

REPORT OF LOCAL POLICY GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM PILOTS IMPLEMENTATION IN PARMA

Deliverable D.T4.1.1

01 2022





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1) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report has the objective of providing some policy guidelines and recommendations, which have been arising during the implementation of the SiforREF project activities. During Work Package 1 Parma's stakeholders and policy makers were interviewed by the researchers of the Ca'Foscari University of Venice and took part to a co-creation workshop to understand local policies and practices related to the integration and inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers. Best Practices implemented in the city were collected and during WP2 they were discussed, not only at local level, but also during transnational study visits. In WP2, from the work of the entire Consortium, a toolbox on how to design social innovative approaches for integrating refugees were created and tested during the implementation of the pilots. In the city of Parma, the pilot concerned the experimentation of the "Social Caretaker". The Municipality of Parma made available some apartments to refugees who carry out social concierge duties in condominiums and in the neighborhood where they live. The project aimed to build positive relationships between natives and foreign citizens.

All these activities underlined positive dimensions and actions implemented in the city of Parma, nevertheless they showed the need for further improvements in policies and practices. The following recommendations can be considered a starting point.

In terms of policies the main recommendation concerns the implementation of Integration Policies at national and local level, with the provisions of funds and structures to tackle the challenges. At the moment, Italy lacks coherent and comprehensive integration policies, and all integration aspects are delegate to the SAI system (Reception and Integration System). Despite the good quality of the SAI system, this is an operational structure, which would benefit from coordinated policies. The enlargement of places available in the SAI system, the compulsoriness implementation of this system in each city, together with the extension of integration services also to asylum seekers hosted in the SAI represent the core of the second recommendation.

Another recommendation concerns the role of the Region Emilia-Romagna. Nowadays Italian Regions haven't specific competence in the field of Refugees' Integration and Inclusion, while an involvement of the regional level could mediate between the national provisions and the local needs and could tackle more promptly difficulties.

At local level the housing policies need specific attention and urgency, the lack of public housing and the prejudice of private landlords against newcomers need to be tackled with specific funds, provisions, trainings and awareness campaign.

In the process of creating Inclusion and Integration paths, the co-creation methodology needs to become the preferred methodology, including all actors (municipalities, NGOs, private landlords' associations, trade unions, work agency etc.) involved in the process. The same actors could benefit from the establishment of permanent coordination tables, which could meet regularly to discuss actions and initiatives and tackle challenges.

The last recommendation concerns communication. Public communication and media discourse have to avoid the reproduction of prejudices and stereotypes and promote cohesion narratives, at the same time stable information activities and awareness campaign have to be implemented to change the mind set of local population.

2) METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTION

One of the main goals of SiforREF project has been the creation of guidelines and indicators to evaluate the social innovation capacity of polices and practices. The creation of these guidelines and indicators has been



based on the multiple actions and activities implemented through the different work packages of the project and summarized in the checkboxes included in this report.

Concerning the city of Parma the indicators for social need of the target group and the indicators that contribute to changing the mind-sets of the local population allow to highlight the crucial dimensions envisaged in the Parma's best practice and pilot.

The indicators create in the realm of the SiforREF project constitute the first and necessary step to reflect, analyze and evaluate the social innovation capacities of policies and practices, nevertheless, in the opinion of the author of this report, they could further be improved in the future. For example, the indicator "Inclusion of exchanges among a diversity of ethnicities, ages, regions, gender, etc." could originate many sub-indicators and including also, as a sub-indicator, the indicator "Offer opportunities for local population and refugees to meet in smaller group activities". The indicator "Use when possible the concept of the Co-creation workshops" could be improved as well, for example considering the target groups that should take part in the co-creation workshops.

As already said, these indicators can be considered as a necessary starting point in the process of evaluating the social innovation capacity of policies and practices. More than a goal per se, social innovation needs to be considered as a crucial methodology which has to shape the process of activities' implementation in order to gain effective actions for a cohesive society.

3) INTRODUCTION

The goal of this report is to collect the work developed in the city of Parma through the activities of project SiforREF, and to analyze how challenges of the local context have been tackled through the implementation of the best practices and the pilot.

At the beginning of the project Parma's stakeholders and policy makers were interviewed by the researchers of the Ca'Foscari University of Venice, in order to understand local policies and practices related to the integration and inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers. Moreover stakeholders, experts, refugees and policy makers took part to a co-creation workshop with the aim of discussing methodologies to design an innovative approach for dealing with refugees' integration. In the meanwhile a set of best practices implemented in the city were collected by the Ca'Foscari University researchers. During the development of the Work Package 2 of the project SiforREF a Working seminar was realized in the city of Parma to discuss the activities implemented, which were discussed later on at transnational level through the transnational study visits. In WP2, from the work of the entire Consortium, a toolbox on how to design social innovative approaches for integrating refugees were created and tested during the implementation of the pilots. In the city of Parma the pilot concerned the experimentation of the "Social Caretaker". The Municipality of Parma made available some apartments to refugees who, carry out social concierge duties in condominiums and in the neighborhood where they live. The project aimed to build positive relationships between natives and foreign citizens. The main goal of the pilot was to achieve beneficial effects for both parties: local citizens, who can get in touch with refugees, dispel the prejudice against them and count on effective support in your neighborhood; refugees, who can build social networks and expand the opportunities for successful socio-economic integration.

Starting from what have been done, the report intends to produce some recommendations and guidelines which will be discussed with local politicians, social and economic actors, in order to develop a Local Agreement that includes specific actions to be pursued. The Local agreement will constitute the base for the draft of a Memorandum of Understanding that will be officially signed by political institutions.



4) LOCAL CONTEXT AND CURRENT CHALLENGES IN PARMA

4.1) The local (city) level

The city of Parma counts 196.518 inhabitants and is the second largest city (after Bologna) in Emilia Romagna Region. Parma has a long tradition related to refugees' issues, as it started to develop projects to host refugees which escaped from Balkan conflicts in the '90. The institution of the SAI (Reception and Integration System) in the city of Parma (see paragraph 3.2), represented a consequent step of the prior work implemented through the SPRAR project and the previous work of the Province of Parma playing a fundamental role coordinating all actors, public and private, involved in this issue. The changes in the functions of Italian provinces, ruled by the introduction of national laws, modified the competences of the Parma Province related to refugees as well and the coordination role among public and private actors in refugees' topics was assumed by the municipality of Parma, even though it did not benefit of the same legitimation at provincial level that the province had.

Since 2014, year of its stabilization, the hosting system for asylum seekers and refugees implemented in the city of Parma foresees the adoption of best practices, a wide connection between public and private actors which drew up protocols to give efficacy to their net including all institutional actors (welfare system, health system, legal system etc.). The local system has been flanked by a collateral system widespread at national level called CAS (Extraordinary reception centers), which initially were supposed to work as an exceptional, short-term solution to complement the ordinary system in cases of its temporary saturation. However, they have eventually covered the lion's share of migrant reception.

About the numbers of asylum seekers and refugees in the municipality of Parma, the following grids can give evidence of that.

	Asylum seekers and Refugees in SAI - 2020	Asylum seekers hosted in CAS - 2020	Total number
PARMA	223	660	883

Source: Protezione e asilo in Emilia-Romagna Compendio statistico 2020

The municipality of Parma and its integration system for asylum seekers and refugees, represents a benchmark in the Italian panorama. Its experience and the connection implemented between public and private actors constitute a far-sighted approach which many other municipalities in the country tried to emulate. The implementation of the restrictive law n.132/2018 at national level also affected Parma's territory, and in particular the number of places in the reception system decreased. Through the implementation of law 130/2020 the local system is reacquiring the traditional role of reference point for the entire country. The following paragraph will describe the specificities of the norms.

4.2) Policies and Legislations

Although the 1948 Constitution recognizes the right of asylum¹, international protection played a minor role within the Italian legislative context for a long time. After decades of inaction, some marginal policy changes

¹ Article 10.3



were enacted in the 2000s, foremost upon the input of the European Union (EU). Three EU Directives concerning the reception of asylum-seekers and the conditions for granting international protection were indeed transposed into national laws in the 2005-2008 period. For instance, the ‘typical’ refugee status - shaped on the 1951 Geneva Convention - was deemed insufficient to ensure protection to all individuals fleeing wars and persecutions. Subsidiary and humanitarian protection were then introduced as additional forms of asylum. As for integration policies, the SPRAR (Sistema di Protezione Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati - Protection System for Asylum-Seekers and Refugees) was first enacted in 2002², but on a very limited scale (Campomori 2019: 11-2). The outbreak of the financial crisis, which started in 2008, followed, in 2011, by the massive arrival of migrants and refugees as a result of the ‘Arab Spring’ and the war in Libya, led to a particularly awkward conjuncture for Italian migration policies (Caponio, Cappiali 2018) and prompted the Italian State to develop specific policies increasing the number of reception facilities for asylum seekers. Local authorities play a crucial role in the institution of a SPRAR project because they are requested on a voluntary basis to launch the reception project in collaboration with NGOs and associations. The Home Affairs Ministry encouraged the implementation of SPRAR, described “as a structured form to achieve a widespread reception, overcoming extraordinary solutions, and taking into account, at the same time, variegated local situations, avoiding imbalances and non-homogeneous distributions” (Ambrosini 2018, 116-117), but the resistance of local authorities led to a lack of reception facilities, and the government responded by creating a parallel system based on the Centres of Extraordinary Reception (CAS) through law no.142/2015 SPRAR. In this case, the national authorities by-passed local governments, giving to private actors (mainly NGOs, but not only, also hotel owners and other private employers) the task of establishing and managing reception facilities of various kinds (Campomori, Ambrosini 2020).

The scenario has been further changed with the approval, on 1 December 2018, of law no.132/2018 by the populist government led by Northern League and 5 Stars Movement: this law modified the reception system in a restrictive direction. SPRAR -which has been renamed SIPROIMI (Protection system for people holding international protection and unaccompanied minors)- was no longer accessible for asylum-seekers; the humanitarian protection was abolished and a new kind of “special” protection introduced only for specific situations (such as health treatments or natural disasters); CASs should deliver to asylum seekers just “bath, bed and bread” (ibidem), while other services such as cultural mediators or Italian classes were no longer funded.

In 2020 a new law was promulgated, in order to mitigate some excessive restriction measures introduced in the law 132/2018. The main changes introduced with the new law, no. 130/2020 have been: the change of the name of the system from SIPROIMI system in SAI (Reception and Integration System); the reintroduction of the possibility to host asylum seekers in the SAI; the enlargement of the definition of special protection. It is possible to affirm that through the SAI the principles of inclusion and integration that inspired the Sprar, has been reintroduced. Nevertheless, a negative remark about the law no.130/2020 is the availability of integration services (Italian classes, trainings, etc.) only for refugees and not for asylum seekers. Law no. 130/2020 introduces for the first time the possibility of further integration paths. At the end of the period in the SAI, in fact, local administrations can launch other initiatives with the aim of promoting the individual autonomy of the citizens already beneficiaries of the SAI, with particular regard to increased language training, employment guidance and essential public services, and knowledge of the fundamental rights and duties enshrined in the Constitution.

To sum up, the current reception system in Italy has two levels to which the zero level must be added (Avallone 2021). The level zero is that of identification centres, the so-called hotspot centres, where first aid and assistance are offered to asylum seekers. The first level consists of CAS (extraordinary reception centres), while the second level consists of the SAI centres. The first two levels are considered as the exclusive responsibility of the Ministry of Interior through local prefectures, whereas the second level is the responsibility of the Central Service, established by the Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration of

² Law 189/2002



the Ministry of the Interior and entrusted (via an agreement) to the National Association of Italian Municipalities, whose operations are backed by the Cittalia Foundation.

4.3) Multi-level governance and actors

In the realm of migration policy, the multi-level structure of governance is particularly evident, several public and private actors with different functions contribute to the implementation of refugees' hosting path.

As introduced in the previous paragraph, the Central Government and in particular the Ministry of Interior is the institutional body in charge of managing the asylum seekers and refugees' reception. At local level, municipalities are the body, that can manage a SAI project, they can voluntarily adhere at the system, in order to assure integration paths to refugees. Usually municipalities give to private actors, mainly NGOs, the concrete management of services to support refugees' integration. If the local SAI system has insufficient places to host asylum seekers and refugees or if the local authorities doesn't adhere to the SAI, the local branches of the Ministry of Interior, the prefectures (prefettura), manage the reception of asylum seekers in CAS (extraordinary reception centres) basically outsourcing services to private actors, usually NGOs and hotels. In the reception system Regions do not cover any role and the lack of a regional level of refugees' policies emerged as a crucial point during interviews collected during WP1, since the lack of a regional level in the governance of refugees' issues is considered method-less, as it deprives the system of a body which has jurisdiction in many fields and could play an important mediator role connecting specificity of its territory with specificity of national level.

Another aspect underlined during interviews related to the levels of government was the lack of a Common European Asylum System, which could provide same permits and same services in all European countries.

The overcoming of Dublin rules and the implementation of a European reception system focused on the integration process of refugees represent an ambition that drives the work of many stakeholders, as well as the need of free movement that refugees explicit.

4.4) Actors

In Italy, migration policies and governance are fields where multiple actors take part. In addition to the public actors, whose responsibilities have been outlined in the previous sections, third sector organisations (NGOs, associations, interest groups etc.) play an important role. Third sector organisations are the actors in charge of the concrete reception, as prefecture or municipalities outsource these kinds of services. Many NGOs or associations have a great experience in working with migrants and their mission is focused on the process of generating integration for more inclusive societies, while other private actors arose with the refugee crisis and their goals are not so transparent, services for asylum seekers and refugees are considered more a business than a mission and their quality reflect this view. Parma's stakeholders, who work in the field since many years affirmed their frustration in observing inadequate services and actors dealing with the refugees' issues considered just a business. Since each Prefecture rules the reception of asylum seekers there can be very differences between territories about services implemented and financial statements to prove them.

In the past years, the municipality of Parma implemented several actions to promote the integration and inclusion of refugees in its territory, achieving high levels of social cohesion and becoming a national benchmark. Despite its efforts, the introduction of national laws, in particular the Salvini Decree, which restricted the criteria for accessing international protection and lowered the quality standards of integration



provisions, have condemned the municipality to deal with the needs of a highly precarious population while having limited resources at its disposal to do it.

The involvement of different public and private actors with different tasks and competences created a fragmentation, since a real structured system, which involves all institutional levels of governments, is missing. It appears that disadvantages are enormously superior, than benefits. Since the national level of government centralize decisions, without considering each regional/local specificity and best practices or strategies implemented, several remarkable experiences will disappear. Moreover, municipalities will be left “alone” to manage social crisis without enough resources to face them.

4.5) Areas of integration and access/barriers for refugees

The municipality of Parma in collaboration with NGOs and associations working in its territory developed strategies and processes of integration and inclusion considered innovative and far-sighted at national level.

The participation in the SAI project represents the main path for the integration of refugees, nevertheless the municipality is always eager to take part or develop projects to enhance the inclusion of migrants.

The achievement of labour integration is a complex process, which requires to refugees, as first step, the knowledge of Italian language and the possibility of attending a professional training with an internship. SAI projects have specific provisions for supporting refugees in professional trainings and when they finished their path the possibilities of finding job are greater. If these conditions are not fulfilled or if the bureaucracy slows down the process, the real possibility of entering the labour force can be very harsh. Moreover, refugees with high level of education need at least two years to convert their academic title in a title recognized from Italian Government and for this reason the majority of them prefer to start any professional activity which can assure an economical autonomy.

In the realm of social integration, the collaboration between the municipality of Parma and NGOs and associations working with refugees have created paths and activated processes which promote substantially social integration of refugees. During interviews realized in WP1, policy makers emphasized a project, promoted by the Municipality, called “Mi impegno a Parma”, which involved asylum seekers in social activities, such as: accompanying guys with disabilities to and back from school or asylum seekers working as crossing guards for children etc. The goal was to connect refugees with the territory and communicate to citizens their integration desire. Policy makers appear satisfied by results as the local community getting in touch with asylum seekers and refugees reduced the level of prejudice. Nevertheless, these activities were considered not sufficient to generate a real change in the society and other kinds of actions to promote refugees’ integration were developed.

While for social and labour integration several paths have been implemented, housing integration represents the main problem for refugees in Parma, since private landlords prefer to leave apartments empty, than rent it to migrants, real estate agencies ask for guarantees (permanent contract, advanced payment of three monthly rent, Italian references), very difficult to provide for a refugee and public houses are not available, as the requests are greater than the offering. The municipality of Parma in collaboration with NGOs and associations tried to develop strategies to promote house integration, but results are insufficient.

4.6) Identification of barriers produced by structures and legislation

The introduction of restrictive norms for refugees and migrants implemented by the previous government at national level and the use of a public discourse, which envisaged international migration as a crucial problem for security reasons have consequences also nowadays. Several integration paths have been interrupted, due to the norms and re-starting inclusion processes need time and extra effort. Moreover, the



fact that the SAI system is on voluntary basis and not compulsory for all municipalities, extremely reduce the availability of places for asylum seekers and refugees.

Another problematic aspect is related to the lack of funds for implementing many integration services for asylum seekers (i.e. Italian curses), only when a person obtains the international protection can access integration services. The length of the process for obtaining the refugee status represents one of the main problem in the governance of refugees' integration, since it can last more than two years.

4.7) Identification of “what works best” in the current context of structures and legislation

The SAI system represents a good system for the inclusion and integration of refugees, even if such a system would need further development and availability of places, since the places available are inadequate to respond the needs. The primary objective of SAI is to provide support for each person, through an individualized program designed to enable that person to regain a sense of independence, and thus enjoy effective involvement in life in Italy, in terms of employment, housing and access to local services and social interaction as well as scholastic integration for minors.

5) INTERIM FINDINGS

The interviews realized during the SiforREF project evidenced the need of major changes in the governance and organization of asylum seekers and refugees' integration and inclusion paths in Italy.

The main recommendation concerns the implementation of Integration Policies at national level, which can consider the topic of immigration and refugees' integration as a whole and foresee funds and structures to tackle the challenges. At the moment, Italy lacks coherent and comprehensive integration policies, and all integration aspects are delegate to the SAI system. Despite the good quality of the SAI system, this is an operational structure, which would benefit from coordinated policies provisions. The enlargement of places available in the SAI system, the compulsoriness of implementation of this system in each city, together with the extension of integration services also to asylum seekers hosted in the SAI represent the second recommendation.

The third recommendation concerns the role of the Region Emilia-Romagna. Nowadays Italian Regions haven't specific competence in the field of Refugees' Integration and Inclusion, while an involvement of the regional level could mediate between the national provisions and the local needs and could tackle more promptly difficulties.

Housing is the focus of the last recommendation, since in Italy and in Parma an effective policy concerning housing is missing. Housing represents the main difficulty refugees must face once they leave the SAI system. More availability of public housing and an awareness campaign with landlords and real estate agencies is needed to overcome prejudice and stereotypes against refugees and migrants at the moment of renting homes.



6) EVALUATION OF SELECTED BEST PRACTISES

Best Practice: Community based initiatives

The Best Practice selected in the city of Parma consists in three different initiatives sharing the focus on community, engagement, meaningful intercultural relations and social networking as a means to promote integration and well-being of refugees. The overall goals of the practice are:

- Promoting social integration and well-being of refugees;
- Enhancing intercultural social networks (both for refugees and Italians);
- Increasing opportunities for stable settlement of refugees (in terms of social connections, housing and job opportunities etc);
- Giving meaningful occasions for exchanging experiences, views, knowledge, orientation etc.
- Creating positive “contamination” meant to counter racism, xenophobia, stereotypes (both for refugees and Italians).

Refugees in families: It started in 2015 in the context of SPRAR institutional reception system and it has involved so far 31 adult refugees (+ 7 minors) hosted in Italian families, small communities and/or co-housing. The project aims at offering a “warm relational space” for refugees leaving the reception paths, in order to improve their condition in terms of housing (better to say: homing), widening social networks above all with Italians and having access to job opportunities. The project offers a continuous multi-disciplinary support by CIAC (Asylum and Cooperation Immigration Center) during all the different phases: initial contact, matching, follow up. Beneficiaries of the process, therefore, are not only the refugees but also the hosts who are effectively included as co-producers of welfare and as beneficiaries of social interventions themselves. The aim is not only to concentrate on individuals but to address the issue of racism, fear and mistrust in both hosting and refugees’ communities: each family and each refugees have wider networks which are indirectly involved and affected by the co-housing experience, producing change in perception, representations and mutual stereotypes.

Tandem is a Co-housing and social networking project, started in 2016, between young Italians (18-29) and young refugees outside the institutional SPRAR-SAI project. It is supported by private funds and integrated in CIAC organization (therefore both Italians and refugees benefit of different services besides housing). The project has so far involved 35 boys and girls (equally represented by Italian and refugees). Tandem emphasizes commonalities shared by all young people currently living in Italy and Parma: precarious jobs, difficulties in finding cheap accommodations, poor opportunities for social activities and friendships for newly arrived (also University students). Therefore, Tandem offers the same opportunities to Italian and refugees, asking participants to give back to the community through volunteering, social participation and cultural activities. It emphasizes of symmetrical relations (different from entering a family with well-established rules and roles).

Local tutor for integration: This project started in 2017 in the frame of a EU AMIF project and involved volunteers (both individuals and associations) accompanying the process of integration of refugees, enhancing their social connection to facilitate the achievement of emotional, relational and social autonomy. Differently from the previous initiatives it does not imply (co)housing but mainly social integration. It acknowledges that for refugees (even when beneficiaries of institutional reception) it is very hard to access Italian social networks and that care relations (such as the ones with social workers) are not



sufficient to give a holistic feeling of stability, safety and well-being to third country nationals. Social orientation and cultural activities are very important for integration as a whole and they produce side positive effects also in the field of housing and work integration.

The Best practice is innovative because it emphasizes social relations and connection as a key factor of integration, and therefore involve new subjects (Italian citizens and associations) as central actors to be considered as policy makers together with institutions and third sector. Moreover, these initiatives can cover all the three dimensions of social innovation considered by Moulart et. al (2013), that are: i) satisfaction of human needs; ii) changes in social relations; iii) increased empowerment.

The main challenges relate to finding a good balance in the different roles of Italian volunteers and social workers. Mutual expectations can be incorrect and produce tensions and misunderstandings. Moreover, since these initiatives focus on active participation of refugees on a more symmetrical basis than the one usually experiences in care work and assistance, a challenge is represented by the capacity to overcome an assistentialistic/paternalistic approach and to acknowledge refugees as the real protagonists of their stories.

The three initiatives that create this best practice can be easily replicated in different contexts, if there are actors well rooted in the local communities. Home reception, tutorship and tandem with refugees have already been experienced in different situations (in Italy and abroad), even though it is not always framed as a multi-stakeholder practice (generally: carried out on a volunteer/spontaneous basis, without a direct involvement of service providers and effects at policy level).

The different activities of the Best Practice implemented in the city of Parma envisage a holistic approach that responds to the diverse and interdependent needs of the newcomer refugees and creates partnerships with members of the local community. Addressing the housing needs of both local communities and the integration of refugees these practices bring both communities together and increase the potential opportunities for communication between them as well as motivation for the newcomers to learn the local language. At the same time these are holistic since they include activities that contribute to the economic self-sufficiency in the form of training for real employment and self-employment opportunities.

The Best Practice embodies almost all the indicators for social need of the target group and all the indicators that contribute to changing the mind-sets of the local population defined in previous SiforREF deliverables. While, about indicators for social innovative policies and practices that - Enhance Labor Market Opportunities of Refugees, Parma's Best Practice has some echo on the challenges considered in these indicators, despite not focusing directly on these issues.

During the Parma's study visit the Best Practice was analyzed, many specific barriers were discussed, and some general obstacles have been pointed out, in particular:

- Sustainability: The Community Development approach, that the Best Practice shows, requires many resources and time to see concrete results over time. For these reasons, a large investment in local integrative policies is needed. Furthermore, it is difficult to find economically sustainable housing solutions, in order to increase the number families that can host refugees. Mainly for economic reasons the implementation of this best practice in other European context could result complicated;
- Political changes: the sudden and incisive Italian political changes have influenced the refugee reception system. The projects have had to adapt to the various changes and to modify their structure according to these. This aspect shows the need of a stronger structure for the Best Practice in order to overcome potential political changes or other difficulties, such as the lack of volunteers;
- Unexpected events: the Covid 19 pandemic has generated many difficulties, especially in maintaining and cultivating social relationship. Despite the search for alternative ways to facilitate the encounter between people, the generation of situations of isolation was inevitable.



Basic indicators for social needs of the target group

INDICATOR	Yes	Partly	No
Agency - the initiative respects the equality and agency of the refugees	X		
Participation - the refugee must have a voice and be heard	X		
Improve the status quo - increase the capabilities of the target group	X		
Provide access to resources - empowering the members of the target group/ refugees	X		
Sustainability - Institutionalization and long-term funding concept			X
Developing a holistic approach	X		
Mainstreaming -Adaption beyond refugee status, for other immigrants and locals who need guidance	X		

Indicators that contribute to changing the mind-sets of the local population toward refugees

INDICATOR	Yes	Partly	No
Activities that create trust between local population and refugees share common interests	X		
Root the activity, practice at the local level within local communities	X		
Offer opportunities for local population and refugees to meet in smaller group activities	X		
Inclusion of exchanges among a diversity of ethnicities, ages, regions, gender, etc.	X		
Provide intercultural mediators / “animateurs” in local settings	X		
Use when possible the concept of the Co-creation workshops.	X		

Indicators for social innovative policies and practices that - Enhance Labor Market Opportunities of Refugees

INDICATOR	Yes	Partly	No
Increases opportunity of “refugees” to have a job that matches their skills		X	
Offers a reasonable / practicable assessment of their occupational skills			X
Offers the refugee access to potential auxiliary training and an opportunity for an equivalent job		X	
Links additional specialized language training to specialized technical courses			X
Provides practicable training to achieve full recognition that can be mastered in reasonable time schedule and will be concretely required for the exercise of this occupation.			X
Includes equal pay /fair wages and social-security;			X
Indicators that would empower women refugees			



Access to education and training at all levels			X
Accessible professional childcare facilities are available for the training-period;			X
Childcare facilities are available, subsidized by the local government for all families/ with working mothers, or single women who work who are seeking work or training			X

7) EVALUATION OF PILOT ACTIVITIES

In Parma, refugees face many challenges: difficulties and discrimination in finding a home, socio-economic problems, lack of a stable job, risk of exploitation and shortage of social networks. The local population, often triggered by media speeches, have implemented defensive and sometimes discriminatory dynamics towards foreign citizens. For these reasons the goal of the pilot was to create opportunities for exchange between natives and newcomers and environments where they can develop generative relations which are necessary for social cohesion. The neighborhood chosen for the implementation of the pilot project presented several challenges:

- a high presence of foreign citizens and asylum seekers of different nationalities;
- a high presence of elderly people, often alone or with poor social and family ties;
- an involvement of foreign citizens in conditions of social marginalization in small delinquency phenomena;
- phenomena of intergenerational frictions.

The pilot project called "Social Caretakers" has concerned the creation of a social concierge open to the inhabitants of the neighborhood. At the heart of the choice to carry out this type of pilot project was the conviction that the local community and the social relations that develop within it are precious levers to favor the processes of social cohesion. The approach followed is that of Community based protection (UNHCR) where the skills, agency, rights and dignity of the people concerned, local inhabitants and foreign citizens, are at the center of the programming.

The preparatory activities of the pilot project involved around 20 refugees in a training course. The four "social caretakers" who took part in the pilot were chosen because they showed great adherence to the project objectives and saw an opportunity to improve their condition. After the selection, in-depth interviews were carried out with the refugees, in order to highlight the specific skills of each one, actively involve them in the co-creation of the process, explore the way in which they build and live relationships, etc. During the project process, interviews and focus groups were carried out with refugees with the aim of understanding the progress of the project, their feelings and any changes to be implemented.

The social caretakers were supported throughout the project by a third sector Cooperative, but the goal is to gradually give refugees greater autonomy to choose how to establish relationships with the inhabitants of the neighborhood and carry out the planned activities.

To sum up the goals of the pilot project have been:

- to enhance the chances of success of the integration pathways for refugees;



- to increase social cohesion in the neighborhood and create opportunities for exchange between the different targets involved;
- to unthrottle the prejudice towards refugees and foreign citizens and change the narrative about newcomers;
- to enhance previous experiences based on Community-based protection;
- to define a methodology for involving natives, asylum seekers and refugees (or people who live for a short period in the area) in the social, economic and cultural life of the neighborhood;
- to disseminate knowledge of the different best practices through networking, promoting mutual learning at the local level;
- to spread the value of the service design method.

The pilot project has represented an innovation for the city of Parma, since it is the first time that a real service of "social caretaker" has been implemented. Refugees can be a point of reference in the neighborhood and not someone to fear or keep at a distance. By living free of charge in an apartment of the Municipality for the duration of the pilot, the refugees will put their time and their skills at the disposal of the inhabitants of the neighborhood, who will be able to enjoy constant support, particularly useful for those people who often live in solitude or with poor family ties.

The methodology implemented to realize the pilot contributed to create a collaborative path in which each phase, tool or problem was shared with the entire working group. This allowed to find shared solutions to the problems and ensured the success of the process.

The main target groups were refugees and native population. Both groups had specific needs, in particular refugees have the need for housing, the need of protection and safety, the need for social orientation and contact with local community and the need of social networks / relations, while the native population had the need to perceive safety in their neighborhood, the need for reference points and the need for social relations.

Many actors were involved in the implementation of the pilot, in particular: the Municipality of Parma was the manager of the pilot project, the Cooperativa Connessioni was the body selected by the Municipality of Parma, through a public tender procedure, for the implementation and monitoring and for the implementation of the activities envisaged by the pilot project; the CIAC (Asylum and Cooperation Immigration Center), is a project partner of the Municipality of Parma and supported the initiative across the board; the ACER, Public Housing Authority, selected the apartments and supported the activities of information and involvement of the inhabitants of the condominiums; the Community Point, a free space open to all citizens in difficulty or in need of support that supported social caretakers in their activities; CCV, Voluntary City Council of Quartier, a council group that talks with the Municipality about the critical issues of the district, projects to be activated, etc. supported the initiative by favoring the inclusion of refugees in neighborhood activities and by divulging the experience in other districts of the city; neighborhood associations, their involvement was a priority for the good progress of the project and for the inclusion of refugees in participatory paths already started.

The involvement of so many actors and the methodology implemented for the realization of the pilots is one of the main results of the pilot. The pilot worked not only for the community, but with the community. All the activities carried out have been designed by working side by side with the institutions, local associations and citizens, and are tailored to the specificities of the neighborhood considered.

Every problem, every tool and every step were shared. Nevertheless, some difficulties arose:

- the duration of the pilot project was too short and not attractive for many refugees who didn't join the training (some participants preferred to stay in their current housing conditions for fear of not finding another accommodation at the end of the project);



- the extra costs related to utilities, as well as personal expenses without any form of contribution represented a limit for some participants who withdrew because they were not working at the moment;
- the training was difficult due to the COVID 19 pandemic and lessons were held remotely. This has created difficulties, especially for those who have major problems with the Italian language;
- the most critical aspect was the impossibility to develop the pilot project in private market apartments. This will force the social caretakers to leave the houses at the end of the project, which must be readmitted in the real estate assets of the Public Housing Authority. Consequently, there cannot be a continuation of the project outside of SiforREF, even if the refugees have achieved optimal autonomy.

This last point represents one of the main limits in the sustainability of the pilot. Social caretakers will need to find an extra job to have the possibility of renting an apartment and continue their activities and their relations with the inhabitants of the neighborhood.

The pilot has the characteristics to be replicated in other context, nevertheless many dimensions require specific attention, in particular it is necessary a real commitment from local institutions, NGOs, target groups and volunteers. The lack of involvement from one of these actors risks compromising the sustainability of the entire project.

The pilot project implemented in the city of Parma envisage an approach that responds to the diverse and interdependent needs of the newcomer refugees and local communities. Addressing both the housing needs and the social relations needs of newcomers and the need of safety and social relation of the neighborhood the pilot aimed at creating social cohesion and overcoming prejudices.

The Pilot embodies almost all the indicators for social need of the target group, while only two indicators for social innovative policies and practices that - Enhance Labor Market Opportunities of Refugees are partly considered in the Parma's pilot. The focus of the "Social caretakers" pilot concerns the indicators that contribute to changing the mind-sets of the local population toward refugees. The activity is rooted to the possibility of creating bonds, connections and relations between native population and newcomers, increasing trust and perceived sense of safety. Only changing the social context, it is possible to create the condition for long-lasting inclusion and integration paths.

Basic indicators for social needs of the target group

INDICATOR	Yes	Partly	No
Agency - the initiative respects the equality and agency of the refugees	X		
Participation - the refugee must have a voice and be heard	X		
Improve the status quo - increase the capabilities of the target group	X		
Provide access to resources - empowering the members of the target group/ refugees	X		
Sustainability - Institutionalization and long-term funding concept			X
Developing a holistic approach	X		
Mainstreaming -Adaption beyond refugee status, for other immigrants and locals who need guidance	X		



Indicators that contribute to changing the mind-sets of the local population toward refugees

INDICATOR	Yes	Partly	No
Activities that create trust between local population and refugees share common interests	X		
Root the activity, practice at the local level within local communities	X		
Offer opportunities for local population and refugees to meet in smaller group activities	X		
Inclusion of exchanges among a diversity of ethnicities, ages, regions, gender, etc.	X		
Provide intercultural mediators / “animateurs” in local settings	X		
Use when possible the concept of the Co-creation workshops.	X		

Indicators for social innovative policies and practices that - Enhance Labor Market Opportunities of Refugees

INDICATOR	Yes	Partly	No
Increases opportunity of “refugees” to have a job that matches their skills			X
Offers a reasonable / practicable assessment of their occupational skills			X
Offers the refugee access to potential auxiliary training and an opportunity for an equivalent job		X	
Links additional specialized language training to specialized technical courses			X
Provides practicable training to achieve full recognition that can be mastered in reasonable time schedule and will be concretely required for the exercise of this occupation.		X	
Includes equal pay / fair wages and social-security;			X
Indicators that would empower women refugees			
Access to education and training at all levels			X
Accessible professional childcare facilities are available for the training-period;			X
Childcare facilities are available, subsidized by the local government for all families/ with working mothers, or single women who work who are seeking work or training			X

8) VISIBILITY, POTENTIAL AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

This chapter reviews the main insights, generated within the five Local Policy Guideline Reports of the SiforREF partner cities. Particularities of the specific local context, future challenges as well as strengths and weaknesses of the implemented projects for refugee integration through social innovation were co-



creatively developed during a review process³. The review interviews revealed a number of commonalities and patterns between the five European cities. Therefore, this chapter is a first step towards the comparative analysis within the Transnational Guideline Report (DT.4.1.2), the final report of the SiforREF project.

This first summary of results shows that the transnational perspective adopted by SiforREF is necessary to identify and address the interconnected challenges of refugee integration through policy responses. This approach is particularly promising in order to avoid a fragmented way to address refugee integration at the local level.

Lack of sustainable integration of refugees

Regardless of particular starting positions (e.g., GDP, political orientation or geographical position of the five cities), the lack of sustainable integration of refugees into the host society can be traced back to the same fundamental issues. First, although the four federal governments (Italy, Germany, Austria, Slovenia) apply a comprehensive and adequate integration policy, which is based on the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention, our analysis shows that actual practice does not meet the legally mandated requirements. This discrepancy is attributed to the spread between centralized legislation at the national level and highly fragmented implementation at the local level. Additionally, differences in the quality of integration occur due to diverse reception processes at the local level, e.g. in Italy. Furthermore, the implementation of respective measures is mostly outsourced to the third sector, which is embedded into precarious structures with regard to funding and temporal sustainability. Confronted with underfunding and unstable perspectives, actors of the third sector are not capable to shoulder the entire burden of integration work.

Best practices and pilot projects

All of the SiforREF best practices investigated and pilot projects implemented rely on underpaid and/or voluntary staff and are located in time-limited spaces, which leads to a limited scope of the projects in scale and in time. Therefore, long-term successes are limited and the high personal efforts do not reflect the output of the projects or the impact for the participating refugees. Regardless of demands for structural improvements, our analysis points out the necessity of an increased and regular knowledge exchange between stakeholders of all different levels (local, regional, national and transnational) in order to streamline efforts and benefit from what works best. In addition to internal communication between involved stakeholders, external communication towards a broader public audience must also be more closely coordinated between the involved actors. Our analysis reveals the necessity to speak with a common voice and to coordinate media outreach in order to create a counterpoint to prevailing anti-refugee sentiments in politics, the media and society.

Housing crises

Another pattern that emerges from our analysis identifies a severe housing crisis which all cities are facing. This crisis is also greatly affecting refugees in Parma, Bologna, Berlin, Ljubljana and Vienna. Real estate prices and rental costs have been rising steadily due to the lack of newly created housing, municipal and social housing or rent regulation. Refugees are unable to withstand fierce competition due to their low financial strength and a lack of housing options. Especially on the private housing rental market, discrimination and reservations to rent out to foreigners can be reported for the cases in Austria and Italy. The accommodation of refugees in state-funded special accommodations also harbors the risk of stirring up

³ Review interviews with all PPs took part on Dec 7 and 9, 2021 led by the UNIVIE team.



resentment within underprivileged strata of the host society. Since the tight housing market is a serious problem in all European countries, it should be dealt with more intensively at the level of EU policy.

Access to (precarious) labour market

The poor financial situation of refugees results equally in all cities from the highly restrictive access to the regular labor market, which actively excludes the majority of incoming refugees and makes them either dependent on low government support payments or pushes them into self-exploitation, temporary employment or the irregular labour sector. In these areas of the labour market, capitalist market logic comes into play to an unregulated extent and the precarious situation of the refugees is likely to be exploited. Due to a lack of residence permits, work suspensions during asylum procedures, the need for language certificates or long procedures for the recognition of existing qualifications, refugees are artificially kept for a long time in a state in which they are incapable of self-determined acting and cannot earn a living. As a result, social integration is also made more difficult, as they are not only deprived of points of contact with members of the host society, but they are also deprived of the opportunity to earn respect and recognition by demonstrating their skills and abilities.

Limited potential for future wellbeing

This state of uncertainty also has a deep mental dimension, since the high level of dependency, the constant state of uncertainty and the limited perspectives undermine the willingness of refugees to further contribute their share to the integration process (e.g., participation in integration courses, language courses or training programs). In addition, our analysis recognizes the high load of everyday-life issues that are mostly neglected when talking about the integration of refugees. Because family, financial, or mental problems naturally demand a great deal of energy and attention, these circumstances must be considered within the design and implementation of integration programs or individual projects.

Future challenges ahead

Overall, it is apparent that integration efforts in all cities are encountering the same problems, albeit to varying degrees. This may also be due to the fact that the reception of refugees is considered and treated as a temporary crisis that is to be overcome promptly. Accordingly, policies and measures do not take a comprehensive and sustainable approach, but foster an uncoordinated and everchanging environment in which it is difficult for actors to operate and for refugees to find their way into their new society. In doing so, we overlook the enormous potential that the refugees bring with them.

9) SYNTHESIS & CONCLUSION: THE SIFORREF VISION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MORE INCLUSIVE LOCAL INTEGRATION POLICIES

Imagining Parma in 2031, the recommendations for more inclusive local integration policies are the following:

- the implementation of local integration policies, which could involve the regional level, the provincial level and the municipality. The policies should be considered as citizenship policies and include all dimensions concerning the live of citizens, such as housing, education, civil rights etc.;



- the co-creation methodology as preferred methodology in the design of inclusion and integration paths. All actors involved in the process (municipality, NGOs, stakeholders, local communities) should work together and co-design projects. In this way, public and third sector bodies will become partners of inclusion process, will support each other and will tackle difficulties in an efficient and prompt way;
- the specific focus on housing policies, as part of the citizenship policies, since they require special attention and urgency. The lack of public housing and the prejudice of private landlords against newcomers need to be tackled with specific funds, provisions, trainings and awareness campaign;
- the establishment of permanent coordination tables at local level, including all actors involved in the process of inclusion and integration paths (municipalities, NGOs, private landlords' associations, trade unions, work agency etc.);
- the implementation of stable activities of information, awareness and mutual knowledge with the local population;
- the specific attention in the public communication and in the media discourse, in order to encourage cohesion and respect, avoiding the reproduction of stereotypes and prejudices against new comers.



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