

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

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1) Executive Summary

This report presents a summary and evaluative view of the prevailing structures and selected projects in the field of refugee integration. Based on this, recommendations for action were developed that can contribute to a positive change in integration policy in Vienna - and on a transnational level.

Refugee integration in the city of Vienna can build on a very solid multi-level-governance structure, good initial care and presents itself at a high level in an international comparison. At the same time, no long-term integration strategy has been developed since 2015 that goes beyond initial reception and basic care. Furthermore, there is a lack of long-term funding and subsidy programs for those institutions that actively strive to integrate people into Austrian society.

This dichotomy can also be found in the evaluation of the selected best practices and implemented pilot projects in the framework of SiforREF. With magdas Hotel and Haus AWAT, the City of Vienna has two outstanding projects that go beyond initial care - they follow holistic approaches to support refugees in their integration process on an ongoing basis. Target group-specific offers are combined in concepts that attempt to overcome existing gaps in state integration approaches with a great deal of creativity and innovation. A particular strength is the transferability and scalability of the projects, which could serve as blueprints for other cities. Nonetheless, especially the scalability (which means that the offers would benefit a larger number of refugees) is obstructed by the limited government funding and time-limited rental contracts. This undermines long-term planning and the further development of the valuable offers.

For the evaluation of the projects, the indicators for social innovation were used - a catalogue developed by SiforREF to offer a guideline in terms of social innovation. It has been shown that the indicators are very helpful for the design of new projects. However, for a meaningful evaluation and measurement of success of existing projects, a further development of the catalogue would be useful.

Chapter 8 of this report deals with a first transnational comparison between SiforREF partner cities. Based on the respective Local Policy Guidelines and interviews with representatives from the 5 cities, first patterns of a misguided European integration approach can already be identified. In all cities, the long-term integration of refugees is hampered by similar obstacles. Thus, there is a serious housing crisis everywhere, of which the more financially vulnerable refugees are particularly affected. The limited access to the labour market, artificially created by bureaucracy, makes it difficult for refugees to lead a self-determined life and keeps them in a state of dependency. This limits not only the financial possibilities, but also the participation in social life. Those projects that support refugees during this difficult time with bridging services suffer from chronic underfunding and staff shortages.

These challenges for refugees and NGOs can be largely attributed to the political handling of refugee integration, which to this day is considered a temporary crisis. The political and social rejection of refugees was followed by exclusionary policies, which have since become more restrictive. In this context, an approachable integration policy and the relaxation of existing policies could have a great positive impact in releasing the potential of refugees and harnessing it for the host societies. For the SiforREF network, it shows how important it is to intensify the exchange between stakeholders and to develop a common voice across national borders. The goal should be to influence the political and social mood in a positive way and to advocate for a forward-looking and optimistic position that recognizes the realities in the field of integration policy.



2) Methodological Reflection

The authors of this local policy guide, which also includes an assessment of concrete activities to promote the integration of refugees, are aware of their own positioning and personal bias. First, the SiforREF research consortium is openly positioning itself in favour of an increased reception of refugees as well as a more comprehensive and sustainable integration into national societies. Quite fundamentally, the participating scientists and project partners are committed to more diversity and acceptance in society and reject nationalist and xenophobic ideas. SiforREF also criticizes the existing border regime at the EU's external borders as inhumane and in part contrary to international law.

In addition, the evaluation of selected best practices and pilot activities was carried out by academics who are intensively involved in the integration of refugees from an academic perspective and who incorporate relevant prior and exclusive knowledge. The group of evaluators is thus relatively homogeneous and the evaluation correspondingly biased.

To ensure a certain level of comparability and systematic procedure, the indicators for social innovation serve as a guideline for the evaluation. Those have been developed by one member of SiforREF, the TU Berlin. The indicators cover all essential dimensions of the integration process of refugees with a special focus on the area of labour market integration. However, the process of evaluation has revealed some weaknesses in this set of indicators that hamper a comparative analysis of different activities and their effective evaluation. First of all, a scaling is missing, which makes it possible to decide in a graduated form whether an indicator applies or not. Also missing is the possibility to indicate that the evaluation on the basis of a specific indicator is not possible. Further, the focus of the indicators varies between very universal and very specific. While an evaluation based on the overarching indicators is often not very meaningful, the very specific indicators cannot be used for all activities. Also, the analytical framework is not always stringent - it alternates between assessing the extent to which refugees benefit and whether a respective project has a promising approach. For a further developed version of the indicator catalogue, it could be a useful extension if the indicators were divided into two groups, so that a separate consideration of both analysis levels becomes possible. Another suggestion for improvement would be to introduce indicators that can be used to evaluate the creativity of a project. Since SiforREF would like to initiate and promote particularly innovative and creative projects, it would also be important to consider corresponding analysis dimensions. It should be emphasized that creativity in strategy and implementation is always context-related and innovation stands for the fact that existing problems are addressed in a new way. This contextuality must be reflected in the corresponding indicators.

The social innovation indicators were used for the first time in this report to evaluate integration projects. They already provide a very solid analytical framework for systematically assessing different activities for their social innovation capacity. Further development of the criteria catalogue would certainly help to achieve even more meaningful results

3) Introduction

SiforRef has been following a mutual learning process between the five neighbouring regions (Berlin, Bologna, Ljubljana, Parma and Vienna) involved in the Interreg project for more than two years. With the aim of significantly improving existing policies for the integration of refugees at the local and transnational levels, a variety of practice-oriented activities and research have been carried out. All these



activities have worked towards the goal of jointly developing new innovative methods for the integration of refugees based on a common understanding of the respective local conditions. Regular study visits and transnational meetings (mostly online due to the Covid-19 pandemic) have helped to share knowledge among the involved partners and enabled particular projects to be presented in a plenary setting. So far, a large amount of output has been generated but not yet put into comparison.

This report of local policy guidelines and recommendations is the first step to bring together the accumulated knowledge of the project in a condensed form. However, this report is not only a summary of what has happened so far, it also contains a very important analytical element. First, the presented best practices and the pilot activities, implemented by our project partner Caritas Wien are going to be evaluated with the help of indicators for social innovation, elaborated by TU Berlin within the SiforREF project. Second, the report is going to critically reflect on all the output produced over the last two years and at the same time derive recommendations for action that will help make social innovation measures transferable to the mainstream in the future. Third, this local report provides the base for the transnational comparative report.

This local policy guideline is going to discuss and evaluate the findings for the case study Vienna. An essential part of this report is the evaluation of the best practice projects "magdas Hotel" (Caritas Vienna) and "Haus Awat" (Hilfswerk) as well as two pilot activities carried out by our project partner Caritas Vienna. Each other partner city will develop such a report based on their respective local and national policies. These reports serve as preparation for the development of a holistic transnational strategy paper that will be elaborated by University of Vienna (UNIVIE). The transnational report will analyse and compare the most important problems and challenges of refugee integration on a regional level and will first derive political demands from this, but at the same time offer practical recommendations for action and specific measures that can be implemented. The aim of this transnational report is to show how refugee integration can be achieved through social innovation in a way that benefits all stakeholders.

In a final step, the proposals will be condensed into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), where policy makers, NGOs and stakeholders declare their engagement and agree in embracing a shared method for addressing refugee integration, including the kind of public/private governance relations that can facilitate the implementation of effective integration measures. As such, the MoU includes both a regional perspective that considers local context and immediate needs as well as a transnational perspective focusing on joint actions to achieve better integration of refugees across Europe in the future.

4) Local Context and Current Challenges in Vienna

The first part of this report provides a summary analysis of the framework conditions for the reception and integration of refugees in Vienna, Austria. This chapter introduces the local specifics regarding refugee integration in Vienna and provides the latest information on statistical data and legislative changes. Furthermore, an overview is given of the relevant actors, that have a significant influence on how integration work is shaped in Vienna. Finally, the central areas of integration and challenges are identified.

4.1) Local migration data

Since the peak of the influx of refugees at 88,340 in 2015, the number of asylum applications in Austria has been continuously decreasing. In 2020, 14,775 people applied for political asylum, which halted the previous downward trend with 14.7% more compared to the previous year 2019 (BMI, 2021a: p.4).

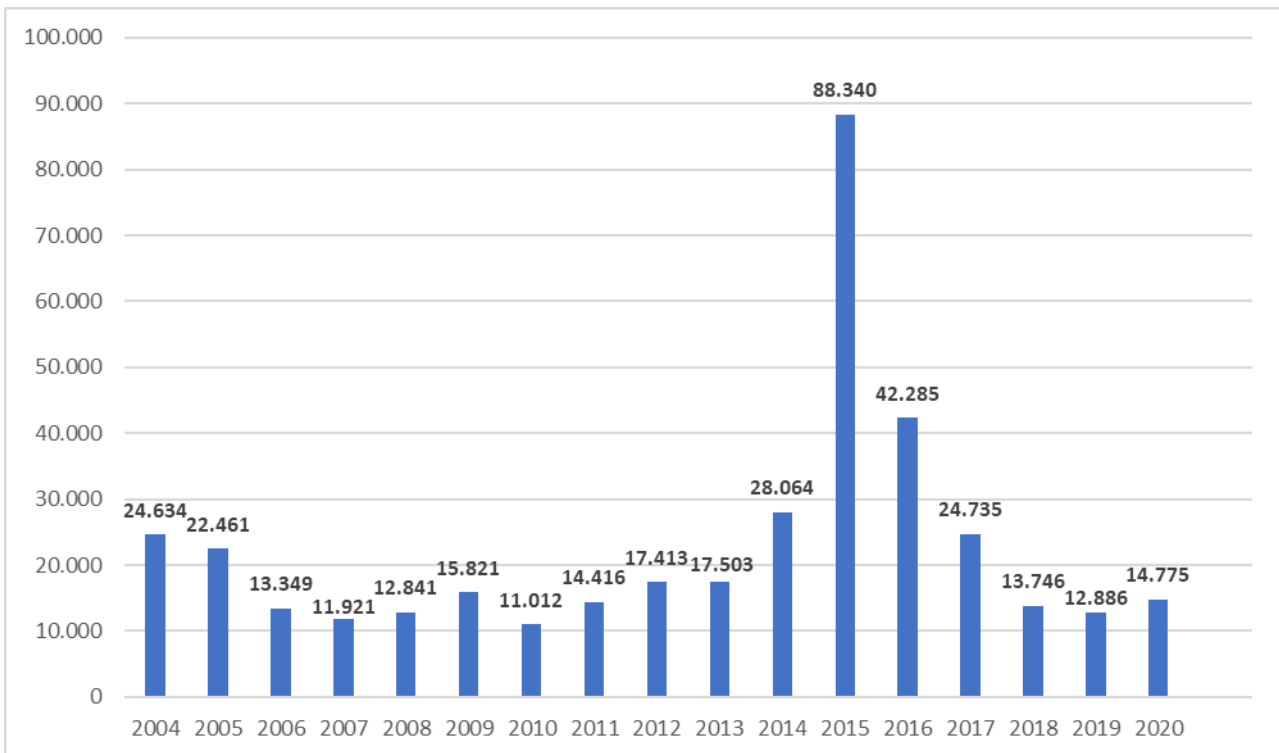


Figure 1 Annual Development of Asylum Applications in Austria 2004-2020 (reproduced figure from BMI, 2021a, p. 4 with 2004 added)

The vast majority of arriving refugees (90.80%) submits an initial application, whereas 9.20% make a confirmatory application after previous rejection (BMI, 2021a: p.9). Throughout 2019, monthly numbers of asylum applications have remained at a stable level, fluctuating minimally between 918 applications in February and 1,195 applications in December 2019 (BMI, 2020: p.4). This pattern has changed in 2020, most likely due to COVID-19. The number of applications declined from 1,538 in January 2020 to 359 in April 2020 - during the first major lockdown in Austria (see BMI, 2021a: p. 4). After April, the number slowly climbed up to 674 in May, 1,092 in June, and ultimately 1,788 in October (see *ibid.*). Thus, it may be argued that COVID-19 has - at least to some degree - slowed down the number of active asylum seekers in Austria in 2020. This claim is further backed by the fact that the monthly application numbers in 2021 until November have *all* been higher - sometimes pronouncedly higher - than they were in the respective month a year prior (BMI, 2021b: p. 3). The largest group of asylum seekers represents people from Syria (35%) and Afghanistan (21%), followed by Morocco, Iraq, and Somalia (all at 5%) (BMI, 2021a: p.5). The distribution by country of origin has seen fairly little change in recent years.

The Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (BFA) is responsible for first-instance asylum decisions in Austria. In 2020, the Federal Office made 45,231 decisions on asylum applications, in 31.5% of the cases there was a positive legally binding decision on the residence status. 8,069 persons were granted refugee status under the Geneva Convention in Austria in 2020. The total share of positive decisions in 2020 was on the same level of 2019 (30.4%), but markedly below the total share of positive decisions in



previous years - 38.5% (2018), 51.4% (2017), 50.8% (2016) (based on data from BMI, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020).

	positive	negative	Sum
Asylum decisions	8,069	9,567	17,636
Decisions subsidiary protection	2,524	6,660	9,184
Decisions humanitarian residence permit	2,621	12,569	15,190
Other decisions			3,221
Sum			45,231

Figure 2 Decisions of the year 2020 by type (adapted from BMI, 2021a: p. 28)

In Austria, asylum seekers are distributed among the federal states according to a quota system. Vienna, as the capital city, takes over the largest share of initial reception and integration work in Austria, exceeding its quota, while other federal states are not providing the number of places required (AIDA, 2018). In 2020, the city of Vienna offered basic supply to 10,686 asylum seekers, including 3,203 under-aged children (FSW, 2021: p.1).

In Vienna, 75% of the asylum seekers find housing in private accommodation, 25% live in one of the 36 organized residence halls (FSW, 2021: p.1). These numbers illustrate on the one hand that a quarter of all asylum seekers in Vienna depend on the support of public and social institutions who enable housing market integration. On the other hand, three quarter of all asylum seekers in Vienna find private accommodation which might be interpreted as successful housing market integration. However, this number must be critically reflected in the context of increasing housing costs on the private housing market in Vienna.

4.2) Policies and Legislations

Austria adopted international agreements on migration and asylum, namely the Geneva Refugee Convention (1973), European Convention on Human Rights (1958). Adopted EU regulations are the Dublin Regulation (1990), the Schengen Convention (1990), the Safe Third Countries Regulation (1998) and the Charter of Fundamental Human Rights of the European Union (2009).

The legislative competence lies with the Austrian National Government, which also ratified the Asylum Act (AsylG) in 1991, replacing the old Asylum Act from 1968. The Integration Agreement (Integrationsvereinbarung) from 2002 shifted the responsibility of providing welfare benefits for migrants from the nation state to the federal states, in return the migrants commit to integrate with e.g. learning German. The aim of the Integration Act is to protect the state from asylum and welfare abuse.

After Austria changed from a country of transition to a country of destination in the 1990s, and especially since a right-wing coalition of ÖVP and FPÖ has been in power, asylum policy has been increasingly tightened in the last decade. In the context of the 'migration crisis' in 2015 the arrival of refugees has been discursively intertwined with internal security. Concerns about the security and social stability as well as the ability of the newcomers to integrate have arisen due to the vocabulary used for them by the right-wing FPÖ party, such as "bogus asylum seekers," "poverty migrants" and "criminal foreigners". Despite civil society and NGOs provided initial supply, a new hostility towards refugees was driven by the conservative political parties, flanked by the Austrian tabloid newspapers. Since 2016, more restrictive policies, border controls,



the shutdown of the “Balkan route” and limits to the share of refugees were introduced. In contrast to the nation level stands the regional level (city of Vienna) with an “integration-oriented diversity policy” (“Integration from Day 1” of arrival) stemming from the Red Vienna tradition of social cohesion and a socio-democratic party (SPÖ) in office since the end of WWII. Since 2020, the ÖVP has been governing with the Greens as its new coalition partner. This change of government has not changed the restrictive refugee policy under Chancellor Kurz or his successors. Even after a devastating fire at the ‘Camp Moria’ on the Greek island of Lesbos, which left thousands of refugees homeless, and European partner states campaigned to take them in, the Austrian government stuck to its stance of not wanting to take in a single refugee. Since then, the Greens have come under heavy criticism, as they have been accused of handing over decision-making authority on refugee policy to the Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP) in order to gain concessions on climate policy issues (John, 2020).

In 2021, the local government in Vienna (headed by the coalition between SPÖ and NEOS), initiated W.I.R (“Wiener Integrationsrat”) consisting of experts consulting the council member in charge for integration (headed by NEOS) on topics of integration (Stadt Wien, 2021).

Austria pursues a two-tier-approach, by dividing responsibilities and tasks between the federal and state level. The Austrian policy-making process is top-down, at federal level, the granting of the legal status, the entrance and reception, deportation and voluntary return, as well as accommodation and Basic Welfare Support during the whole asylum process are regulated by the immigration and asylum legislation (OECD, 2018). The federal states (Bundesländer, e.g. Lower Austria or Vienna), where applicants are registered, are responsible for the Basic Welfare Support¹(2004) (accommodation, food, clothing, health insurance, sometimes spending money) or social aid (e.g. Needs-Based-Minimum Benefit) for asylum applicants, in case they do not have any private income or financial support. At the local level in Vienna, the Municipal Department for Integration and Diversity (MA 17) is responsible for the organization and communication between the individual stakeholders and NGOs, as well as the implementation of specific measures targeting integration.

As of 1 January 2021, the newly established federal agency for care and support services (“Bundesagentur für Betreuungs- und Unterstützungsleistungen” (BBU)) has taken over legal counselling in the asylum sector. The agency takes over basic care, legal and return counselling, human rights monitoring during deportations, as well as translation and interpreting services for asylum seekers within sphere of influence of the Ministry of the Interior (BBU, 2021). This means that the representation of people in asylum procedures lies within the state’s sphere of action and is beyond the control of non-governmental actors. How independent and free of instructions from the Ministry of the Interior the legal advisors of the newly founded agency can work is still questionable. In this way, the current national government (ÖVP and Green Party) is limiting the fairness and transparency of asylum and deportation procedures resulting in public debates as well as conflicts within the coalition (Brickner, 2021; Fairlassen, 2021; Die Presse, 2020c).

4.3) Actors

State actors responsible for asylum, migration and integration include the Federal Ministry of the Interior (Bundesministerium für Inneres, BMI) and the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (Bundesamt für Fremdenwesen und Asyl, BFA). They hold the main responsibilities in the policy fields of migration and

¹ Basic Welfare Support includes: “Accommodation and provision of food; Monthly pocket money for applicants in organized reception facilities and for unaccompanied minors but not in cases of individual accommodation; Medical examination and health care; Measures for persons in need of nursing care; Information, counselling and social support concerning their stay in Austria and voluntary return; Costs of transport in the case of transfers and official summonses; Travel expenses for school attendance and supply of school requisites for pupils; Measures for structuring the daily routine if necessary; Clothing in cash or in kind; Costs of burial; Return travel costs and a single payment by way of interim financial assistance in the event of voluntary return to the country of origin in special cases.” (EMN, 2015)



asylum and are responsible for border protection, migration, expulsions, citizenship and asylum. The Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (Bundesministerium für Europa, Integration und Äußeres, BMEIA) processes visa and the Red-White-Red-Card (an income-dependent residence permit).

Since 2014, the integration agenda is assigned to the Austrian Integration Fund (OIF) (Österreichischer Integrationsfonds), which was outsourced from the Federal Ministry of the Interior. The OIF is “a fund of the Republic of Austria and a partner of the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs along with many responsible authorities on integration and migration in Austria”. The ÖIF finances and manages integration projects on behalf of the BMEIA and was responsible for the Integration Agreement. Other state actors are the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection (BMASKG), which issues work permits and help refugees with attending qualification courses (free of charge) in cooperation with the Public Employment Service (Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS) which is an affiliated partner of ÖIF.

Furthermore, a very strong network of private actors is involved in service provision and initiatives for labour market and social integration. The dominant NGOs supporting migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers are Caritas and Diakonie. They receive financial subsidies by the government to support migrants through consultancy, welfare services, integration programmes or voluntary return programmes. Their primary source of funding comes from the European Refugee Fund (ERF) and the Ministry of Interior (BMI) (Josipovic and Reeger, 2018).

Public migration governance stakeholders at the federal level	
Federal Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (BMEIA)	Responsible for policy matters on migration, asylum, integration, issues Red-White-Red-Card and residence permits
Austrian Integration Fund (OIF)	Manages projects on behalf of the BMEIA; responsible for Integration Agreement, funds language courses, organizes workshops, offers counselling
Bundesagentur für Beratungs- und Unterstützungsleistungen (BBU GmbH)	The agency takes over basic care, legal and return counselling, human rights monitoring during deportations, as well as translation and interpreting services for asylum seekers
Public migration governance stakeholders at local level	
Municipal Department for Integration and Diversity (MA 17)	Coordination of integration and diversity policies
*Center of Refugee Empowerment (CoRE)	EU-funded project in the realms of Urban Innovation Action (UIA), supports labour market integration, cooperates with former refugees on peer-to-peer mentoring
W.I.R - Wiener Integrationsrat	An independent body of experts from academia and practice that discusses migration policy issues in regular tours and provides advice to the government
Municipal departments ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Planning (MA 18) • Housing (MA 50)



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women (MA57) • Employment (MA 23) • Education and Youth (MA 13) • Immigration and Citizenship (MA 35) • Social Wellbeing (MA 24)
School Council	Schooling
Vienna Social Fund (Fonds Soziales Wien)*	Management of social support and refugee integration
WAFF (Viennese Funds for the Advancement of Workers and Employees)	Organises labour-market related vocational training for unemployed and employed, acts as employment promotor and employment agency
Labour Market Service Vienna (AMS)*	Viennese Branch of Federal Labour Market Service
Chamber of Labour Vienna	Interest representation of workers and employees of companies located in Vienna, compulsory membership, important policy actor in the field of employment and protection of workers' rights
Verband Wiener Volksbildung Die Wiener Volkshochschulen (VHS)	Adult education centers sponsored mainly by the City Government, offer broad range of adult education and training, and free afternoon - care and support for pupils, with a specific focus on children from migrant families
Private organisations active in the areas of migration and integration in the city	
Caritas Vienna*	Aid organisation of the Catholic Church, runs kindergardens, refugee homes and homes for elderly on behalf of the city, and several projects on immigrant integration, supports projects for schoolchildren
Volkshilfe Vienna	Aid organisation of the Social Democratic Party, runs kindergardens, refugee homes and homes for elderly on behalf of the city, and several projects on immigrant integration, supports projects for schoolchildren
Evangelische Diakonie	Aid organisation of the Protestant Church, runs kindergardens, refugee homes and homes for elderly on behalf of the city, and several projects on immigrant integration
Association of Industrialists	Representation of industrial companies in Vienna, advises the city on the needs of employers with regard to migration
Counselling Center for Migrants (Beratungszentrum für MigrantInnen)	NGO advising migrants with regard to labour market issues, funded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the City of Vienna

4.4) Multi-level-governance

In the realm of migration policy, the multi-level structure of governance is particularly evident when it comes to the sharing of responsibilities in social policies, e.g. payments or distribution of refugees, between the federal state and the Austrian provincial states. Due to the special status of being a federal state and a city at the same time, the city of Vienna has significant powers on policy development. Therefore, the nation state (Republic of Austria) and federal states (e.g. Lower Austria) cooperate on funding opportunities, also for refugees. Since 2010, the National Action Plan for Integration (NAP.I) tries to bring together all levels of government into integration measures by connecting ministries, municipal departments, and agencies.

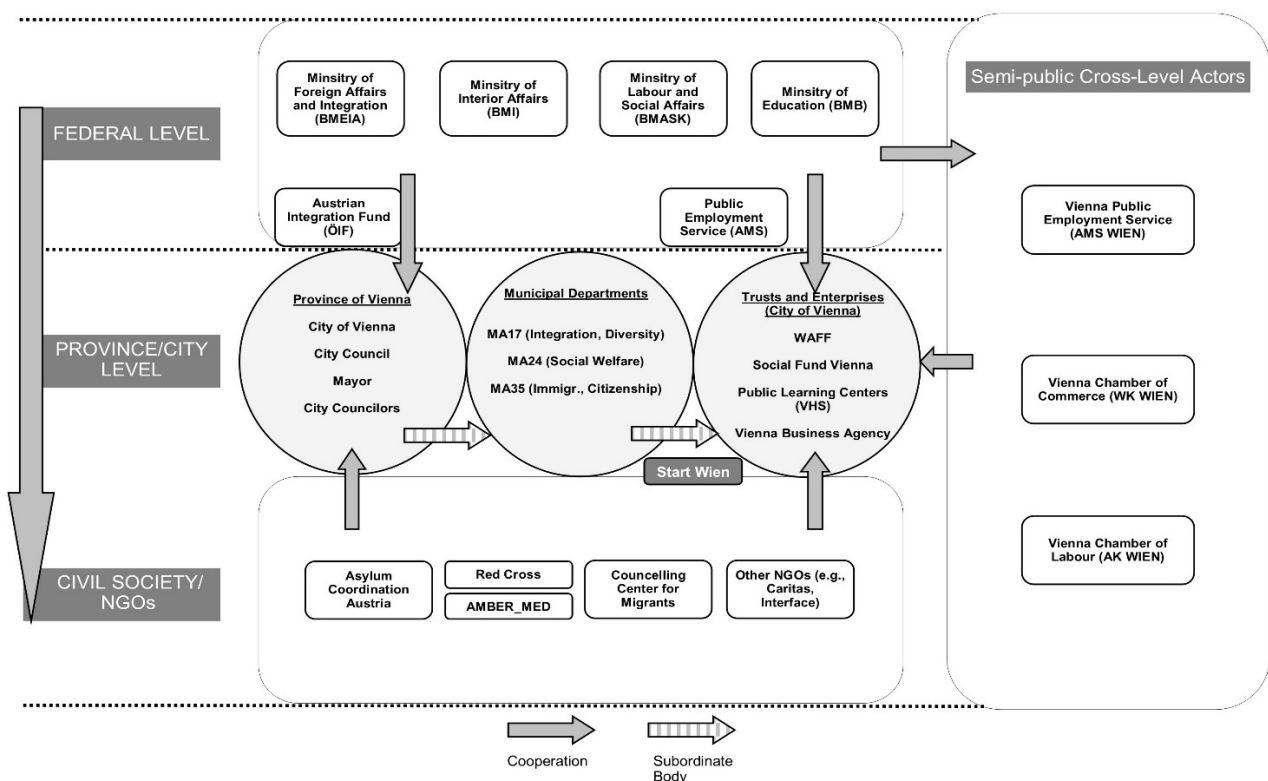


Figure 3: Multi-level institutional mapping for migrant integration (based on OECD, 2018, p.41; own illustration)

The multi-level-governance system can rely on a historically grown network that shares long-term experiences in cooperation and has the capabilities to respond quickly and efficiently to disruptive moments such as in autumn 2015, the peak of the ‘migrant crisis’. While overlaps in coordination, service provision and funding availabilities are inevitable in a multi-level governance system, the robust system of service provision might be seen as a strength and weakness at the same time. The Austrian migration policy is characterised by a dichotomy between a well-established multi-level governance system and a strong dependency on access to financial means at the local level. While the responsibilities and financial resources at the federal level seem to be communicated transparently by the public actors, the regional level (Vienna) is largely dependent on strong communication skills amongst municipalities being involved in refugee policy-making and its significance in terms of refugee numbers.

A relevant feature of the multi-level governance in Austria is the so-called “social partnership” (Sozialpartnerschaft), which strives to reconcile all interests from the employers and employees association (Trade Unions, Chamber of Labour, Economic Chamber, Federation of Austrian Industry), the Chamber of



Labour (Arbeiterkammer) and the Austrian Federal Chamber Economic Chamber (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich) in a cooperative manner. (OECD, 2018)

4.5) Specific areas of integration and related barriers for refugees.

Reception and social integration

Vienna follows the official credo of "integration from day one" and offers refugees relatively generous monetary and in-kind benefits, combined with social security benefits, right after their arrival with regard to the provision of social services, Vienna in particular stands out as an exception compared to its neighbouring countries. Federal states (Bundesländer, e.g. Lower Austria or Vienna), where applicants are registered, offer the Basic Welfare Support (2004) (accommodation, food, clothing, health care and insurance, travel costs for school attendance, sometimes spending money) or social aid (e.g. Needs-Based-Minimum Benefit) for asylum applicants, in case they do not have any private income or financial support. In 2016, the right to reside in Austria has been restricted for recognized refugees, from permanent residence to three years, thus decreasing the number of asylum seekers and hindering family reunifications. Besides this basic material supply, the Austrian government has rolled out the pilot project "value and orientation courses" (Wertekurse) in 2015, providing an initial assistance for linguistic and cultural integration. In 2017, the Integration Act (BGBI 2017/68) made participation in such courses a mandatory for refugees. Accordingly, migrants who want to settle in Austria permanently, have to participate in language course (CEFR levels A1 and A2) and value courses and successfully complete them within two years. The courses cover key topics of everyday life in Austria, including values like democracy and equality, in order to ensure a "peaceful coexistence of all people" (BMEIA, 2015, p. 14).

Housing

The accommodation of asylum seekers is a central component of basic care and initially takes place in guesthouses, boarding houses or reception centers. For refugees, it is also possible to rent a flat, which is the most common form of accommodation for refugees in Vienna. 75% of the asylum seekers find shelter in private accommodation, 25% live in one of the 36 organized residence halls (FSW, 2021: p.1). Refugees are only entitled to Basic Care (Mindestsicherung) during the time their asylum application is being processed. From the moment refugees are granted asylum, this right ceases, which is why NGOs strive to provide housing for at least another four months after asylum is granted. For subsidiary protected asylum seekers, on the other hand, there is no time limit for the Mindestsicherung.

Despite the low financial opportunities and the rising rental prices in Vienna, refugees mostly seek shelter in private accommodation, since the access to municipal and social housing is restricted and associated with long waiting times. Given the problematic access of refugees to the housing market, a new sub-market of sleeping places (within rooms) has emerged. However, due to their considerable costs, refugees change flats very often, and they are more likely to be discriminated and exploited in the private housing sector.

Labour market integration

During the asylum procedure, asylum seekers have no access to the formal labour market in Austria. However, they can only engage in voluntary work, seasonal work (although a work permit is required²) in tourism, agriculture or forestry for maximum six months. Such voluntary work is subject to quotas and internships, and it is allowed whenever labour shortage is evident and the refugee/ asylum seeker is under the age of 25. Additionally, asylum seekers can work in private households. The sectoral restrictions are

² The employment permit can be obtained via the AMS (public employment service) three months after the asylum application is admitted. (AIDA, 2018)



based on a labour market test (“Ersatzkraftverfahren”) (AIDA 2018), which evaluates if there are enough Austrians and other EU citizens who could do the same job. The unrestricted access to the labour market is guaranteed after asylum or subsidiary protection is granted.

Self-employment is another option for migrants to access the Austrian labour market. In Vienna, the Migrant Enterprises (part of the Vienna Business Agency, Wirtschaftsagentur Wien) helps migrants with their start-ups, from the initial concept to its implementation. Although self-employed migrants may find themselves in problematic situations, e.g. self-exploitation.

4.6) The City of Vienna: Exemplary in international comparison

Despite a hostile political environment and rhetoric, Vienna pursues its position of “integration from day one” and offers relatively generous cash and in-kind benefits (in comparison to remaining “Bundesländer” in Austria), combined with social services, in addition to initial placement. Together with the very strong multi-governance system, the City of Vienna manages to create a humane situation for covering the basic needs of arriving refugees so that an integration process can be initiated. For the long-term integration of refugees who have been granted asylum status, the city offers mandatory language courses as well as “values and orientation courses” that must be successfully completed within two years. After that, refugees may also attend second-level training programs. Also, the Training Certificate (“Bildungspass”) is a well-established tool that documents skills and qualifications of refugees to avoid redundancies in qualification courses as well as “missing gaps” in education. Regarding the labour market integration, the public employment service (AMS) supports refugees to find work with so called Competence Checks³. In Vienna, the AMS introduced other initiatives, Job-chance, Equal and Step2Job, to access the labour market more easily, especially for recipients of social welfare.

The comparatively high level of initial support and long-term integration can be ensured through a robust multi-governance system composed of a strong network of experienced public and private actors. The decentralized approach has proven to be efficient for the provision of basic services, as responsibilities and competencies are distributed among several levels.

5) Interim Findings⁴

As shown, refugee policy in Vienna is based on long-term experience, through which a strong multi-level system has developed over time, ensuring a relatively high standard of initial material provision for refugees. This also applies to initial housing, but the restricted access to the municipal and social housing market

³ The Competence Checks are tailor made for recognized refugees and “(...) check language proficiency, educational level, professional experience, personal interests and motivations. Furthermore, they help with and inform individuals about applying for a job as well as norms and values in Austria.” (OECD, 2018, p. 47)

⁴ SiforREF first conducted an in-depth analysis of the framework conditions that influence the integration process of refugees arriving in Vienna. The local report for Vienna (DT.1.2.1) provides a structured overview of all relevant refugee policy developments, influential actors interacting in a multi-level governance system, and identifies the important areas of integration and their specific challenges for both - refugees and integration projects. The results were shared with the project partners in Ljubljana, Parma, Bologna, Venice and Berlin through a virtual online study tour to promote mutual understanding of the challenges and opportunities in refugee work in the respective cities. In addition, the analysis serves as a basis for the subsequent evaluation of refugee projects from civil society and the implementation of innovative pilot activities aimed at enhancing the chances of labour market integration.



needs to be lifted in order to protect refugees from the severe disadvantages of the private housing market and to offer affordable housing with long-term perspectives to asylum seekers. Access to the municipal social housing market and equal treatment in the local housing market will also promote social mixing and contact with their Austrian fellow citizens.

The multi-governance-system in Austria is characterised by a strong dependency on access to financial means at the local level and insufficient measures for a successful long-term integration of refugees. Reducing financial dependencies and providing a longer-term funding horizon would help to significantly improve the capabilities of refugee integration initiatives and services. Moreover, this step would help to lower the barriers for new private actors to implement their projects and generally increase the permeability of existing structures.

With regard to social integration, Vienna has only been offering integration and language courses since 2015, but they are limited to the very basics. In order to improve the assistance of asylum seekers, the capacities of such educational programmes need to be expanded and integrated into a sequential range of second-level training programmes and lifelong education possibilities that aim at full integration into the education system or the labour market. Since a large proportion of refugees are traumatized by war, persecution and flight, psychological support must be expanded. This applies not only to immediate post-arrival support, but also to long-term psychological care, as refugees face challenges throughout the integration process that require a stable mental state to overcome.

To improve the efficient integration into labour market, a better collaboration between private sector and public sector (as job-preparing institutions) is needed to meet the specific skills required in the labour market more efficiently. A crucial issue is the recognition of qualifications acquired abroad to enable highly qualified refugees to access relevant positions and to protect them from precarious or self-exploiting working models. The duration of the recognition of educational qualifications must be accelerated so that refugees can pursue professions that correspond to their obtained qualifications from the very beginning. This is a crucial point, because a shortened process of recognition of qualifications not only simplifies labour market integration, but also improves the general integration process of refugees quite substantially. At the same time, it is important to provide more assistance to refugees in implementing entrepreneurial ideas and starting businesses, as bureaucracy is a major challenge. In order to give parents time to find work, there also needs to be a broader range of childcare options so that they can leave their children in care while they go to the authorities or job interviews. Such affordable childcare must also be accessible for refugees who have already found employment and are in regular work.

The government led by the ÖVP and Chancellor Karl Nehammer (ÖVP) continues to create a hostile atmosphere and positions itself against accepting more refugees in Austria. A central compromise in the coalition negotiations of the ÖVP with the Greens were concessions on climate protection if the hard line on refugee policy is maintained. Since then, the two coalition partners have repeatedly clashed over questionable deportations and the unwillingness to grant more people asylum (Kahlweit, 2021).

After the fire in the Moria refugee camp on the Greek island of Lesbos, the government took a stand against accepting refugees, arguing that more than 5,000 underage children had already been granted protection in Austria. It turned out that these figures of the Minister of the Interior were far below those of the official statistics, which only state 186 (Asylkoordination, 2020).

The former Chancellor Sebastian Kurz emphasised his uncompromising stance on the migration issue: "The open border policy no longer exists [...] It is not realistic to force states to accept refugees." The Chancellor emphasises his uncompromising stance on the migration issue: "The open border policy no longer exists [...] It is not realistic to force states to accept refugees." In this respect, he also refers to the EU's responsibility to present concrete proposals for solutions that are compatible with Austria's stance of "flexible solidarity" (Der Standard, 2020). So far, the new Chancellor Karl Nehammer (ÖVP) has not shown any sign of diverging from this position.



Looking at the last 6 years since the peak of the refugee crisis, it can be stated that the City of Vienna can rely on resilient structures in the field of integration work and that arriving refugees receive support at many steps in the integration process. Nevertheless, the sharply declining numbers of refugees arriving in Vienna show how effectively the policy of sealing off the EU's external borders is working. The current government led by the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) chalks this up as a success and positions itself against accepting more refugees. The newly established Federal Agency for Care and Support (BBU) is criticised by all NGOs because it gives the state even more competences in matters of asylum policy and reduces the transparency of asylum procedures. Overall, it is to be expected that the room for manoeuvre of the important actors in refugee integration will be further curtailed in the long run by restrictive policies or budget cuts, and that Austria will pursue an even harder line in refugee policy.

6) Evaluation of Selected Best Practices

Within the framework of SiforREF, two projects that excel in the field of refugee integration in Vienna were selected as best practices. Both projects were presented to the project partners during the study visit trips by representatives of Caritas Wien and Hilfswerk Wien. Best practices include holistic approaches that address the local challenges of refugee integration, bringing together several points of the integration process in one project. The specific aim is to provide refugees with a stable environment and a certain degree of planning security so that the basic conditions for a successful entry into the labour market are created. Although the goals of the two projects are similar, they differ fundamentally in terms of their business model and legal structure. The following chapter presents the two best-practice projects and then evaluates their approach using the social innovation indicators created by SiforREF.

6.1) Best Practice [1]: Haus AWAT

Haus AWAT (Kurdish name for “hope/whish”) provides sheltered housing for asylum seekers in the national programme of provision with basic supplies as well as dwelling places for recognized refugees. Temporary residents in Haus AWAT incorporate single male, female, LGBTQI as well as families. In addition to housing, the ground floor is used as a business zone that opens up to the public/ neighbourhood. It consists of a coffee bar, a barber shop as well as of a workshop area for tailoring and upcycling. The rooftop as well as the event room in the upper level can be used for community events free of charge. The target groups of AWAT are asylum seekers, refugees as well as the neighbourhood / host society, to foster:

- Housing integration through temporary housing for asylum seekers and refugees
- Housing integration through support services to find permanent housing for refugees
- Labour market integration through training programmes and apprenticeships in the AWAT businesses
- Labour market integration through support service in education recognition
- Social integration by offering an “open house” to the neighbourhood and initiatives outside of Haus AWAT

6.1.1) Leverage of this best practice project

AWAT combines a mixed-domain approach to refugee integration in a unique manner: housing, bureaucratic advice, education and training programs, interaction with local citizens and labour marketing integration through apprenticeships in the Haus AWAT businesses. Through this holistic concept, refugees are offered



one single point of contact at which they find assistance for the central pillars of the whole integration process. The particular strength of the offer lies in the fact that the extended help offers are located directly next to the accommodations, so that access is very low-threshold and refugees can access them continuously. This lowers the barriers that usually arise from the fact that refugees have to resort to a multitude of offers that specialize in a particular topic, but are spread across the city and require multiple contacts.

Haus AWAT primarily serves refugees eligible for asylum who were previously housed in transitional housing but had to leave within the first four months of being granted asylum and are now at risk of homelessness. In addition, the offer also aims at local homeless people, who are also cared for in Haus AWAT. The shared experience of a threatening housing situation also serves as a content bracket and unifying element to enable an intercultural exchange between refugees entitled to asylum and the local population. Social integration and contact with fellow citizens are promoted through several touchpoints, such as the coffee bar or the free venue, which can also be used by the neighbouring community.

Haus AWAT tackles the biggest challenge, financial dependence and constraints, with a mix of public funding that is allocated for refugee care, as well as funding supporting the provision with basic supplies for homeless aid. The integrative approach, in which several vulnerable groups are addressed at the same time, is particularly skilful because it also brings financial benefits. Furthermore, the initiative can rely on strong institutional support by Hilfswerk and Social Funds Vienna and the strong network consisting of individuals, civic initiatives, local institutions (e.g. Gebietsbetreuung) and public actors (e.g. district government). The multi-level network as allows for a stable financial foundation and creates important interfaces with professionals and institutions from which the refugees can benefit throughout the integration process.

6.1.2) Assessment of transferability of this best practice project

The overall idea of a mix of housing, business and community spaces, as well as the dual-funding approach is replicable and can be transferred to other European cities. However, the integration of training programmes as well as the financing of housing for asylum seekers and refugees depends heavily on the local/national context of institutions, available public funds and its financial duration as well as policies (e.g. with regard to education/labour market programmes). Haus AWAT must be understood as a response to the structural realities in Vienna, in particular the city's housing policy, where people with positive asylum decisions have to find their own accommodation on the private market often without further support. For other cities, where accommodation in initial reception facilities is already a problem, the concept must be structured at an even lower-threshold. Nevertheless, the concept provides an impetus to consider integrated solutions for initial reception facilities that offer refugees a central point of contact from the outset and provide access to directly adjacent training centres.

6.1.3) Evaluation of this best practice project with the indicators of social innovation developed by the SiforREF project

The selected best practice initiative Haus AWAT corresponds to almost all criteria developed by the SiforREF project for measuring social innovation capacity. According to this, the project covers all essential dimensions of the inclusion and integration process and is clearly oriented towards the complex and interdependent needs of refugees. At the same time, it responds to existing legal structures and policies in an innovative way that has the potential to be sustainable in the long term.

First and foremost, House AWAT developed a holistic approach that responds to the diverse needs of the newcomer refugees that creates partnerships with members of the local community. The project has positioned itself at an elementary interface, the transition from refugee accommodation to long-term housing after a positive application procedure and granting of asylum. At this crucial point where primary



care ends, AWAT helps refugees to find permanent housing solutions that fit their needs, and provides ongoing support for long-term integration to the labour market and society. Refugees can rely on support for the recognition of degrees and certificates acquired in their home countries. Ongoing education and training programs promote qualification and are designed to prepare refugees for entry into the labour market. Through low-threshold contact with mentors, cultural mediators and fellow citizens, the project promotes integration assistance that goes beyond basic care or assistance with bureaucratic matters.

In addition, the involvement of a wide range of institutional and private sector stakeholders fosters collaboration, and the cross-target approach may circumvent rivalries in a competitive environment for mostly short- to middle-term funding. Since the interdependent needs of refugees are composed along different dimensions, the following checkbox list represents in condensed form which of the identified indicators are fully met, only partially met or not met by Haus AWAT.

Basic indicators for social needs of the target group

INDICATOR	Y es	Partly	N o
Agency - the initiative respects the equality and agency of the refugees	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participation - the refugee must have a voice and be heard	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve the status quo - increase the capabilities of the target group	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide access to resources - empowering the members of the target group/ refugees	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sustainability - Institutionalization and long-term funding concept	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developing a holistic approach	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mainstreaming -Adaption beyond refugee status, for other immigrants and locals who need guidance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

INDICATOR	Y es	Partly	N o
Activities that create trust between local population and refugees share common interests	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Root the activity, practice at the local level within local communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Offer opportunities for local population and refugees to meet in smaller group activities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inclusion of exchanges among a diversity of ethnicities, ages, regions, gender, etc.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide intercultural mediators / “animateurs” in local settings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use when possible the concept of the Co-creation workshops.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

INDICATOR	Y es	Partly	N o
Increases opportunity of “refugees” to have a job that matches their skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Offers are reasonable / practicable assessment of their occupational skills	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Offers the refugee access to potential auxiliary training and an opportunity for an equivalent job	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Links additional specialized language training to specialized technical courses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Includes equal pay /fair wages and social-security;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Indicators that would empower women refugees			
Access to education and training at all levels	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accessible professional childcare facilities are available for the training-period;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6.1.4) Further comments and suggestions

A major challenge for the project is the limited fixed-term leases for the premises of Haus AWAT. This prevents long-term planning security and makes perspectives for further developments of the project more difficult. Nevertheless, there are signs that the initiative will receive a lease extension. In addition, the various sub-offers of the AWAT House are tied to different funders who provide the budget only for specific services. On the one hand, there is a risk that the services will be discontinued if the cooperation partners (e.g. FSW, AMS) cease to exist; on the other hand, the services can only be adapted to changing needs of the refugees to a limited extent.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the important income from the hairdresser's store "Baharat" and the café is also substantially reduced. But it is not only the financial losses that burden the ability of the project and the refugees to develop. Operations in the workshops can only run in shifts to a limited extent, group meetings cannot take place, and the important interactions of the refugees with the local community, which are normally initiated by the café and the hairdresser, are largely eliminated.

In order to develop Haus AWAT further, it should be considered how to continue to support those people who have already left the Haus AWAT, because they could find their own accommodation. The project is so far only focused on the important interface between temporary state housing and self-organized housing. However, since the project provides valuable support for labour market integration, a next step would be to develop a concept for a possible forward integration of Haus AWAT in the overall process.

6.2) Best Practice [2]: Magdas Hotel

magdas HOTEL is Austria's first social business hotel. For most refugees and asylum seekers it is still difficult to access the Austrian labour market. There are initial difficulties with the German language, resentment from many employers and the fact that you are only allowed to work in Austria after your asylum application has been approved. magdas Hotel was opened in 2015 and creates apprenticeships, jobs and future prospects for people, who do not have equal access to the labour market. Magdas is convinced that people who come from abroad actually strengthen the hotel business. They contribute a number of skills, talents, languages and cultural backgrounds. These positive aspects enable a special positioning within the hotel market.

The hotel is centrally located in an attractive area of the city, which is close to the Vienna Prater, and offers seventy-eight rooms. Thus far, madgas Hotel has welcomed 181,000 guests from all over the world. These included over seventy people from twenty countries who have found employment through the hotel. A new location is currently being built for the hotel with ninety rooms and its own restaurant. The expected opening is scheduled for the spring of 2022.

The goal here is to foster the following:

- Solve social issues wherever it makes sense and is possible in an entrepreneurial way
- Create apprenticeships and jobs for people who do not have easy access to the labour market



- Benefit from the special skills and talents of those with a refugee experience

magdas Hotel is part of the magdas social business group founded by Caritas Vienna in 2012. The aim of the entire group is to solve social issues wherever possible in an entrepreneurial way. magdas Hotel does not aim for profit, but wants to create jobs for people with a refugee background and offer them apprenticeships. The building where magdas Hotel is located is a former retirement home. The renovation of the building was financed with approx. 57,000 Euros from a crowdfunding campaign and a five-year loan from Caritas Wien for the amount of 1.5 million Euros. Since the financial resources were not entirely sufficient for a hotel renovation, recycling and upcycling was used in order to achieve this goal. With the support of the Federal Ministry for Digitization and Business Location; a special focus on apprenticeships was introduced in autumn of 2017. This has been implemented at magdas HOTEL. At the moment, thirteen young individuals with a refugee background are being trained for the various hotel sectors.

6.2.1) Leverage of this best practice project

The approach of magdas Hotel is to tackle the common challenges of refugee labour market integration with a smart business model, that turns supposed weaknesses into main pillars of the initiative. While most projects are heavily dependent on government funding and have strong financial dependencies, magdas Hotel can finance itself contribute?? 100% from its own resources. The hotel is part of the regular business world and operates on equal terms with other hotels in Vienna and therefore must be profitable (or at least must not make any losses). Further investments, like the renovation can be financed through crowdfunding campaigns and with credits from Caritas.

The strength of this financing model lies in the connection of social integration and regular business. On the one hand it reduces financial dependencies, on the other hand it has transformed the problem of integrating refugees to the labour market into a unique selling point that attracts guests and tourists from all over the world - so far more than 181,000. The hotel and tourism industry has always been international and multicultural, which is why the integration of refugees can also function particularly smooth there. The presence of hotel employees with different cultural backgrounds, various languages and special personal histories is what makes magdas Hotel an interesting place. It diminishes the charitable nature for both - those who support the project with their overnight stay and the refugees.

For the employed refugees, magdas Hotel offers a regular working atmosphere, with all rights and duties. They can earn their own money with which they can make a living and shape their own future. magdas Hotel offers them the opportunity to build on existing qualifications from the hotel industry or to be trained in the various sectors of a hotel business. Together with a team of experts (mostly former refugees themselves) who coordinates and organizes the activities the refugees gain useful skills, necessary qualifications and self-confidence in safe, but regular employment relationships. Refugees become an integral and productive part of society and business, which strengthens the refugees' social position and builds trust in the local community. Even though the hotel industry might be a good entry point into the labour market, it also carries the risk of keeping refugees in a low-wage sector and reproducing the perception of migrants/refugees as low-skilled workers. To improve opportunities for highly skilled refugees and education graduates, deeper integration into other sectors of the economy would be helpful.

Since magdas Hotel is located in a highly frequented area of the inner city, it enhances the visibility for the issue of refugee labour market integration and the employed staff. This fosters the chance to establish relationships with neighbouring people and businesses and promotes necessary cultural exchange. The café and restaurant are not only open to hotel guests, but also invite the local population to enjoy drinks and food, and incidentally come into contact with the project and the refugees.



6.2.2) Assessment of transferability of this best practice project

This project has proven to apply a very self-sufficient and solution-oriented approach to address the common challenges of labour market integration of refugees, which can be easily transferred to other European cities. It is especially suitable for larger cities with many hotel and tourist guests. The concept can also be either up-scaled or down-scaled, depending on the local context and type of guests. In smaller cities, the offer could be reduced to a hostel aimed at young backpackers, while in large cities with a high proportion of business travellers, a more sophisticated atmosphere could be created. However, the concept, the number of beds and the prices per night are subject to the market, just like any other business.

6.2.3) Evaluation of this best practice project with the indicators of social innovation developed by the SiforREF project

magdas Hotel has recognized that diversity is a particular strength in the hotel industry and has developed a unique selling point from a supposed weakness. By establishing itself in the hotel industry, the project is responding very cleverly to local conditions, because in the tourist city of Vienna there is a large market and high demand from millions of international guests, who are also happy to be inspired by new concepts.

Thereby, the best-practice project fully respects the refugees' ability to act and places particular emphasis on treating them as equals. Employees and trainees are involved at all hierarchical levels of the company and bear responsibility accordingly. magdas Hotel has created a safe working environment with long-term perspectives, where refugees can bloom and develop a broad skillset, that enhances their chances to entry the regular labour market. The holistic approach allows employees to move through various positions within the hospitality industry and gain valuable experience through interaction with international guests. In addition, magdas Hotel also creates important interfaces with the local population by creating spaces (restaurant and garden) in which exchange is organically initiated.

The innovative character of the initiative is particularly evident in its business model. magdas Hotel operates economically and is not dependent on any third-party state funding or subsidies. Through partnerships and sponsorships with private companies, it is possible to obtain external services (such as the website development) at favourable conditions and to create a highly professional overall appearance. The many good reviews on TripAdvisor (average 4.5 points with 481 reviews)⁵ demonstrate how well the concept is received by international guests (Tripadvisor, 2021). This business-oriented approach makes it possible to act independently of other funding and guarantees that the project can also establish itself sustainably.

On the other hand, the project is naturally subject to market fluctuations and is not immune to external influences. The current Covid-19 situation has hit the whole tourism industry particularly hard, which naturally also affects magdas Hotel and illustrates that being embedded in the ordinary business sector has its downsides, too. However, Vienna's first social business hotel is an outstanding project that provides meaningful and successful support to refugees and makes a great contribution to sustainably improving the labour market integration of refugees.

Basic indicators for social needs of the target group

INDICATOR	Y es	Partly	N o
Agency - the initiative respects the equality and agency of the refugees	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participation - the refugee must have a voice and be heard	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve the status quo - increase the capabilities of the target group	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide access to resources - empowering the members of the target group/ refugees	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sustainability - Institutionalization and long-term funding concept	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

⁵ Status at 29 April 2021



Developing a holistic approach	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mainstreaming -Adaption beyond refugee status, for other immigrants and locals who need guidance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

INDICATOR	Y e s	Partly	N o
Activities that create trust between local population and refugees share common interests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Root the activity, practice at the local level within local communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Offer opportunities for local population and refugees to meet in smaller group activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inclusion of exchanges among a diversity of ethnicities, ages, regions, gender, etc.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide intercultural mediators / “animateurs” in local settings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use when possible the concept of the Co-creation workshops.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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

INDICATOR	Y e s	Partly	N o
Increases opportunity of “refugees” to have a job that matches their skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Offers a reasonable / practicable assessment of their occupational skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Offers the refugee access to potential auxiliary training and an opportunity for an equivalent job	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Links additional specialized language training to specialized technical courses	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Includes equal pay /fair wages and social-security;	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indicators that would empower women refugees			
Access to education and training at all levels	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accessible professional childcare facilities are available for the training-period;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Although magdas Hotel can be regarded as a showcase project, this can only be depicted to a limited extent using the indicators developed for social innovation developed within SiforREF. On the one hand, this is due to the fact that the indicators operate at different levels (rather general, very specific) and no weighting is applied. On the other hand, some indicators are relatively soft, making a clear evaluation difficult. In addition, the innovative strength of the projects can only be read to a limited extent based on the indicators. After all, innovation also means that particularly creative and efficient solutions have been found in which the project breaks new ground in order to meet the challenges of the specific context.

This is evident in the comparison of the two best practices. While the AWAT house implements more conventional ideas and relies on government funding, magdas Hotel has taken a completely new direction with its social business approach. In terms of innovative and integrative power, autonomy and sustainability, this project is significantly stronger in relation to visibility and long-term perspective, although this cannot be fully reflected in an evaluation based on the indicators.



Therefore, a possible further development of the indicators should also be highlighted at this point. Particularly indicators that measure creativity and innovative strength, but also include organizational structures and financing strategies would improve the evaluation capabilities.

6.2.4) Further comments and suggestions

The social business approach of magdas Hotel is a unique refugee integration program in Vienna that has proven to be sustainably successful and has growth potential. Due to the business model, the organization has enough financial autonomy to develop and adapt the program further, depending on how the market or customers change. At the same time, this business model takes away the charitable character of the project, which makes more demands on the employed refugees and reduces the dependency ratio. The project serves as a benchmark for other labour market integration programs.

The apprentices work in a challenging but safe environment. A next step could be to initiate exchange programs with other leading hotels in Vienna so that the refugee apprentices can experience other work environments, develop new skills, and connect with like-minded young apprentices from the local community. That could enhance social cohesion and gives them the opportunity to think outside the box and develop greater ambitions. For the organization, this would also mean becoming even more embedded in the local business environment and intensifying links with other training companies in the hotel industry. In addition, consideration should be given to how to expand the offering to other related industries and training programs. In the long term, this could enable refugees to leave the low-wage sector and pursue occupations for which higher qualifications are necessary. One area that could possibly be considered for such ambitions, also because it is closely related to the hotel industry, would be event planning, for example.

6.3) Comparison of the selected best practices in Vienna

As shown, both best practices meet the interdependent needs of refugees and diverse challenges of their integration process with holistic approaches that particularly respect the agency and equality of refugees. While Haus AWAT has primarily addressed the accommodation problem and provides important fundamental consulting services, magdas Hotel focuses on labour market integration. Thus, both projects also operate on different levels or at different points within the integration process. A secure and long-term accommodation and the completion of the necessary administrative procedures is the basis for the entry into the Austrian labour market. Accordingly, both initiatives make an important contribution to integration work in the city of Vienna.

In terms of social innovation capability, the social business approach of magdas Hotel is particularly noteworthy. Compared to Haus AWAT, the project has developed a more creative and sustainable approach that significantly strengthens the refugees' ability to shape their own lives and their sovereignty in the long term. Moreover, the concept is a response to a less policy-related challenge and can be easily transferred or adapted to other local contexts.

On the other hand, an employment or apprenticeship at magdas Hotel is already linked to some prerequisites. The first steps of integration must already have been successfully completed in order to work at magdas Hotel. Thus, the project is not quite as low-threshold as the AWAT house. There, the various interdependent needs of refugees are addressed in one place and bridges are built to key counselling centres and other stakeholders involved in the overall integration process. Haus AWAT has positioned itself at an important interface between initial reception and long-term integration. In return, the refugees' opportunities for development are somewhat limited, especially in the area of labour market integration.



Particularly valuable is the effort of both best practices to nudge intercultural exchange between refugees and local communities. Embedding activities in a natural environment encourages casual and organic interactions, so that exchange between refugees and locals also take place naturally alongside the planned events and workshops. Both projects always try to offer assistance through the use of intercultural mediators, so that potential misunderstandings can be avoided or quickly resolved. It is worth highlighting the fact that, Haus Awat is deeply rooted in the neighbourhood and allows for an organic, spontaneous exchange between locals and the project, while magdas Hotel is a bit more remote and Viennese people have to go there specifically to get in touch. It can be assumed that the project strengthens the trust between the refugees and international tourists rather than between the trainees and the local population.

7) Evaluation of pilot activities implemented by Caritas Wien

Caritas Vienna has developed two different pilot activities based on the reviews and assessments of the selected best practices. These activities aim to implement new findings and test innovative ways to improve the labour market integration of refugees in Vienna. Both programs are created in cooperation with magdas Hotel, the first Austrian social business hotel, where the activities also take place. The first activity “softskills for apprentices” has a planned duration of nine months, starting in January 2021 is expected to expire in September 2021. The second activity ‘volunteers for volunteers’ is running from April 2021 to September 2021. The results will be documented in two short-films, directed by professional filmmakers.

7.1) Pilot activity Magda’s Hotel: Softskills for apprentices

The pilot activity is operated by Caritas Wien in cooperation with magdas Hotel and mainly focuses on strengthening labour market integration of young refugees. Therefore, a new educational line for apprentices at magdas hotel was created. This educational line is tailor made for apprentices with migrant experience. The aim is to give apprentices a helpful skillset for handling difficult situations through a training in soft skills - with a focus on conflict resolution and intercultural communication. The pilot activity is implemented in magdas Hotel, Austria’s first social business hotel. Their aim is to resolve social issues by actively employing marginalized people like people with migration background and refugee experience. In magdas Hotel people from all over the world come together - not only as guests but also as employees. At the moment, 16 young people with refugee experience are trained as apprentices in the fields cooking, facility management and reception.

In this pilot action apprentices with migration experience take part in a three-part training course in conflict management and intercultural competence. The theoretical content is prepared by the trainers, the practical content is developed participative with the apprentices. The goal is to create a training in which the participants can bring in their previous knowledge and they can apply the learned input directly at the workplace, in their social environment or in their everyday life. The experiences of the participants are an important resource for learning. During the training, active attention is given to ensuring that the topics that are being analysed and discussed come from them. The trainers see themselves as facilitators of the framework - the exact content is developed with the apprentices. The apprentices become co-creators of the program.

The pilot activity pursues the following goals:

- Providing a profound and relevant training
- Raising agency of participants



- Increasing competences for job market

7.1.1) Leverage of this pilot activity

In Austria, apprenticeship training refers to the system of dual training, in which an apprentice learns a profession at two places of education. The apprentice completes the majority of the training through practical work in the company and learns the theoretical background and a deepening of general knowledge as a student at a vocational school. Access to non-formal, low-threshold education is thus not covered. For apprentices in the tourism sector, conflict competence, personality development and intercultural competence are important areas that often find too little space in the dual education. magdas Hotel sees importance of training their apprentices in this field and giving them access to low-threshold competence development. Within the pilot program "competence acceleration for apprentices", a low-threshold education program is developed to train apprentices in conflict competence and intercultural competence. These two aspects have been identified by magdas Hotel as key learning areas and have been selected for further development.

The pilot is strongly focused on the specifics of the hotel industry and builds on an in-depth analysis, tailoring the training program to the participants' work environment. Special attention is thus paid to industry-specific challenges in combination with migration background. Therefore, the pilot is a valuable addition to the "normal" content of magdas Hotel's training programs, which mainly focus on the hard skills necessary for a professional qualification. A special focus is placed on soft skills, which tend to be neglected in the state-run dual training system and in many training companies due to scarce financial and human resources. Another issue, that is connected tightly to this, is the fact that existing offers in the field of conflict management and intercultural communication are based on high-threshold concepts. Due to their migration backgrounds and language barriers, refugees often have difficulties to fully engage and develop in the course of the program. Therefore, this pilot action has set itself the task of developing a concept that creates access to this offer in simple language and at a low threshold.

Moreover, the program is based on the perspective that conflicts also contain a productive and constructive element that, if properly channelled, can have a positive impact on the development of apprentices. In this sense, Conflicts have the potential to bring people closer together, to discover new ways and to broaden horizons. The prerequisite for this is a constructive and conscious way of dealing with conflicts. Especially when working with guests in the tourism industry, the ability to deal with conflicts as well as an awareness of intercultural peculiarities is important for a successful and satisfying everyday working life.

But the structure of the pilot activity and educational program does not only take apprentices with a refugee background into account that receive training It also empowers the trainers themselves. The training team is largely made up of people with migration or refugee experience, who are given the opportunity to help shape the training courses and curricula. On the one hand their life experiences are very valuable for this project, on the other hand this pilot can act as a steppingstone for them to get experience, safety and knowledge in the field of holding workshops and leading groups. It is important to the pilot to give people with migrant background the chance to professionalize in the field of training and holding workshops - not as a participant but as the creator. The Austrian scene of trainers is very much "white" and autochthonous Austrian. This pilot can contribute to a more diverse scene of trainers.

7.1.2) Assessment of transferability of this pilot activity

"Softskills for apprentices" lifts participants out of the refugee or migrant category, but still recognizes their specific background and needs in the context of their work environment. The idea to strengthen the



soft skills of young refugees that are already integrated into the labour market or other educational programs is a meaningful approach that can be transferred to other industries.

Conflict management skills are basically universally applicable, but the conflict situations or causes differ depending on the work environment. Since this program focusses on the particularities of the hotel industry, an in-depth analysis would be needed to identify corresponding conflict causes and solution concepts for the respective industries in which the program is to be integrated. At this point it is worth emphasizing that such a soft skills program can be considered directly in the creation of training programs in order to make the offer an integral part of the new curricula from the very beginning.

In addition, the trainees carry their knowledge directly to their environment, which includes all the people in their professional (colleagues, guests, customers) and private environment (friends and families), which means that the program has important spill over effects on the people who cannot participate in the programs themselves.

7.1.3) Evaluation of this pilot activity with the indicators of social innovation developed by the SiforREF project

The implemented pilot activity from Caritas and magdas Hotel is following most of the criteria developed by the SiforREF project for measuring social innovation capacity. The educational program is a meaningful extension of the existing training program of magdas hotel, that already contributes to the integration of refugees successfully. The program respects the agency of participating refugees and includes them on both sides. From the start on, their diverse perspectives, ideas and problems are considered and influence the structure and design of the training program. Overall, the activity significantly contributes to improving refugees' skills and chances of long-term labour market integration.

On the other hand, the program can only partially fulfil the essential indicators of labour market integration developed within the SiforREF program. On the one hand, this is due to the character of the activity, which is designed as a continuing education measure building on an apprenticeship, and on the other hand, the indicators are not suitable for fully capturing and assessing soft factors. This is because these are mostly universal, i.e. useful for all work environments and private space, but cannot be assigned to specific jobs for the purposes of this evaluation. The strength of this pilot activity is therefore not fully reflected by the evaluation based on the indicators in this area. At the same time, it could also be discussed whether other training programs that focus on teaching job-specific hard skills and document successful completion by means of certificates would not be better suited to facilitating refugees' access to highly qualified and well-paid jobs.

Basic indicators for social needs of the target group

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



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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Root the activity, practice at the local level within local communities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Offer opportunities for local population and refugees to meet in smaller group activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Inclusion of exchanges among a diversity of ethnicities, ages, regions, gender, etc.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide intercultural mediators / “animateurs” in local settings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use when possible the concept of the Co-creation workshops.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

INDICATOR	Yes	Partly	No
Increases opportunity of “refugees” to have a job that matches their skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Offers a reasonable / practicable assessment of their occupational skills	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Offers the refugee access to potential auxiliary training and an opportunity for an equivalent job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Links additional specialized language training to specialized technical courses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provides a 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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Includes equal pay /fair wages and social-security;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Indicators that would empower women refugees			
Access to education and training at all levels	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accessible professional childcare facilities are available for the training-period;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7.1.4) Further comments and suggestions

The prototype training program is to be handed over to magdas Hotel at the end of the pilot phase in September 2021. The next generation of trainees should receive an even better version of the first version in the training of conflict resolution and intercultural communication. Should magdas Hotel decide to implement this training program in the long term, it might be useful to integrate ongoing evaluations so that participating trainers and trainees can actively participate in the design of the program and the focus of its content. Thus, the crucial situations in which conflicts potentially arise, can be identified and the positive handling of such can be practiced.

In addition, the program can be expanded to include soft skills other than conflict management. For the modern job market, it is indispensable to demonstrate digital competencies and management experience, i.e. the confident use of common business software programs and the organization of complex processes. Therefore, the training program should expand its content to include soft skills such as moderation, keynote presentations, project management or rhetoric courses. This could help to empower trainees in the long term and increase their chances of moving up to higher positions or entering other industries.

In order to anchor the pilot activity, it could be interesting to extend the offer to trainees from other sectors who experience similar conflict situations or also have the need to improve their soft skills. Involving other trainees would increase the visibility of participating refugees and could contribute to



social cohesion. It would also enhance magdas Hotel's reputation in the hotel industry and make it a pioneer in innovative training programs.

7.2) Pilot activity Caritas: Volunteers for Volunteers

The second pilot activity builds upon an existing educational program that is operated by Caritas Wien since 2012. The project "Grätzeleltern / Community Buddies" (Caritas Vienna, Community Work) has so far trained 65 volunteers from different migrant and refugee communities with the help of experts (social workers, legal advisers, etc.). The trained volunteers from different ethnic communities act as "Grätzeleltern / Community Buddies" and offer orientation for newly arrived migrants/refugees from their respective home countries. They share knowledge about everyday life and build bridges to services in different areas. Some of the volunteers have migration backgrounds themselves and therefore can support in an authentic way based on their own experiences. Some of the volunteers come from the autochthon population and therefore have a wide knowledge about different aspects of everyday life in their country.

The Volunteers for Volunteers pilot activity is now establishing a training program in which veteran and experienced volunteers train other volunteers. Five trainers will design a curriculum on the subject of 'Labour market integration of refugees', organize respective workshops and serve as trainers for around 10-12 new volunteers. The following five content pillars were already developed in advance in exchange with refugees and experienced volunteers:

1. Communication
2. Education & qualification
3. Labour market
4. Social entrepreneurship
5. Role as multiplier

The idea is to empower experienced volunteers to encourage them to take responsibility and to pass on their knowledge and special experiences to newly arriving migrants. On both sides, trainer and student, important new experiences can be gained, new knowledge about the Austrian labour market can be generated and important skills for long-term success on the labour market can be learned.

7.2.1) Leverage of this pilot activity

This pilot activity addresses the second level of education of those refugees who have already completed education, are well integrated and actively participate in civil society. Their valuable experience is not only applied in the training workshops, but from the very beginning, as the experienced volunteers contribute valuable experience and new perspectives to the design of the entire educational program. As a result, the experienced volunteers get a new role and pass on the knowledge they have acquired over the years to new volunteers. This not only gives the experienced volunteers recognition, but also helps them develop their own skills. After participating in the pilot, they will be able to design, organize and hold their own workshops independently.

At the same time, new volunteers will be acquired and enabled to take a responsible role with high visibility in the respective district. After the training, the new volunteers will act as multipliers and pass on the knowledge they have acquired to migrants and refugees. This is intended to improve the real-life situations of migrants and refugees in Vienna. Because of the focus on labour market integration,



improvements are expected in this area in particular. This social innovation will create a multiplier effect, which in turn will pass on to the migrant and refugee communities.

The strength of this pilot project lies in its sustainability. The developed training concept and curriculum can be reused for future trainings and therefore be continuously adapted and improved. This applies to the project partner "Grätzeleltern", but also to other projects that train multipliers. The contents can be adapted depending on the thematic focus. The scope of the training, as well as the number of participants, can also be adapted as needed.

This pilot activity also focuses on teaching soft skills that are too often neglected in conventional education programs. It breaks down existing, structural hierarchies and empowers refugees to take on the role of teacher themselves. For the new volunteers, this makes the teaching program more accessible and creates role models they can easier identify with.

7.2.2) Assessment of transferability of this pilot activity

To share the curriculum, the results and experience of the are discussed with stakeholders, policy makers, experts, etc. timely after the pilot action. For this purpose, a round table will be organized. With the help of digital marketing measures and a short film, the pilot activity will be presented to a broad audience of institutional representatives and civil society.

As already mentioned, the concept can be easily transferred to other projects and cities. Depending on the requirements the content of the training program can be adapted and the number of participating volunteers can be scaled up or down. This prototype builds upon the existing structures of "Grätzeleltern / Community Buddies" that focus on social integration of newly arriving refugees and migrants. However, the basic idea of refugees training refugees can also be translated to other areas of integration or with a focus on specific industries. To successfully implement such measures, there must be existing structures in the respective area and a first-level education program must train volunteers in the first place.

7.2.3) Evaluation of this pilot activity with the indicators of social innovation developed by the SiforREF project

This second pilot activity in particular respects the agency of refugees by making people not only recipients of services, but empowering them to participate in the creation of integration projects themselves. In doing so, the pilot intelligently leverages the diversity of participating volunteers and makes the unique experiences of people with immigrant backgrounds a central aspect of the training program.

One aspect that deserves special mention is that the pilot has identified a gap in ordinary training programs. "Volunteers for Volunteers" provides second-level training that empowers participating refugees and prepares them for responsible jobs in their community, as well as in the business world. The program thus goes beyond basic primary training and imparts high-quality soft skills that can be applied in a variety of ways.

On the other hand, the pilot activity cannot fully meet the requirements for enhanced labour market opportunities. Despite the idea of focusing on the area of labour market integration, the pilot rather promotes general social integration in the local communities. The workshops provide valuable knowledge about the Austrian labour market, but ultimately the training program does not directly help



to obtain necessary qualifications that increase the chance of finding a suitable job. Furthermore, it is a voluntary commitment to engage as ‘community buddy’ that is not monetarily remunerated.

Basic indicators for social needs of the target group

INDICATOR	Y e s	Partly	N o
Agency - the initiative respects the equality and agency of the refugees	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participation - the refugee must have a voice and be heard	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve the status quo - increase the capabilities of the target group	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide access to resources - empowering the members of the target group/ refugees	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sustainability - Institutionalization and long-term funding concept	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developing a holistic approach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mainstreaming -Adaption beyond refugee status, for other immigrants and locals who need guidance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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

INDICATOR	Yes	Partly	N o
Activities that create trust between local population and refugees share common interests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Root the activity, practice at the local level within local communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Offer opportunities for local population and refugees to meet in smaller group activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Inclusion of exchanges among a diversity of ethnicities, ages, regions, gender, etc.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provide intercultural mediators / “animateurs” in local settings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use when possible the concept of the Co-creation workshops.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

INDICATOR	Yes	Partly	N o
Increases opportunity of “refugees” to have a job that matches their skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Offers are reasonable / practicable assessment of their occupational skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Offers the refugee access to potential auxiliary training and an opportunity for an equivalent job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Links additional specialized language training to specialized technical courses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provides apracticable training to achieve full recognition that can be mastered in reasonable time schedule and will be concretely required for the exercise of this occupation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Includes equal pay /fair wages and social-security;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Indicators that would empower women refugees	Yes	Partly	N o
Access to education and training at all levels	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accessible professional childcare facilities are available for the training-period;	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

7.2.4) Further comments and suggestions

In order to improve the pilot in the long term, it would make sense to expand the idea of second-level training to other existing projects - i.e. not to focus only on the "Grätzeleltern". It would be interesting to cooperate with integration projects that teach hard skills or offer training programs in specific industries. Successful graduates of these programs could take responsibility for mentoring programs that



train new refugees. In this way, learning leadership skills would be directly linked to their professional skills. In this regard, it would also be worth considering cooperating with local companies and educational institutions. Thus, the engagement would also take place in the field of paid activities and not rely on unpaid volunteer work.

So far, the activity has largely focused on people with a migrant or refugee background who continue to be active in the field of their migrant community after successfully graduating. Thus, an intercultural exchange is not given. If the project were to be extended to other areas, it would also be beneficial to integrate people from the local communities as participants. This would give the experienced coaches the opportunity to present themselves more strongly to the outside world in their new role, while the Austrians could learn from the valuable experiences of the migrants and refugees.

Once again, it is difficult to fully map the positive aspects of the pilot using the indicators for social innovation developed by SiforREF, since they are not suitable for assessing the acquisition of soft skills. Unfortunately, it can also be assumed that the chances of long-term labour market integration, especially in occupations with high skill requirements, would be only slightly improved by participation in this activity. This means that the activity can only partially fulfil one of the goals it has set itself. But in return, the impact on the area of social integration and visibility of refugees should be all the greater. The positive effect is, in particular, that refugees are given a new, responsible role. This breaks through familiar hierarchies and increases the volunteers' self-confidence.

7.3) Comparison of the two pilot activities in Vienna

Both pilot activities were implemented by the project partner Caritas Vienna and build upon existing refugee integration structures. Their main focus is on creating second-level education and training for refugees who are already successfully integrated into the local community or undergoing apprenticeships. Therefore, the participants are taught important soft skills, which should be an extension to the educational qualifications. This should also enable the refugees to take on management positions. On the other hand, these are skills that are universally applicable and can therefore also help in the private environment.

Particularly noteworthy is the fact that participating refugees are firmly involved in the development process of the workshops from the very beginning and can thus incorporate their own experiences, ideas and skills into the programs. This strengthens their position and self-confidence. In addition, the programs are designed for sustainable further development, which means that they can be adapted to changing problems or requirements. If the training programs are well received, they can also be extended to cover a whole range of different soft skills or competencies. The fact that the pilots are based on existing structures means that they are closely related to work practice.

On the other hand, both pilots contribute only marginally to actually improving the labour market opportunities for the refugees participating. First of all, this is due to the fact that the certificates acquired are probably given much less attention in job interviews than professional qualifications. It is questionable whether they actually increase the chances of getting better-paid jobs as a result. The "soft skills for apprentices" programme links its training programme to specific requirements of the hotel industry, making the universal soft skills directly applicable to a specific work environment. This makes the acquired qualification interesting for future employers from the industry. The "volunteers for volunteers" pilot, on the other hand, does not create such a link, which is why the skills learned are universally applicable to any form of workshop that the participants may design themselves in the future, but this does not particularly improve their chances on the regular labour market. Furthermore, the second pilot activity focuses on an area that should rather be classified as community management and not as a programme to promote labour market integration.



Both pilots neglect interaction with local communities, as the programmes are aimed exclusively at refugees and do not interface with, for example, other trainees in other sectors. On one side, this provides a safe space where participants can try things out and develop, on the other side, it misses the opportunity for participants to make new contacts and friendships with people from the local community, while attending the workshops.

Finally, it must be criticised that the pilot activities and the Grätzeletern project are voluntary activities that take place in the participants' free time and are not financially remunerated. This is especially true for those refugees who are involved as trainers and mediators and invest a lot of time and energy in the development and implementation of the workshops.

Overall, it is difficult to measure the actual value of the two pilot activities for improving labour market opportunities. The first pilot, "Softskills for apprentices", can be seen as more promising based on the analysis, as it builds on the experiences and challenges of a concrete work environment and represents a meaningful extension to the taught hard skills within the framework of the apprentices' training.

It must be pointed out once again at this point that the indicators for social innovation are only partially suitable for fully mapping the impact of best practices and pilots. This is evident in the pilots insofar as the teaching of universal soft skills does not lead to concretely measurable results. Therefore, the indicators: *increases opportunity of refugees to have a job that matches their skills / Offers are reasonable / practicable assessment of their occupational skills* and *Offers the refugee access to potential auxiliary training and an opportunity for an equivalent job* cannot be assessed as applicable, despite the positive impact the activities might have.

8) Visibility, Potential & 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 process⁶. 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

⁶ Review interviews with all PPs took part on Dec 7 and 9, 2021 led by the UNIVIE team.



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 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

Vienna, the capital of Austria, has already proven its ability to respond and adapt quickly to new migration challenges, as in 2015 when the city government established its position of "integration from day one" and offered secure initial housing, generous cash and in-kind benefits, and accompaniment of arriving refugees through a strong network of social services. The robust multi-level-governance system can rely on long-term experiences in cooperation and has the capabilities to provide refugees with reasonable initial care and take the first steps of the integration process together with them. In international comparison, the city of Vienna already offers an extremely high standard, but cannot fulfil its own self-image as best-in-class.

This is mainly due to the fact that most of the integration services in the various field of housing, labour market, language training or social integration remain at a rather low and basic level and do not cover long term development and integration approaches. A weakness that was identified by the initiators of the selected best practices and SiforREF implementing pilot activities to prototype innovative projects with the aim to provide sustainable solutions that accompany the multi-year integration process at various levels.

SiforREF's mission is to propose innovative perspectives and actionable measures for refugee integration that trigger important changes in society and existing policies. Always with the goal to contribute to a more inclusive Austrian society that welcomes people with refugee experience who are looking for a new, safe home where they can develop their personality and skills. The basic prerequisite for this is that Austrian society views refugees as an enrichment for cultural life and as an important resource for the domestic economy. A condition that has not yet been achieved. Instead, many stakeholders assessed the political atmosphere under the administration of Sebastian Kurz and his successor Karl Nehammer



(ÖVP) the media coverage of refugees since 2015 as increasingly defamatory⁷. In order to reduce the negative portrayal and prejudices about refugees, it is first necessary to give people with refugee experiences themselves the chance to influence how they are presented. To make this to be possible, full access to all relevant areas of community life - housing, labour market and cultural life - is needed. Politics has the responsibility to create equal basic conditions for everyone. To give people, regardless of their right of residence, the chance to prove their own ability to integrate and to become part of society.

The following recommendations emerge from the evaluation of the selected best practices and implemented pilot activities within the SiforREF research project. In this context, the sequence from the three areas of housing, labour market and social integration follows the sequence of steps necessary for the success of a successful integration process.

In the field of housing, the city government should provide a legal framework that provides long term planning reliability for refugees and those civil society initiatives that take over an essential part of the integration work of the city of Vienna. In addition, the City of Vienna should take over the financing of the necessary real estate with comprehensive state subsidies, so that the financial burden on NGO's and refugees is as low as possible. The initial reception facilities have already proven their worth; now the task is to offer refugees a bridging option until they can look for suitable housing on the open housing market on their own. The proposal of SiforREF provides that refugees are granted access to municipal and social housing. In doing so, one could fall back on those apartments with a particularly low standard - On the one hand, to create incentives for people to look for better apartments on the private housing market as soon as this is possible, and on the other hand, to avoid giving Viennese citizens the feeling that they are being deprived of the scarce commodity of municipal housing. The city of Vienna is already well prepared for such a concept, as it already has more than 220,000 apartments⁸. For one thing, there is no need for extra investments for new buildings, at the same time, this circumstance makes it possible that rents can be subsidized by the state, so that financing is also possible for people who do not have a work permit.

A similar approach can be taken by the City of Vienna regarding the real estate situation of the NGOs. As magdas Hotel's best practices show, these initiatives are able to breathe new life into old buildings and significantly enhance the entire area by becoming a multi-culture hub. The provision of such real estate at an unconventional price and equipped with multi-year leases (e.g. 20 years) would not only give the NGOs planning security, but would also make them financially less dependent, so that the funds and resources can be invested into a fast and successful integration of arriving refugees. An approach that would drastically improve the situation of the selected best practice Haus Awat that is exemplary for many other initiatives in Vienna.

An equal access to the labour market is the most fundamental condition for a successful, sustainable integration of refugees. The permission to work is the permission to make a living, to learn the language in an organic and targeted manner, to earn respect and recognition and to get in touch with the local community naturally. A work permit is the condition for self-reliance. And the faster refugees become independent, the shorter the city government must pay for their accommodations, language courses or social security. Therefore, it must be in the interest of the city of Vienna to loosen the restriction of the labour market policies for refugees. A first important step would be to dissolve the labour market ban for those people whose residence status has not yet been clarified. In addition, existing degrees and certificates must be recognized and the bureaucratic process must pick up speed so that refugees can get into jobs that match their qualifications as quickly as possible. Because then they represent a valuable resource for the domestic labour market. Such an approach would especially improve the

⁷ SiforREF organized the dialogue-oriented seminar (DC.4.1) "Walking Workshop" where important stakeholders developed a common perspective and formulated demands that are also included in the Memorandum of Understanding. They assessed the current political and social mood as deficient.

⁸ This figure is based on official data from the Vienna Housing Advisory Service (Wohnungsberatungservice, 2021:1).



situation of those refugees who do not have a university degree and work as a doctor, for example, but who are also not unskilled day laborers, but instead have sound training and knowledge in craft or nursing. Particularly in these areas, degrees are often not recognized, even though these sectors that are desperately looking for skilled workers. Last but not least, companies that are willing to hire people with a refugee background could be subsidized by the city government to create financial incentives and to lower potential risk for employers.

Given the two conditions of a long-term accommodation and a decent employment, refugees gain the necessary momentum and confidence to deepen their relationship with the city of Vienna and its citizens. Refugees would become able to participate in and contribute to social life, to make friendships and to dismantle potential prejudices and fears. They would be given the opportunity to speak for themselves to share their own perspective and pass on valuable experiences to Viennese citizens, but also for other migrant communities. Negative media coverage of refugees and other migrants could be put into perspective through direct interaction between refugees and the local community and have less power over how Austrians feel about the issue of flight and migration.

SiforREF has identified that minor changes in the policy framework could have the potential to create major leverage effects. Therefore, the key of a successful integration process is to support the self-reliance of refugees and other migrants through legislations that allow them an equal access to municipal housing, the regular labour market and social life. SiforREF perceives this approach as a Win-Win-Win Situation. Refugees would get the chance to act independently and pave their own way.

NGOs could fulfil their actual role of actively assisting refugees and showing clear perspectives. The City of Vienna could benefit from cultural and professional resources while reducing the expensive bureaucracy, social security contributions, and other subsidies incurred to provide for refugees. Ultimately, it is minor changes in the legislative framework that could achieve a great deal. All that is needed is the political will to give people with a refugee background a real perspective in Austria.



Reference List:

- D.T1.1.2 In depth study of refugee policies and practices of the five cities involved in SiforREF
- D.T1.3.1 Report describing the stakeholders, experts and refugees involvement in a local workshop
- D.T1.3.2 Concept report on inputs and ideas come to light during the workshops and roundtable in each city.
- D.T1.4.1 Report on best practices in the territories of the partnership.
- D.T1.5.1 Guidelines for evaluating the social innovation capacity of policies and practices.
- D.T2.1.1 Report describing the implemented activity (1 working seminar and peer review for each city)
- D.T2.3.1 Evaluation report of the training activity at city level
- D.T2.4.1 Open guidelines to be refined after the pilot implementation
- D.T3.1.1 Report describing the kind of pilot chosen and the sequence of activities to be done
- D.T3.2.1-8 Pilots implementation (1-8 Pilots in Cities implemented)
- D.T3.3.1 Evaluative report emerging from round table in each city with all the people involved in pilot (s)

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