Soziales Wien, at the net of the presence of a strong and consolidated network consisting of individuals, civic initiatives (e.g. Frühstück im Park), local institutions (e.g. Gebietsbetreuung) and public actors (e.g. district government). The initiative “Everest, instead, received early support from the Dept of Education, Youth and Family. Essential in the case of the Initiative “Welcome Centre Berlin”, instead, was the position of the Commissioner for Integration and Migration that – along with her welcome centre – has a pro-immigrant function. Additional success factors are also emerged in this practices, in part present also in other best practices selected, that are: 1) emphasis on the quality of the placement process; 2) time for individual assessment and support systems; 3) intercultural and assessment skills of the staff leads to enforcement of trust and communication between counselor and job applicant; 4) support system for applicants and employers in on-the-job situation, regular job fairs for job applicants and employers to meet and exchange information. Finally, in line with the aim of our INTERREG Central European Programme, an additional success factor had concerned the possibility to have access and implement EU funds (the initiative “Stand 129 dei Caritas Wien) is emblematic of that.

As concern innovativeness, the main common thread encountered in this best practice collection had concerned the use of co-design and participatory processes, by pushing towards the involvement of voluntary citizens inside the process to develop of new host and integration policies for refugees. This is a common thread encountered in the best practices, and particularly in the case of the Initiatives “Vesta” – “Salus



Space” – “Zona 8 Solidale”. An additional element of innovativeness had concerned the use of a flexible approach in implementing the practice, without too excessive bureaucratic constraints. The Initiative “Everest”, for example, is open to new participants at any time of the year, rather than being dependent on timing of new semesters. Finally, other factors had innovativeness concerned the type and quality of the services provide within these initiatives, that are specific to the field of refugee integration. In this way, these initiatives are able to cover all the three dimensions of social innovation as Moulart et. al (2013), that are: i) satisfaction of human needs; ii) changes in social relations; iii) and, increased empowerment. By way of example, the organisation “Frauenloop” not only offers tech training for this group, but also offers additional necessary skills i.e. resumé evaluation, salary negotiation and coaching measures on how to succeed with the job interview process. In the same direction, the Initiative ISieV is innovative being the unique programme in Central European regions for immigrant and refugee women that has been initiated from immigrant women with the same objective to support the economic independence of women as immigrant and refugees. This innovative social practice proves over time the viability of its empowerment philosophy of “immigrant women for immigrant women” and at the same time, has adapted its specific program, courses.

6. MAIN CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

While it is possible to identify the main challenges encountered in the 16 best practices collected, solutions had to be differentiated for each strategy due to the heterogenous characteristics they present (as described in Table 1). To this purpose, it is first at all relevant to present the main challenges identified, then provide evidence about the solutions adopted to face these challenges by taking into account single projects in order to show how these challenges had been overcome. These informations are relevant for the aim of SiforREF, since they could help us to build the set of indicators



that will be used during the project. The main challenges identified had concerned the financial and bureaucratic constraints encountered, as well as institutional challenges related, among others, to the Multi-level system present or the different occupational training systems present. Emblematic practices, for each of these challenges, had following presented.

The challenge related to the increased of different provenience countries of the unaccompanied stranger minors hosted had been for example addressed in the Vesta project, by adapting and increasing the skills of project operators to the new dimension of the phenomenon.

If labour legislation constricts foreigners, racism, internal friction between staff, low added value, precarious labour force, rising costs of operating, new and innovative practices like promotion of the restaurant, catering, e-food ordering, connecting food with culture, applying for EU and other projects, had been for example used to overcome this challenge in the case of Skuhna project.

In the case of the Project “Zona 8 Solidale”, the main constraints were related to multi-level governance. Providing voluntary services and organizing celebrations in a CAS require extensive negotiations with prefectures (the local branches of the Ministry of Interior), which are generally quite closed towards external demands. This resulted in significant difficulties in both bureaucratic and political terms. These challenges were addressed mainly through the support of municipal institutions.

Where financial constraints and dependency on additional funds (e.g. EU funding) were prevalent, but the partnership implementing the initiative can only address the issues related to the specific market laws and regulations (e.g., AWAT, and Stand 129), the staff had tried to negotiate with the market administrations in case they need any exceptions.

The challenges with respect to the mismatch between the dual system and the ability to certify the years of learning on the job remain difficult in different context (above all in Germany).



A solution to the multiple challenge related to immigrant and refugee women who want to become economically independent had been instead found by I.S.I.e.V. To overcome this challenge, co-creation workshops had been launched with current and former participants, refugee women themselves active in the field of self-organisation of refugee women's concern and specialist in the field. Feedback is conducted with the teacher/trainers as well as with the participants on a regular basis, after completion of the learning units. Courses/ trainers and participants are being evaluated. The latter measure their own progress. At the end of the year/course analysis is conducted from participants about their start-ups or other activities and plans. An ISI day of reflection is held annually for feedback, critique with participation of all trainers, regular staff, Board and some participants or former participants.

7. SCALABILITY

Part of the projects included in our best practice collection have remarkable rooms for scalability. Some of them, in fact, can beget processes of diffusion across other territories and toward higher geographical scales. By way of example, the Initiative "School4job" was developed by involving asylum reception centers, high schools, and universities at the local level. As these institutions are often under the jurisdiction of central authorities, it is then reasonable to develop permanent policies with similar purposes at the national level. As concerned other initiatives, instead, such as Stand 129, Everest, Work for Refugees, Skuhna, up-scaling might be understood as setting up similar places in different neighbourhoods, not implementing larger and more centralized centres. There is probably a need to set up similar projects in many other disadvantaged neighbourhoods across cities part of the Central European regions. Nevertheless, building up similar initiative is a long-term effort that requires specific resources to use (in terms of both human resources and finances).



8. REPLICABILITY

Most of the best practices included in our analysis had shown to be adaptable to other contexts. The final goal of some of these was precisely that of create an innovative and replicable model to be used also in other European contexts (e.g., Salus Space). Other practices, instead, had been already tested in other local realities inside the same national borders, and they appeared to be easily adaptable to other contexts (e.g., Vesta). In some cases, instead, their replicability is conditional to specific factors, that differ from practice to practice. First, replication seems conditional on the existence of a pre-existing solidarity network at the local level and, possibly, on the support provided by a sympathetic local government (e.g, Zona 8 Solidale, Everest). Second, the replicability of some practices can be hardly achieved through top-down ‘impositions’, but the dissemination of such experiences is often important for inspiring social innovation elsewhere (e.g. Zona 8 Solidale). Third, similar success factors identified in the best practices collected had to be at play, among them: the involvement of different partners mobilizing different resources, the existence of a favourable political landscape, and the back-up of a solid, well-equipped welfare system (e.g, School4jobs). Fourth, some good practices collected in Germany can be adaptable to other contexts that have a dual educational system, such as Austria, Denmark and Switzerland, for example. (e.g., Work for Refugees). Fifth, and finally, the replicability of those social innovative projects that provide for the integration of training programmes as well as the financing of housing for asylum seekers and refugees is subordinate to the local/national context of institutions, available public funds as well as policies – such as with regard to education/labour market programmes (e.g. Haus AWAT).