



INTEGRATING REFUGEES IN SOCIETY AND THE LABOUR MARKET THROUGH SOCIAL INNOVATION



SIFORREF & SOCIAL INNOVATION

In our first newsletter, we introduced the main objectives of the SiforREF project. Our focus is the promotion of social innovation capacity of policies and practices to enhance opportunities for the inclusion and integration of refugees. Further, it is important to our team that socially innovative and inclusive measures become sustainable and mainstream not only on the local and national levels of our five partner cities, but internationally as well.

With that said, we will briefly explain what is meant by the concept of social innovation and how it is understood and utilised in the SiforREF project.

What is social innovation and why is it important?

Social Innovation as applied by SiforREF is a concept and process that leads to the transformation of existing conditions related to established policymaking and integration practices faced by refugees.

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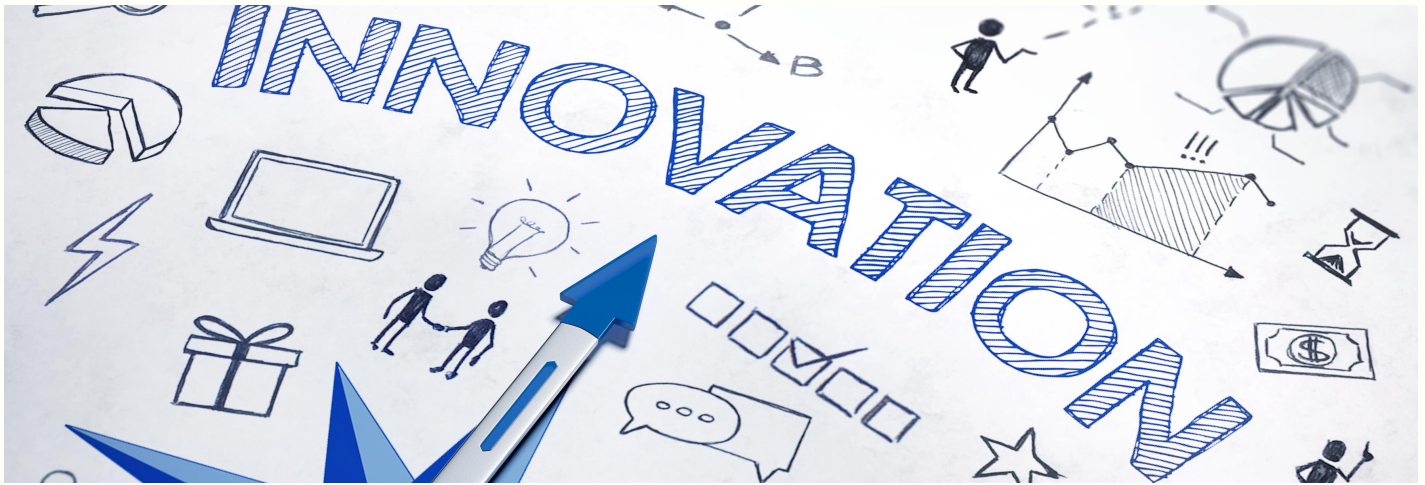
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SIFORREF NEWS

FALL NEWSLETTER



How can can social innovation be applied to help refugees?

Divisive processes, such as polarization and exclusion, have threatened many of our local societies with the most recent arrival of refugees since 2015. Refugees often risk social exclusion, scapegoating and defamation in this context. A social innovative approach to the social inclusion and integration of refugees requires a governance that is open to cooperate with actors in civil society, and to design and implement new policies and practices that will improve their conditions immediately and in a long-term perspective.

In brief, the SiforREF project shares the view that social innovation:

- fosters social inclusion and counters restrictive forces that prevent it,
- encourages bottom-up participation,
- enables co-learning between local governance and key and diverse stakeholders in civil society.

Core Dimensions of Social Innovation

The concept of social innovation has three core dimensions* that we reference in our work

Here a brief overview of these dimensions:



Content dimension:

to satisfy the basic social needs of refugees.



Process dimension:

to transform social relations via co-creation activities with local government.



Empowerment dimension:

to increase socio-political capabilities & access to resources for refugees.

* Moulart et. al (2005) cited in Gerometta, OpCit, p.2007.

MILESTONES



Photo credit Jean Emmel

In the past months, we have worked on two workpackages that are fundamental to the project.

We completed workpackage no.1 and are currently in the middle of workpackage no.2. Here is an overview of the work that we accomplished:

WORKPACKAGE NO.1 - CREATING A TOOLBOX FOR MEASURING SOCIAL INNOVATIVE CAPACITY

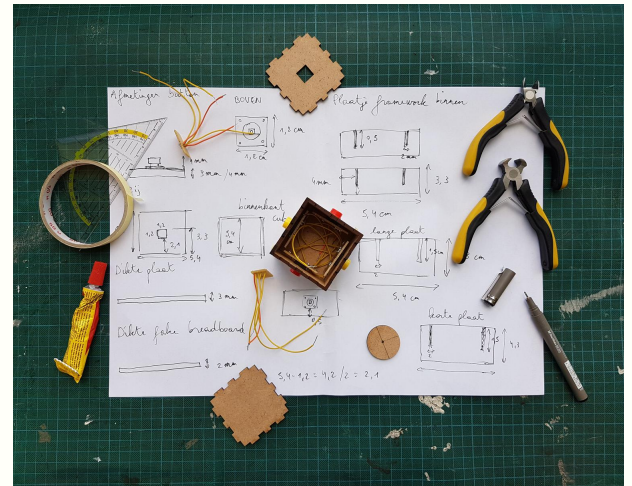
- Transnational team meetings in Venice & Ljubljana.
- Launch of the SiforREF website.
- In depth interviews with key stakeholders.
- Co-Creation workshops in all five partner cities.
- Selection of and comprehensive reports on best practices in all five cities.
- Compilation of indicators for evaluating the social innovative capacity of policies and practices.
- Addition of a special section on the project website about Covid-19 and refugees along with regular updates.



Photo credit:C.Ellerbe

WORKPACKAGE NO.2 - DEVELOPING SOCIAL INNOVATIVE APPROACHES FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION

- Compilation of indicators for measuring social innovation.
- Creation of factsheets highlighting important data for each of the five partner cities.
- Preparatory seminars for key stakeholders, who will participate in five transnational travel study visits.
- Travel study visits with selected stakeholders will occur in each of the five partner cities (Fall 2020-Spring 2021).



For more information, please see: <https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/SiforREF.html>

BEST PRACTICES

In the coming newsletters SiforREF will highlight a selection of best practices from each of our partner cities. However, before we proceed, you might ask: what are best practices and how do you know one when you see it?

The SiforREF team defines good or best practices as experiences or initiatives that are working effectively and can be replicated elsewhere. Further, we contend that best practices can be regarded both as processes or interventions that can, when possible, be easily transferred elsewhere.

The following best practices have been categorised into three specific areas that intersect:



- Labour market
- Housing market
- Societal integration

More info on SiforREF best practices: <https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/SiforREF/Innovative-Best-Practices.html>

LABOUR MARKET & SOCIAL INTEGRATION

BOLOGNA School 4 Job



Photo: School4Job

Initiated in 2018, **School 4 Job** was selected as a particularly inspiring initiative in the realm of labour market and social integration. Thanks to sustained interactions with professionals and assorted social actors, a group of asylum-seekers have been able to enhance their professional and relational skills, as well as their chances of accessing the jobmarket. The project also involved high-school students within the same age range. This interaction helped foster the building of relationships and knowledge exchange.

BERLIN

Bridge

Bridge, founded in 2012, is a partnership between private sector organisations working with refugees (NGOs) and the Commissioner for Integration and Migration of the Berlin Senate. This composition of different actors is very effective in advising refugees, but also in political lobbying. Bridge offers assistance in relation to obtaining qualifications and finding employment and training opportunities as well as general advice about questions regarding access to the labour market.



Photo credit: Bridge

LJUBLJANA

Shukna



Since 2012 the social enterprise **Skuhna** has worked to increase the employability of migrants through culinary work and to bridge the gap of understanding between migrants and locals who live in Ljubljana. Migrants prepare food from their various countries of origin and present it to a potential customer base of people willing to taste it. Skuhna isn't just about food. It is about the stories of the food, the people who prepare it and the countries it comes from.

HOUSING & SOCIAL INTEGRATION

PARMA

Refugees in Families : Created in 2015 this project has involved so far 31 adult refugees and 7 minors that have been hosted in Italian families, small communities and/or co-housing. The project aims to offer a “warm relational space” for refugees leaving the reception paths. The aim here is to improve their conditions and chances in terms of housing, widening social networks above all with Italians and having access to job opportunities. The project offers a continuous multi-disciplinary support by CIAC during all the different phases: initial contact, matching and follow up.



Photo credit: Maria F.posito

VIENNA

Haus AWAT



Haus **AWAT** (Kurdish for “hope/wish”) provides sheltered housing for asylum seekers in the national programme of provision. This includes basic supplies as well as dwelling places for refugees that have been granted asylum. Temporary residents in Haus AWAT can be single individuals who identify as female or male, LGBTQI, as well as families. In addition to housing, the ground floor is used as a business zone that is also open to neighbourhood residents.

IMPACT OF COVID - 19 ON REFUGEES



In order to curtail the spread of the Covid -19 virus, many EU countries imposed during the last six movement restrictions and even near or complete lock-down measures upon its citizens. But what does this mean for the refugee populations located in these spaces? In many cases such measures added further complications and difficulties to the lives of individuals that have already experienced trauma and forced displacement. On our website we devoted an additional section to information, stories and updates about how refugee populations and various organisations in Berlin, Bologna, Ljubljana, Parma and Vienna are finding solutions to deal with the global pandemic.

For more information see: <https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/SiforREF/Covid-19.html>

THE IMPACT OF COVID - 19 ON THE SIFORREF PROJECT

The Covid-19 pandemic has undoubtedly impacted various domains of human social interaction across the globe. The crisis measures - lockdown- implemented by many EU member states restricted not only the movement of individuals seeking refuge, but also the movement of our transnational project partners as well. Since March, the SiforREF team has had to not only cancel all planned live transnational meetings, but also postpone various important project-related activities in each of our five cities.

While advanced technology allowed our team to quickly switch to an online mode of interaction; we nevertheless have had to re-think how future transnational visits with all project partners - in particular study visits- will take place should in person meetings not be possible in late 2020 and early 2021.

Despite these challenges, our team remains hopeful that even with restricted physical proximity, viable solutions will be found and the project's goals will be met.

SiforREF Transnational Online Meeting 14-15 May 2020

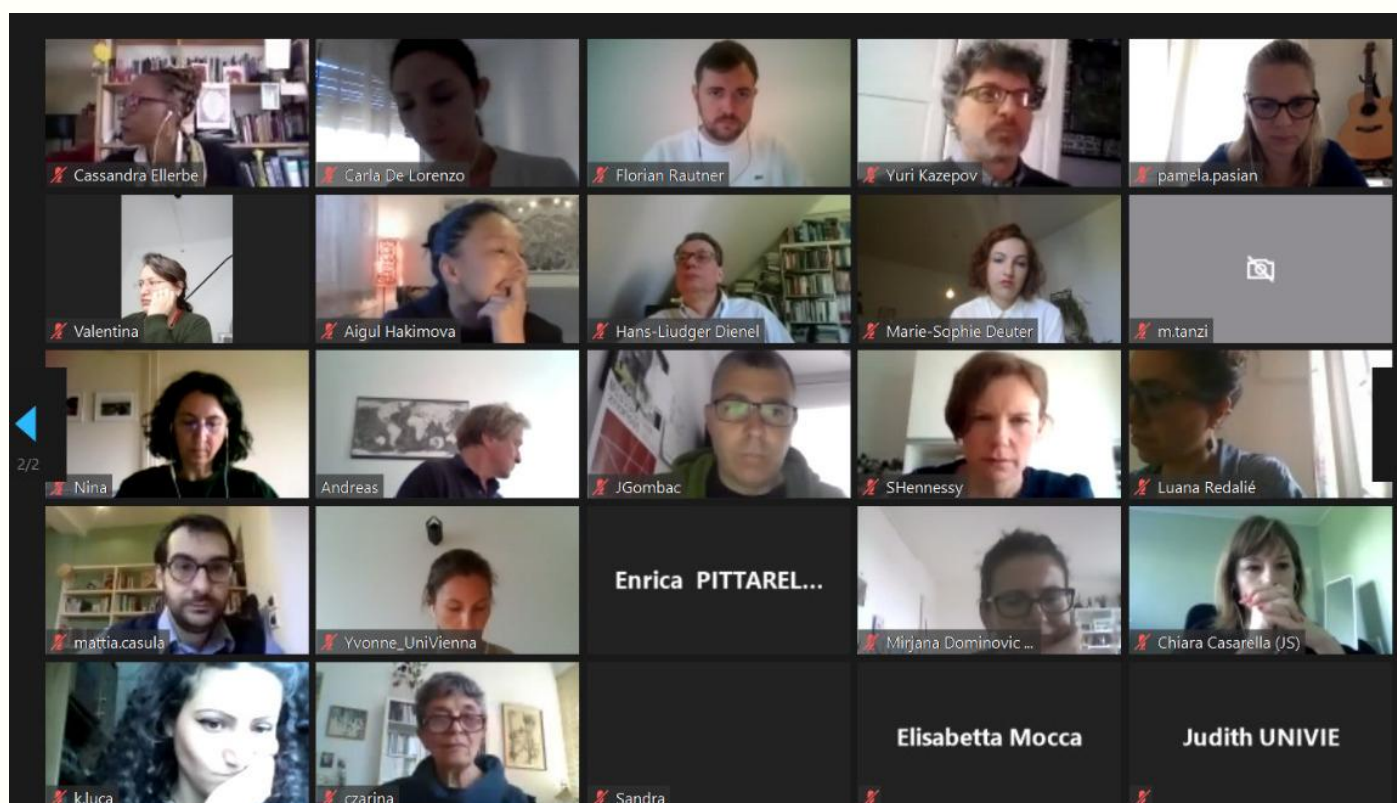


Photo credit: University of Venice Ca'Foscari

NEWS

Berlin Commissioner for Integration and Migration Katharina Niewiedzial Supports SiforREF.



Photo credit INTMIG

In a video statement of support for the **SiforREF project**, Berlin Commissioner for Integration and Migration Katharina Niewiedzial spoke about the significance of a strong common European policy in regard to the topic of migration and inclusiveness.

Niewiedzial touched on the necessity for transnational collaboration and stated:

Berlin is a diverse city with a very clear political message: we are very much committed to the participation and integration of all migrants from day one. I want the expertise of Berlin to contribute to a liberal European migration policy. But, I also want to learn from other European countries and initiatives - with a common and positive spirit!

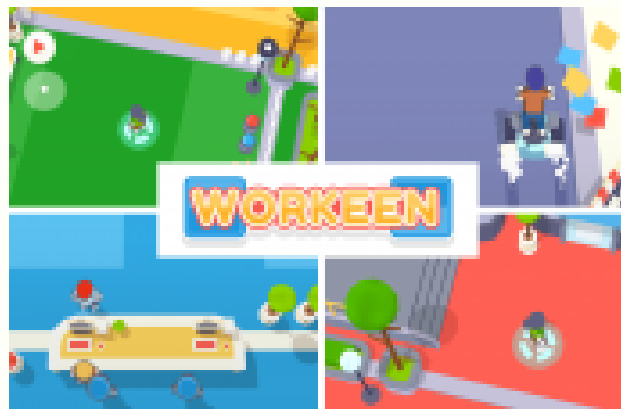
Full video statement:

<https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/SiforREF.html#News&Events>

SPOTLIGHT ON NEW EU INTEGRATION INITIATIVES

Job Search App for Refugees & Migrants

On the occasion of **World Refugee Day** (20 June 2020) an app was launched that helps immigrants and refugees to enter the European job market. The app, which is free to use, was created by the European research project Horizon 2020 SIRIUS "Skills and Integration of Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Applicants in European Labor Markets". The project is coordinated by the Department of Economic and Business Sciences of the University of Parma (Prof. Simone Baglioni) and is one of the first apps to offer interactive training to assist newly arrived immigrants in Europe, but also European citizens with their search for employment.



The app titled **WORKEEN**, belongs to the “serious game” genre. It was created by a team of social and economic science researchers and engineers based in seven European countries and Canada. It provides soft skills tutorials and training for those entering the labour market. **WORKEEN** is available in Italian, English, Arabic and Farsi as well as other European languages such as Czech, Danish, Finnish, French and Greek. It is on Google Play and works on Android phones.

See: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=eu.sirius.workeen>

WHAT'S COMING NEXT?

The next newsletter will highlight the project's progress, offer updates on our trans-national study visits, and examine the development of the pilot projects.

The SiforREF team wishes everyone a wonderful fall season.
And please stay healthy!

Thank you for subscribing!

OUR PARTNERS



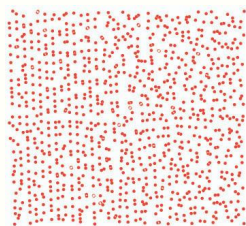
ASP CITTÀ DI BOLOGNA
Azienda pubblica di servizi alla persona



Ca' Foscari
University
of Venice



**Caritas
&Du**



GMAJNA



Comune di Parma



ISI Initiative Selbständiger
Immigrantinnen e.V.



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