

MIGRANT MINISTRY REPORT IN EUROPE **DURING THE** PANDEMIC CRISIS

GOOD PRACTICES
MARCH - DECEMBER 2020





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This volume provides the results of the Third Report on the Pastoral Care of Migrants in Europe, realised within the framework of a cooperation agreement signed between the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and the Catholic University of Milan.

It offers a collection of 40 Good Practices covering the four "verbs" suggested by Pope Francis in his Message for the 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2018: to welcome, to protect, to promote, and to integrate.

The good practices were selected in order to cover a wide range of European countries and to obtain a sample composed of no less than eight practices for each of the four "verbs" proposed by Pope Francis. The target groups of these practices are different, due to the complex character of migration phenomena.

The Report aims to highlight the Catholic Church's effort in welcoming and supporting migrants and refugees at all stages of the migration process. It refers to 2020, and therefore it includes many initiatives launched in response to the health emergency. As underlined by the numerous reports produced internationally - including those released by the Migrants & Refugees Section - migrants and refugees have been among the categories most violently affected by the economic and social crisis generated by the pandemic.

Once again, the commitment of the Catholic world has proved crucial in offering answers to the needs of the most vulnerable among the vulnerable and in promoting the dignity of every human being. This report provides evidence of this extraordinary effort.

November 2021

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OBJECT OF THE REPORT

This volume provides the results of the *Third Report on the Pastoral Care of Migrants in Europe*, realised within the framework of a cooperation agreement signed between the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and the Catholic University of Milan.

It offers a collection of 40 Good Practices covering the four “verbs” suggested by Pope Francis in his Message for the 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2018: to Welcome, to Protect, to Promote, and to Integrate.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ANALYSIS

The practices included in this report were selected among the wide variety of initiatives focused on the welcoming and social inclusion of migrants, implemented by (or in cooperation with) European Catholic churches, congregations and organisations during 2020 and in many cases still in progress. Since 2020 was particularly marked by the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, the analysis has a special focus on the efforts put in place to deal with the challenges provoked by the pandemic. It aims to highlight the response of the Catholic Church in serving and protecting refugees and migrants in this unprecedented crisis.

Each Good Practice, together with a description of the initiative and its aims, is analysed in terms of relevance, innovativeness, impact, and sustainability. As for the meaning of a Good Practice, the following definition has been adopted: *“A good practice is a process or methodology that is ethical, fair, and replicable, has been shown to work well, succeeds in achieving its objective(s), and therefore can be recommended as a model. The essence of identifying and sharing good practices is to learn from others and to encourage the application of knowledge and experience to new situations. A good practice need not be viewed as prescriptive, but can be adapted to meet new challenges, becoming better as improvements are discovered”.*

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE COLLECTION

The overall objective of the collection is to gather and map Good Practices focused on migrants, asylum seekers, victims of human trafficking and refugees, displaced persons and returnees, starting from the words of His Holiness Pope Francis in his address to participants in the International Forum on "Migration and Peace" (21 February 2017): *"I feel the need to express particular concern for the forced nature of many contemporary migratory movements, which increases the challenges presented to the political community, to civil society and the Church, and which amplifies the urgency for a coordinated and effective response to these challenges. Our shared response may be articulated by four verbs: to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate"*. These four verbs as a pastoral response were also recalled in the Message for the 106th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2020 (27 September 2020). They also represent the four sections at the base of the Good Practices selection. As far as specific objectives are concerned, the collection is targeted at enhancing the exchange of information and experiences among European Catholic organisations active in the fields of migration and integration, by promoting a collaborative framework among local, national, and international organisations. The Good Practices collected also provide the possibility for operators, decision-makers, and the wider public to learn more about positive and innovative initiatives aimed at the support of migrants. Moreover, it is a stock of encouraging examples that could be applied to similar objectives across different countries (local or national contexts). In this direction, the selection is intended to serve as a source of inspiration for other Catholic organisations, by sharing initiatives realised for the given target groups and strengthening the spirit of cooperation among the different realities of the Church. At the same time, counteracting the tone of contemporary debate about migration in Europe, this report provides excellent examples of a proactive attitude of Church and local authorities to forge new partnerships and bring new actors into humanitarian response and integration agendas. Finally, the humanitarian emergency has created new relationships among different actors, opening opportunities for new pastoral roles and responsibilities towards the positive and sustainable welcoming and integration of vulnerable people, such as migrants and refugees.

METHODOLOGY APPLIED

The Good Practices collected include the description of the selected 40 practices, available for dissemination, in the European context. Based on a general desk review and a series of interviews/email exchanges with representatives of relevant Catholic organisations, the response of the Church has been analysed, in the general framework of humanitarian assistance and civil protection, in terms of rights and needs of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, along with cross-border cooperation. A particular focus was placed on analysing the above-mentioned verbs of the Message for the 106th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2020 and its pastoral impact through the different Good Practices collected. The starting point has been the broader frameworks under which the different Catholic organisations operate, including their decision-making processes, communication and dissemination of initiatives and corresponding coordination. As such, this collection of Good Practices provides a narrative of how the Catholic Church is facing the migrant and refugee crisis, focusing on heterogeneous contexts and practices to map how issues were addressed by different stakeholders. The research was divided into various phases. At first, the research team conducted desktop research in different disciplines and fields of practice relevant to the study, with a special focus on the specific context of the pandemic. Relevant Good Practices were collected through open sources available online, publications and other material publicly accessible. After having gathered relevant information, the Good Practices were divided according to the four verbs proposed by Pope Francis, to welcome, to protect, to promote, to integrate. Afterwards, the Good Practices selected for in-depth investigation were analysed in their design, implementation and measurement, by exploring and studying the available published literature (e.g. annual and periodical reports by Catholic organisations, such as Caritas International, The Jesuit Refugee Service, etc.), as well as grey literature (conference proceedings, newsletters and bulletins, fact sheets, leaflets, organisations website, etc.). All this literature has been validated with online calls or written interviews with project managers and/or volunteers. All Good Practices contain an initial fact sheet indicating:

- the "verb" in which they have been placed: *to welcome, to protect, to promote, to integrate*;
- the country of the initiative;
- type of initiative;
- beneficiaries;
- duration of the initiative;

- source of funds;
- website;
- Catholic Church organisation involved and contacts.

Each record:

- describes the given initiative;
- considers the contribution to a successful reception, welcoming and social inclusion.

As for the key outcomes and success factors of the collected Good Practices, an analytical description per dimension has been presented. In particular, the dimensions analysed are:

- **relevance**
- **impact**
- **innovativeness**
- **sustainability**

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF GOOD PRACTICES

The collection displays a variety of experiences that proved to be relevant, effective, innovative, sustainable, and transferable, which can provide further ideas on how to address migration issues through actions of *welcoming, protecting, promoting, integrating* and, in particular, suggestions of methods to use when working on the integration of refugees. The financial sources of the Good Practices analysed are heterogeneous (e.g., donations, self-financing through voluntary work, public funding by international or national institutions, private financing through foundations, etc.). The Good Practices included in this collection come from different Catholic organisations operating multiple services provided for migrants. Consequently, they appear quite heterogeneous and not easily comparable; they reflect country-specific migration trends and situations along with the role Catholic organisations play in the migration area, both at national and at international levels. Nonetheless, all Good Practices undoubtedly reflect the attitudes of the Church towards migrants that can be also found in a booklet by the Migrants & Refugees Section. *Twenty Pastoral Action Points*, an additional tool that helps to accompany migrants, those who are forced to migrate, those who are returning to their place of origin, or victims of human trafficking, especially valuable in the current pandemic crisis.

The results of the research indicate a good diversification of the range of services offered. Thus, all the dimensions of the human life of the migrant are covered by the supportive actions of the Church, avoiding as much as possible a gap in the protection of the person. In addition, it was possible to notice a considerable commitment in the field of advocacy. Several organisations are very active in raising awareness on migration issues and promoting more equitable policies in front of both national and international institutions.

Regarding networking, the organisations operating in the territory were often able to build partnerships with other local charities, making available additional resources and creating more structured services, the involvement of local parishes was valuable as well.

The current study on the overall situation of the migration policy of the European Catholic Church found very favourable attitudes and views on adaptations of modalities for social and pastoral use. These have been facilitated by the crucial and efficacious efforts of Catholic Church actors.

Considering the local, national, and international contexts, activities inside the selected Good Practices follow various aims and reinforce rights granted to all migrants (e.g., freedom of movement, education, work, health care, etc.):

- welcoming and helping to actively (re)integrate into the receiving society within a general framework;
- providing humanitarian aid, food and other basic needs;
- offering comprehensive care;
- assisting migrant women who are victims of violence and trafficking;
- offering psychological support;
- fostering the job insertion of migrants and refugees;
- empowering language skills;
- providing information about the legal status and orientation in a socio-cultural environment;
- improving the educational system for adults and children, as well as aiding schools with courses, training, information on the culture of integration);
- offering assistance to detained migrants;

Most of the initiatives presented are accessible on the Internet, but they are not always available in English or understandable or usable in the languages most spoken by migrants. Although some of the collected activities may not meet certain expectations and not be innovative if compared with other successful practices, they do represent an important innovation or a step in a specific country, region, or city. Finally, it has not been easy to identify initiatives whose purpose is first and foremost the dissemination of information on programmes and activities. This fact points to the conclusion that the most basic and general access to information for migrants has not yet been fully realised in most countries.

In 2020, all the Initiatives and Programs were severely affected by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Restrictions posed by governments, lockdowns, general closures, and the urgent necessity to prevent the transmission of the virus caused for a while a standstill of the system. In addition to the unprecedented health emergency, the pandemic has also aggravated the humanitarian crisis among persons who were already living in a serious precarious condition, including refugees and migrants. In front of this dramatic situation, awareness about care for the most vulnerable in society has increased every day, and more and more solutions are being

sought, offered, and rolled out. During the pandemic, Catholic organisations proved to be able to search for and find new ways to still accompany and serve migrants. Every organisation mentioned in the present study continued to assist even in this challenging time. For the most part, the trend was to carry on and maintain the previous work rather than launch new initiatives aimed at dealing with the specific needs raised as consequences of the pandemic. Notwithstanding, some extra initiatives, including disseminating pamphlets in multiple languages, were put in place to inform people about the COVID-19 virus, the associated dangers, and the importance of prevention. Moreover, hygiene kits including masks, gloves and disinfectant gel were provided to protect these vulnerable groups of the population. In addition, fundraising campaigns were launched to support migrants in the current health emergency in the five continents.

To respect the necessary measures to fight the Coronavirus, the organisations had to make some adjustments in their activities to ensure safety. The creativity was boundless, and was able to find countless new ways to offer concrete solidarity.

When operators could not be present physically due to the restrictions, they strived to stand close to the migrants in need making use of other means. In particular, the implementation of new technologies was fundamental, since most of the activities moved online through digital platforms for communication or WhatsApp. Because of the lack of online connection for some migrants, staff made great use of telephone calls. Taking advantage of IT tools, numerous training and workshops were held during the pandemic. In this context, these were strategic means that represented a very efficient way to help migrants come out from the isolation of confinement and, at the same time, an investment for their future in terms of integration.

Amid the health emergency in 2020, new projects were also born with the aims to welcome, protect, promote, and integrate refugees and migrants. These initiatives are the proof of the strength of a true Christian commitment that does not stop in front of the difficulties but carries on its objective with constancy, dedication and hope.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FINDINGS EMERGED FROM THE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

The collection and analysis of the Good Practices have highlighted some peculiar aspects that are helpful to sum up.

- The initiative's information should always be **accessible and updated** on the Internet, including participatory approaches to support a **joint sense of decision-making** and actions between professionals, institutions and migrants and imply a community of practitioners (authorities, community-based groups, migrants, associations, professional networks, academia, humanitarian organisation, etc.).
- These actions should represent a **joint reflection both on migration flows and welcoming and social inclusion actions**. Therefore, it would be important to provide **continuous training** for all the actors involved (e.g., volunteers, parishes, foster families), as the most successful and challenging initiatives are those where the local community is part of the processes.
- The collaboration between Catholic organisations and public institutions is crucial to help migrants and refugees and to implement effective communication on the outside. Given the current difficult situation, it is fundamental, more than ever, to dialogue also with local communities to help them understand the importance of these activities and to foster the interaction between different communities and cultures.
- Catholic organisations must appreciate the value of the work they carry out in favour of migrants and refugees. The difficulties encountered in participating in the interviews indicate a hesitancy to make known what is being implemented. Acquiring a full awareness of the importance of this work, and the relevance of its communication is an essential step in the path of help and assistance provided by these projects.
- The health emergency has produced extremely serious social and economic effects not only for refugees and migrants but also for the weakest segments of the local populations, increasing the suffering of national citizens as well. Through this research, it was observed that Catholic organisations during 2020 also had to face this emergency, providing services also to the local population not used to having to resort to these services before the pandemic. In any case, this circumstance demonstrates the ability of Catholic organisations to face even new emergencies, providing services also to a wider audience.

Furthermore, practical and effective cooperation between Institutions/Organisations, as well as between Organisations and the Migrants and Refugees Section, should be facilitated to bring out more effective governance; it should provide means of sharing information, exchanging experience, carrying out policy dialogues and collaborating on related research. Pastoral care and assistance programs can be compared and be a source of inspiration and stimulus. Through the creation of a common space for dialogue, the protection and support offered by the Catholic Church would be even better appreciated, such as decision-making procedures or the extent of the support provided.

Finally, the implementation of data collection by the institutions/organisations may be difficult, due to their decentralised structures, often their transnational dimension and sometimes even because of the lack of any assessment to date. Data from isolated organisations working in related areas can be shared, leading to less duplication of efforts (of researchers and respondents).

Greater data production and subsequent sharing among the Conferences and with the Dicastery are for the benefit of all the actors involved: it would provide a reference for improving the actions of the Catholic Church, leading to more effective governance

Far from being a means of control, data collection plays a crucial role in active policy elaboration; its lack can lead to both practical difficulties for the Institutions/Organisations and produce inefficiencies in the general support options put in place by the Catholic Church for migrants.

Greater data collection also would allow a better understanding of the Catholic Church's current complex situation. Such information would not only help the Catholic Church to provide crucial support, but also improve the ability of Catholic Church actors to enhance meaningful and outstanding contributions in the formation of public understanding of migration, refugee and humanitarian crises.

GOOD PRACTICES SELECTED BY VERB OF ACTION

GOOD PRACTICES SELECTED BY VERB OF ACTION

TO WELCOME

1. REFUGEE RECEPTION PROGRAM



Source: <https://solidaritat.santjoandedeu.org/accion-solidaria/migraciones/>

Verb: to welcome

Country: Spain

Initiative: to offer accommodation and accompany toward integration

Beneficiaries: Asylum seekers, particularly families with minors and vulnerable people

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: reception centre, comprehensive support

Duration of project: 2017- to present

Source of funds: public funds and the *Obra Social de San Joan de Déu*

Website: <https://www.ohsjd.es/refugiados/centros>

Catholic Church organisations involved and contacts: *Foundation Germà Tomàs Canet, Order of Sant Joan de Déu, Paula López Díaz, Communication Officer, Email: pl.diaz@pssjd.org*

TO WELCOME

INTRODUCTION

Since 2017, the *Refugee Reception Program* is an initiative of the Order of Sant Joan de Déu aimed at offering reception and support to asylum seekers, while accompanying them toward an adequate integration.

The Program is carried out by the Foundation Germà Tomàs Canet, the charitable institution of the Order that takes its name from Brother Tomàs Canet, a generous religious almoner of the Order of Sant Joan de Déu.

The Program consists of two phases:

Reception phase:

This phase takes place at *Llar* (which in Catalan means "home") *Sant Joan de Déu*, a facility located in the former convent of the Little Sisters of the Poor in the town of Manresa, near Barcelona. It offers 100 reception places to shelter asylum seekers with their respective families for a period of between 6 and 9 months, depending on the situation. During these times, the basic needs of the people cared for are provided, such as food, clothes or showers. In addition to this basic aid, the Foundation provides comprehensive assistance to facilitate access to necessary services related to medical care, psychological support, legal assessment and socio-educational care. To enhance social inclusion, people also have classes in Spanish to help them overcome the language barrier. Furthermore, with the same aim, the Foundation provides support in the search for a job. Finally, particular attention is paid to the education of minors: it ensures that migrants with children are informed about education and the obligations of schools, as well as about the school system in general, and making sure migrants have effective access to education, including early childhood education.

Integration phase:

If the beneficiaries of the first stage of the Program obtain the recognition of the international protection from the competent Authority, the person passes to the second phase that is aimed at fostering his/her autonomy and integration. With the end of the phase of reception, people end their stay at the *Llar Sant Joan de Déu* of Manresa and begin to live autonomously. Since they still need support at the economic, social, educational, health and labour levels, the Germà Tomàs Canet Foundation in this phase continues to help accompany them in the process to recover their independence

through housing, training and employment. This phase lasts between 12 and 18 months and concerns more than 200 people.

After this phase, the Germà Tomàs Canet Foundation says farewell to its beneficiaries, letting them live their own life autonomously. Nevertheless, sometimes a phase of completion may be necessary to respond to the necessities of the families, who had been already within this program and are facing particular difficulties at the beginning of their projects of independent living. To address this issue, the staff provides an orientation to other opportunities in the territory.

In 2020 in facing the health crisis of Covid-19, both the team of professionals and the families residing at the *Llar Sant Joan de Déu* demonstrated great resilience and group empathy.

During the months of strict confinement, everyone was first committed to ensuring complete cleaning and disinfection of all the premises and rooms of the Reception Home. To spend the time profitably, the older guests of the facility began to make gowns and masks. Each week, all the people could get involved in preparing texts and photographs for the magazine of the Home where all the activities were explained. The weekly paper was called the "*New Llar Times*".

While the Reception phase continued to shelter the beneficiaries of the Program, the actions related to the second phase of the project had to deal with even bigger troubles because of the measures of containment of the virus that did not permit contacts. During the pandemic, the Foundation suffered from a lack of volunteers who were not always in condition to work, so it had to sort out and prioritise the most vulnerable families. However, it wanted to continue being present using all the alternatives that technology offers, especially WhatsApp. The staff have placed a lot of emphasis on psychological attention, to reduce the impact of confinement and try to lessen the distance that was being created due to the pandemic.

RELEVANCE

The *Refugee Reception Program* focuses on people who, after being forced to flee their homeland because of harsh persecutions, do not have the social and economic resources to settle in the host country. To help them,

TO WELCOME

the Foundation Germà Tomàs Canet has developed this social support program aimed at responding to their major demands, paying special attention to housing, education and job insertion. Indeed, stable housing and economic integration are essential components to successful integration.

First, since adequate housing is fundamental for newcomers to feel safe and confident, the Program provides a reliable and supportive environment through the Reception. The Program also enables them to learn Catalan and Spanish, thanks to which they can reach adequate autonomy in the host society and become members of the community. The Foundation is particularly committed to ensuring a proper education especially to children, aware that quality education not only empowers assets that refugees have but also facilitates the building of new friendships. The *Refugee Reception Program* also fosters the entry of these migrants into the labour market, with the final aim of achieving successful long-term integration, as employment gives refugees a sense of belonging and purpose in the new host society and the fundamental opportunity to gain financial independence.

The organisation proves its relevance even beyond the confines of the Project. Indeed, the staff strives to extend its support with personalised orientation to those people who have remained outside the program due to various reasons, but who nevertheless need help or accompaniment because of their high degree of vulnerability.

INNOVATIVENESS

The project is original and advanced since it takes into account that integration is a multi-staged process that needs to be implemented through successive steps. For this reason, the staff accompany its beneficiaries through different phases from the moment of their settling in until they have reached a certain autonomy.

Since integration is also a multi-layered process, responsibility for the *Refugee Reception Program* is shared by a multidisciplinary team of professionals, including doctors, lawyers, teachers, and social workers. The aim is to provide comprehensive care, centred on the person through a tailored approach: it is very important that users feel heard, welcomed, understood, and valued. Paula López Díaz, during an interview conducted

online, highlighted this attitude towards the migrant beneficiaries of the Program: *"We work with a very personalised and person-centred focus. We always try to ensure that attention is as personalised as possible and consistent with the desires and the real needs of the person. We also try to apply our values of hospitality, respect, and attention centred on the person in all the professional activities we carry out, even including spirituality".*

Furthermore, accordingly to the words of Paula López Díaz, the staff behaves with the asylum seekers involved not only as a professional figure, but also almost as a relative: *"We work mainly with volunteers who provide professional accompaniment and, at the same time, become a direct contact that helps families to have relationships with other people in society. Asylum seekers of our Centre welcome them not only as professional figures but also as real contacts that help to create networks and facilitate real insertion into the community".*

IMPACT

The Refugee Reception Program has been able to cover many needs of the asylum seekers who have arrived in Barcelona, both economic and social. The method of the Program, which is divided into two phases with two main different goals, ensures both short-term and long-term integration. Through its professionals, the project has played an important role in their lives helping them to become more self-reliant and comfortable in their new country.

As for more practical issues, the Program proved to be useful for migrants even in obtaining legal status within the country. Indeed, by making contacts with companies and facilitating contracts, this Good Practice uses job placement as a way to regularise the administrative situation of these vulnerable people.

2020 in numbers:

- 75 families served
- 426 persons served
- 273 persons attended the Catalan language course
- 34 persons attended working training
- 58 work contracts obtained

SUSTAINABILITY

As for organisational aspects, from the online interview with Paula López Díaz emerged the need for flexibility to better cope with the mission of ensuring a good integration for migrants in need: *"The main difficulty is being able to accompany people correctly with the little time we have available. The project is divided into phases; this is complicated because some families or people require a more intense accompaniment and more time if they have needs that are more complex, perhaps mental health problems or language barriers or even just severe cultural differences. Many times, the months that the program lasts are not realistic or sufficient for them. Therefore, we would like to extend the program for them. Not all people respond equally. For example, the situation of a migrant who arrives with a minimum command of the language and is not able to work, or a single-parent family, or people who experienced trauma during the migration process, is very different. Furthermore, many times the asylum claim is not resolved quickly so that they remain blocked in some ways for a long time since they cannot work."*

Besides this challenging aspect, the Program is run very well, using all the institutional resources present in the area. The project is part of the International Protection Program (PPI) of the Ministry of Employment, Migration and Social Security, so that all of the users have been identified by the reception system of the State. Indeed, In November 2017, after many months of intense work, the Ministry of Employment and Social Security awarded the grant that recognized this facility *Llar Sant Joan de Déu* as an International Protection Centre for the reception and care of refugees. Consequently, the project is carried out in coordination with and with funding from the latter Ministry. The Foundation, with the support of the Department of Work, Social Affairs and Family, provides continuous care of those families and people who are in situations of more fragility and who have not been able to consolidate their project of integration in the period covered by the PPI.

In addition, the Foundation Germà Tomàs Canet has established a solid network in the area. In particular, it collaborates closely with the Municipality and local services, the provincial administration, social services, health, schools in the area especially on the issue of schooling of children.

The work of the Foundation can rely on ongoing support from the *Obra Social de San Joan de Déu*.

2. DAYTIME RECEPTION FOR FAMILIES IN NANTES



Source: <https://diocese44.fr/les-services-pastoraux/pastorale-des-migrants/page/2/>

Verb: to welcome

Country: France

Initiative: Reception Day Centre

Beneficiaries: families of migrants, migrants in general

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: welcoming and integrating migrants

Duration of project: 2020 to present

Source of funds: private donors

Website: <https://diocese44.fr/les-services-pastoraux/pastorale-des-migrants/>

Catholic Church organisations involved and contacts: *Diocese of Nantes, Marie Aleth Kada and Isabelle de Labarte, email: pastorale.migrants@catholique-nantes.ccf.fr*

INTRODUCTION

The Pastoral Care of Migrants is the service of the Diocese of Nantes committed to accompanying migrants from a human, spiritual and legal point of view, regardless of their status or their religious affiliation.

TO WELCOME

The primary task of the Office is listening to migrants and addressing their specific needs for services available in the territory, helping them not feeling lost as they face the complexity of the welfare system of a new country. Thus, according to their various needs, the Office provides general counselling and guides people towards other local assistance that can offer them more specialised services as needed.

Besides this general counselling aimed at providing essential advice, the Office for Pastoral Care of Migrants also offers legal aid for people seeking asylum to inform them about the procedure and the examination that are part of the asylum application. Moreover, the legal team aids with bureaucratic issues and understanding the administrative pathways foreseen in the host country.

The Office for Pastoral Care is also active integrating migrants into the local community and the life of the parishes. Therefore, it supports Catholic communities of immigrant origin so that they find their place in the diocesan Church, striving to get them in touch with parish groups or movements where they can express their originality and their richness. In doing so, particular attention is given to the spiritual dimension of the individual. Thus, several spiritual moments have been designed to foster inner growth and, at the same time, participation in the environment of the Diocese. A diocesan meeting takes place every year during World Missionary Week with Christian communities from immigrant backgrounds, to sensitise the local Catholic communities to the presence of these foreign brothers and sisters and to promote the value of "living together", while respecting differences in culture and religion.

With the outbreak of the pandemic, the Diocese of Nantes has demonstrated not only a great capacity of resilience but also an ability to grow and develop in front of one of the biggest challenges that our humanity has ever experienced. On the one hand, concerning those migrants who already attended the offices before the pandemic, during the confinement the team continuously stayed in touch with them mainly thanks to WhatsApp. On the other hand, regarding new people who asked for help during these times, volunteers made an extraordinary effort to welcome them despite the lockdown. The office was closed for a few weeks, but the volunteers, without getting discouraged, resolved the obstacle making use of the spaces of the church that were open for the worship. Being always present and available the team also started to receive migrants in special need at their own homes. In this time of unexpected crisis, mi-

grants' frailties have been exacerbated and the necessity emerged for an enhancement of psychological support provided. Due to this new demand, the Diocese of Nantes immediately called for and activated new volunteers to complement the staff.

Moreover, to deal with the challenges that the health emergency provoked for the most vulnerable fringes of the population, the Diocese of Nantes offered extraordinarily generous support: numerous food distribution points were organised in the different districts of Nantes. A specialised COVID-19 centre opened in St. Aignan de Grand Lieu, a town near Nantes, to accommodate homeless and migrant people. The Diocese also provided medical assistance there thanks to volunteer doctors and nurses, as well as medical monitoring in two hotels that accommodated nearly 180 confined migrants and homeless people.

The period of confinement represented a valuable occasion for the Office for Pastoral Care to reflect on the most challenging questions affecting the foreign population in Nantes. Among other concerns, the phenomenon of migrants, often with children, wandering through the streets during the days is becoming increasingly worrisome, since they are not accommodated in long-term structures but are only sheltered at night. Starting from this urgent concern was born the idea to build **a daytime reception** centre where families can rest, cook, play with the little ones, recreating social bonds and participate in group activities. During all of 2020, despite the raging of the virus, the team of Pastoral Migrants worked tirelessly to set up the facility. After they obtained a large building from the Parish of Sainte Madeleine, they made fundraising requests and calls for new volunteers. In this way, they were able to carry out repairs and renovations to ensure the accessibility and safety of the premises. The shelter finally opened its door in November 2020 and it is now houses **ten families**.

The accomplishment of this project has witnessed the creative potential and enthusiasm of a few volunteers of the Pastoral Care of Migrants sincerely devoted to their mission. Despite the restrictions related to the containment of coronavirus, their motivation led to this great achievement, providing a safe and warm place for families in exile and in danger of isolation and social distress.

RELEVANCE

The main goal of this Good Practice is to build fraternal relationships for participating in the path of healing and reconstruction of people often wounded by the traumas of exile. Uprooted from their lands, they can once again take root in a welcoming land, regain confidence, hope and energy to build a new stage in their life. The Office is important not only because it gives migrants some practical advice, but because it explains the issues in-depth and ensures their understanding. Thanks to this effort, migrants gain confidence and the necessary tools to face the situations they have to deal with daily. Such a mission is conceived by the volunteers involved as a matter of Catholic identity. Marie Aleth Kada and Isabelle de Labarte, from the Office, during a joint interview conducted via Skype, said: *"Because we are Catholic, we try to welcome migrants as brothers or sisters. We have to recognize their suffering. Here, there is a family atmosphere. We pray together and they are treated as one of us"*.

INNOVATIVENESS

The heart of the mission of the Office for Pastoral Care of the Diocese of Nantes is to welcome and support the migrants in their entirety: to be attentive both to their material and spiritual needs. Marie Aleth Kada and Isabelle de Labarte during the Skype interview highlighted this particular attitude, which is considered an outstanding value in the context of the marked secularism that has long characterised France: *"We speak to the whole dimension of the person. Here in France, many associations are very generous, but they never speak about spiritual needs. They do not take care of the spiritual dimension of the man or woman who need this. Since the migrants often came from countries with a strong religious identity, they are used to paying attention to this aspect and they need this kind of attention. It is not a matter of proselytising, but it's simply about taking care of them"*. The Diocese of Nantes takes care of every migrant in need, regardless of his or her religious belonging, welcoming them to Church, when appropriate, and also supporting Muslims, always bearing in mind that this is not a proselytising action but a testimony of fraternity and solidarity.

IMPACT

The Pastoral Care of Migrants proved to be not only a resource of material and practical aid but also an important channel through which people who arrived in Nantes can be integrated with the community and gain a sense of belonging in the new environment. It gives a warm welcome, but also offers the opportunity to be involved in the life of the Diocese and of its parishioners. Christelle TSANGA, a lawyer in the team of the Office, wanted to share her experience first as a migrant and then as a volunteer, underlining how meeting persons of the Dioceses has changed her life: *"It was through the efforts of Alain GUEYDIER, deacon of my parish that I integrated into the pastoral care of migrants. Indeed, when I arrived in Nantes as a student, a few years ago, I received a warm welcome from Alain and the parishioners of St. Francis of Assisi. Pastoral care was, therefore, a way of getting involved with others [...] Joining the Pastoral Care team is therefore an opportunity to give other people - very often arrived in difficult conditions in France - a little something of what I received when I moved to France: assistance to turn at any time, listening and especially benevolence. If it is quite complicated for a person who has arrived under regular conditions to meet new benchmarks when settling in a new country, what about people seeking asylum? In this regard, the team is wonderful and the relentless commitment of Isabelle and Christine, as well as of all the volunteers, is heart-warming. Committing to pastoral care means putting the human being back at the centre of my concerns; this is also one of the things that impressed me when I joined the team and that makes me want to invest more of myself. Indeed, things are not rosy every day (refusals, delays in procedures, etc.). However, we also have some great victories (when an accompanied person obtains subsidiary protection or refugee status); the best of all victories, however, in my opinion, is the fact that asylum seekers once again feel that they are treated as full persons, simply human beings".* [Source: <https://diocese44.fr/les-services-pastoraux/pastorale-des-migrants/>].

The Dioceses of Nantes can boast many examples of integration of newcomers among the community of local believers: they are brothers and sisters who now have their place in parishes and who are involved in the activities. For instance, the experience of the choir of the parish of St. Joseph de Porterie could be mentioned. It is called "Métis Choir" because it includes French members as well as members of foreign origin. They sing songs of praise together, in French and in their different languages. They thus show that no one is a stranger in the Church.

In 2020, the Office for Pastoral Care of Migrants supported a total of 140 people.

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SUSTAINABILITY

The Office for the Pastoral Care of the Diocese of Nantes is composed of two lay people missioned by the Bishop and three volunteers. Moreover, a diocesan committee ensures the link between the Catholic communities with an immigration background, the parishes, districts, associations and movements of the Church. Accompanied by Father François Renaud, the Episcopal Vicar, it brings together around twenty people. The new facilities of the Shelter for families have requested a new commitment. To this end, almost 30 volunteers have been recruited. Notwithstanding, the work to be carried out is enormous and there is a continuous need for the help of new persons of goodwill so that the call for new volunteers is always open.

Moreover, from the online interview emerged the willingness of the Office to develop partnerships with other organisations able to help migrants to find a job, to ensure them of an effective pathway to integration.

As for the financial sustainability of the activities, the Office relies on the diocese but also private donors. Families involved in the new day-care centre receive both private contributions coming from fundraising, along with public funds from the Municipality of Nantes and the Regional Department.

3. MISSION MITMENSCH



Source: <https://www.ckd-netzwerk.de/beitraege/ehrenamt-fuer-das-krankenhaus-in-corona-zeiten/1868776/>

Verb: to welcome

Country: Germany

Initiative: assistance to refugees forced to return to their countries

Beneficiaries: refugees

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: providing refugees with material help and promoting their integration within the German society

Duration of Project: 2015 - ongoing

Source of funds: public institutions

Website: <https://www.erzbistumberlin.de/wir-sind/corona/> ; <https://www.ckd-netzwerk.de/praxis/mission-mitmensch/mission-mitmensch>

Catholic organisations involved and contacts: *Archdiocese of Berlin, Caritas Berlin, Caritas Conferences in Germany (CKD); Michael Haas-Busch (m.haas-busch@caritas-berlin.de)*

INTRODUCTION

The MitMensch mission is a joint campaign by the Caritas Association, Caritas Conferences in Germany (CKD), and the Archdiocese of Berlin. Its main purpose is to develop a synergy between the various Catholic organisations present in the city, so as not to neglect any possibility of assistance and help for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. This form of cooperation proved extremely valuable precisely during the pandemic, as it managed to fill some of the existing gaps and offer concrete help to people who had added the health emergency to their previous state of suffering and discomfort. In 2020, the city of Berlin recorded nearly 100,000 cases of contagion in the entire metropolitan area, which resulted in the loss of over 1300 people.

RELEVANCE

The ultimate goal of the project involving Caritas Berlin, the Archdiocese of Berlin, and the Caritas Conferences in Germany is to bridge the gap between Caritas and other ecclesial and Catholic organisations, such as parishes. The objective is, therefore, to develop a deep bond with the territory and the initiatives and events to be carried out in favour of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The idea behind Mission MitMensch is to develop projects that include Caritas throughout the archdiocese and parishes. This is in response to the growing and urgent need for communion of purpose on the part of the whole Catholic community to strengthen common activities on the one hand, and to respond more effectively to the needs of those in difficulty and suffering, on the other hand. This need for cooperation and strengthening also arises from the acknowledgement of the structural weakness of the Catholic Church in northern Germany, where Catholic institutions are not particularly developed. This is for both social and cultural reasons, also in light of the low percentage of Catholics present in that region. Despite the small size and relative weight of the Catholic Church in society, Caritas has a good reputation that it can use to promote its projects. Mission MitMensch, therefore, is dedicated to promoting the conduct of activities with refugees and migrants within the parishes, supporting individual churches and prelates in carrying them out. This primarily involves partnering with volunteers, recruiting and training them, and most notably promoting funding and fundraising. Among the various activities that are promoted through these fundraisers, the bureaucratic and legal assistance in to the people who have to leave stand out in particular. These people re-

ceive, through such projects, first of all, a first refuge in which to find shelter, and then legal assistance in order to defend their rights. Mission MitMensch also coordinates with the authorities, trying to avoid these expulsions. In addition to this, projects have been developed to promote the integration of refugees into the social fabric of the city. This was done by trying to bring together locals and refugees to offer lessons to develop their knowledge of the language, as well as finding accommodations. The aim, therefore, is to provide all the assistance people need when they are new to Germany. Through professional counseling programs, Mission MitMensch also tries to connect these people to other organisations dedicated to specific needs when particular needs emerge for individual refugees.

IMPACT

The data provided on the impact of the MittMensch program and the commitment these activities entail for the associations involved are as follows. By 2020, the number of professionals engaged in carrying out the activities was 143. The number of volunteers who gave of their time to help and carry out the services and activities offered was at least 462 (although this is a rough estimate). The number of refugees who benefited from the services was 3,185. In addition, in the year 2020 as a whole, aid to refugees provided by the Catholic Church in Germany reached at least 154,000 refugees.

INNOVATIVENESS

The main strength underlined during the interview is the flexibility and adaptability of these initiatives. This aspect is also closely linked to what is innovative in Mission MitMensch's projects, namely the learning process. What happened during the pandemic exposed previous weaknesses and highlighted the need to rethink many of the activities and projects. In such a context, the ability to rethink what is being done and offered in favour of refugees becomes crucial. The pandemic, in fact, has shown how many things that are usually considered normal may no longer be so, and therefore a process of reflection is needed to reassess the situation. Being better prepared for crises is, therefore, a strong element of innovation in the projects carried out. Just as no one could have thought of such pandemics before, now digital improvements and the introduction of a lot of technological equipment

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guarantees better opportunities for participation. This obviously also requires an adaptation of the skills of the volunteers and staff who must be able to master these new tools.

As regards the main difficulties faced during the pandemic, one difficulty that emerged during the interview was the speed with which the various local churches proceeded to close services at the outbreak of the pandemic. This element is considered not very responsible, as, on the one hand, it made it difficult to carry out many of the projects, at least in the first phase of the emergency, but above all, it is considered an attitude that does not conform to the spirit of the Church. This aspect, in particular, is a priority element to be addressed in the near future.

SUSTAINABILITY

The gravity of the migratory processes that have involved Germany over the last few years has forced the Catholic Church in Germany to expand its commitment from a financial as well as a material and human point of view. This financial support focuses on promoting initiatives in Germany and refugee projects in crisis regions. The funds for financing the activities of Mission Mitmensch come from a variety of sources. A major advantage they use comes from the ecclesiastical tax that exists in Germany, i.e., citizens pay a tax aimed at financing churches. In this way, religious institutions receive a lot of money from taxes and therefore from the state. Another part is financed by the city of Berlin as well as by the federal government. This financial structure provides a lot of funds to invest which allows these programs to develop and grow. They also make possible the employment of many social workers.

The financial resources invested in the complex of activities that went to support the activities of the MittMensch project in 2020 in support of refugees amounted to approximately € 650.330. This figure includes the resources invested overall by the Archdiocese of Berlin, including Caritas and the other Catholic organisations involved. As for the investments made by the German Catholic Church in support of migrants and refugees in 2020, the total investments are structured in the following way. On the basis of the data provided during the interview and the information available on the website of the Bishops' Conference, the special financial resources used in 2020 amounted to € 37.8 million (including benefits in kind for an equivalent value of about 1.5 million euros).

Among these are:

- € 19.5 million for full-time assistance services to refugees and accompanying volunteers;
- € 2.8 million for education and vocational training;
- € 4.5 million to support volunteering; and
- € 1.3 million to support family reunification.

The special financial resources from abroad in 2020 instead amounted to a total of approximately € 86.1 million. Overall, therefore, the funds available for the implementation of assistance programmes for refugees and migrants in 2020, by the German Catholic Church, amounted to €123.9 million.

The pandemic emergency prompted many parishes to immediately stop their activities, not only with the refugees but everything; they only broadcast the masses in live streaming. Caritas, in concert with Mission MitMensch, sought to provide strategies on how to manage this problem and how to stay in touch with parishes. The goal was to always keep a channel of communication open between the parishes and the leaders of the Archdiocese and organisations. They initiated extensive online counselling with a tool provided by Caritas of Germany, thus introducing online language courses and meetings. However, technological innovations have also produced a large gap with many people left out. Many of them in fact could not participate, not being equipped with the right equipment, nor the ability to use it. In addition, the main problem has been within refugee shelters, where the pandemic has caused the most damage. If a case of contagion arose, in fact, the entire refuge was closed because the authorities were very harsh and inflexible. Fake vaccine news was widespread. Many refused the vaccines, while the government made little effort to explain the facts. The vaccination campaign was essential to ensure the sustainability of Mission MitMensch's future activities. However, the spread of a large amount of fake vaccine news has jeopardised that goal. In fact, many refugees initially refused vaccines, fearing their danger. National institutions also made little effort to explain to refugees the true facts about the vaccines. The problem was partially solved thanks to a widespread information campaign among refugees conducted by volunteers.

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4. HUMANITARIAN AID IN ATHENS



Source: <https://migrants-refugees.va/crs-athens-34-jpg/>

Verb: to welcome

Country: Greece

Initiative: to provide humanitarian assistance and integration

Beneficiaries: all migrants and people in need

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: responding to the refugee crisis

Duration of project: 2015 – to present.

Source of funds: Caritas, public funds, and private donors.

Website: www.caritasathens.gr

Catholic Church organisations involved and contacts: *Caritas Athens, Maria Roza Delasouda, Secretary of the Refugee Department, E-mail: caritasref@caritasathens.gr.*

INTRODUCTION

Since its foundation in 1976, the Catholic NGO Caritas Athens has been committed to fighting poverty and social inequalities, implementing actions of concrete solidarity toward the most vulnerable groups on Athenian territory and in the surrounding regions of Attica, Euboea (Evia), Peloponnese, and Central Greece (Sterea Hellas).

After the refugee crisis that hit Greece severely in 2015, Caritas Athens strengthened its efforts to help in as many ways as possible these people who were escaping from their countries of origin, often conflict zones, as in the case of Syria. As a consequence of this new stronger migration flow, the number of aid seekers more than doubled, resulting in approximately 1.000.000 people being served between summer 2015 and December 2020.

To deal with the challenges related to the presence of such a great number of foreigners, often living in dangerous situations, Caritas Athens carries out the so-called Refugee Program, which entails a wide range of services aimed primarily at offering humanitarian aid to these people. The main actions implemented have been the following:

- **Distribution of food and clothes:** Every day a hot meal is offered to **more than 200 people**. In addition, food bags and vouchers to buy food in the local supermarkets are provided. Twice a week clothes, shoes, bedding, necessities, school supplies, and toys for children are distributed;
- **Social Service:** This program aims to assist people in need to try to improve their daily life, contributing to the solution of many of their problems, through information, support, counselling, social research, case history report, evaluation, references, etc. In particular, it refers people to other organisations who provide direct assistance in the fields where Caritas does not operate;
- **Lessons in English and Greek** are provided twice a week for adult migrants.

In addition to these programs aimed only at refugees and migrants, Caritas Athens also runs a Help Centre, open to all people in need, including in the same framework both foreigners and local citizens. In this centre, Caritas offers a range of activities to foster the integration of the people concerned. With this purpose, the Help Centre offers psychological support, job counselling, and referrals through information about other services and social benefits, workshops (painting, drawing, other crafts), and outdoor group activities such as visiting museums, attending cultural events, etc.

Recognizing the severe socio-economic impacts of the COVID 19-pandemic emergency in 2020, Caritas Athens has continued to be on the side of the most vulnerable people, guaranteeing to these persons the meeting of their basic needs, at least having enough food. Despite many challenges, such

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as the several restrictions imposed but also the understandable hesitancy of some volunteers to go outside their homes and risk being exposed to the infection, all the activities finally managed to continue safely with the appropriate adjustments. Maria Roza Delasouda, Secretary of the Refugee Program in Caritas Athens, during an interview conducted online, told about the situation of her organisation in 2020: *"The pandemic has been a major challenge as we had a long lockdown and our migrant population was even more frightened than the locals, mostly because they had no easy access to information from the Health authorities. Also, we had to close down our Refugee Centre and think of new ways of continuing to provide help and support by phone calls. The Soup Kitchen had to close for many months and most of our volunteers were hesitant to come. As the authorities did not allow our Soup Kitchen to open again, we decided to prepare food parcels and have people come to pick them up at our door. The social worker was able to keep offering psychological support and practical advice to those who needed help and also the housing and inclusion programs continued with some adjustment".*

Besides the unprecedented health emergency, the pandemic provoked also a grave humanitarian crisis among those persons who already lived in a serious precarious state, such as refugees and migrants. This crisis put additional strain on the poor food situation of these people. Moreover, adequate nutrition is essential to support a healthy immune system, which is even more challenged in times of pandemics. For all these reasons, the commitment of Caritas Athens to ensure food to this helpless population, expressed through concrete actions such as moving the kitchen outdoors, was extremely important.

RELEVANCE

Many refugees and asylum seekers, after a perilous journey on foot or in dinghies, arrive in Greece literally with nothing, exhausted and starving. Since they often don't have an income or other resources, most of them are unable to support themselves and are not even able to afford to eat one meal a day. Caritas Athens has responded to this challenging situation ensuring these people in need have access to basic goods, such as food or clothes. Through this humanitarian aid, Caritas aims to enable them to live a dignified life, guaranteeing an adequate level of nutrition and other necessities of life. This Good Practice is, in a broader sense, aimed at giving peace to the persons concerned, providing them with some basic goods,

so they have one less problem to think about during an already stressful situation of settling in a new country. Moreover, the provision of food aid allows people to save the little money they have for other necessities and perhaps to rebuild a life in the host country.

Anyway, it should be underlined that the effort of Caritas Athens is not limited to basic humanitarian aid, but it addresses other dimensions of the life of the migrant as well. Certainly, the provision of food and clothes is the priority, given their primary relevance for every living being, but also the fostering of the integration and inclusion of the foreigners in the host society is another one of the main goals of Caritas Athens. It provides people in a precarious state with access to basic items as an immediate alleviation of their troubles, but at the same time, it also provides long-term solutions, for instance, language lessons or job counselling. Caritas has a double focus: the first is on people's basic short-term needs, while the second is on long-term solutions aimed at fostering and empowering the autonomy and self-sufficiency of the migrants. In this way, migrants are prevented from falling into an endless cycle of dependency.

INNOVATIVENESS

In the abovementioned interview, Maria Roza Delasouda explained: *"Due to our daily help, migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees feel recognized, respected, and feel free to receive help without feeling humiliated or abandoned by society. We have the experience of offering serious help in a respectful and friendly atmosphere"*. Refugees and migrants frequently live on the fringe of society, facing poverty, malnutrition, and even social isolation. Besides hunger, the risk of being avoided, isolated and stigmatised, and labelled as the refuse of society is for these people the most concerning issue. In front of this dramatic situation, from the beginning, the strong response of Caritas Athens was pioneering in facing these challenging situations in Greece. Offering free assistance to foreigners is a matter of respect of fundamental human rights that should characterise every democratic nation, but is also a matter of culture. Caritas Athens has brought, with certain progressivism, an attitude of openness and solidarity towards the other, fostering in this region the multiculturalism that is increasingly marking modern societies.

IMPACT

This Good Practice has a great impact on the life of the migrants in Athens since it affords them the material tools to deal with their primary necessities. In Caritas Athens, starting from receiving the most basic aid, migrants begin to resettle in the host country with dignity. When they arrive at Caritas, they can start to undertake their paths. Maria Roza Delasouda in the interview reported many stories of migrants who have achieved some success after the support of Caritas: *"I could tell many successful stories, starting from the joy of a migrant who used to come to our Soup Kitchen. He came here again to share the news that he had found a job and he thought we should hear about it, as we had become his family. Another story: a mother started crying because the smell of our meals reminded her of the "smell of home". It was the first moment of the day in which she could sit and rest in a clean and friendly environment with her children"*.

It is also worth noting that the volunteers of Caritas Athens often receive calls of thanks from the beneficiaries who received services a while back, who share the positive feelings they felt from this act of love and care.

SUSTAINABILITY

This Good Practice has proven to be durable and sustainable from still another point of view.

Founded more than thirty years ago, Caritas Athens has a strong experience in charitable activities that entail clear objectives and the capacity to achieve them. Given its stability in the territory and its proven seriousness, it has an excellent working relationship with the Greek authorities, and is well known among the local population. This attracts people to offer their contribution as volunteers. Accordingly to Maria Roza Delasouda, to have an idea of the dimension of the organisational structure, it should be said that as of last year 70 volunteers were required each week to run all the activities.

Caritas Athens has strategically located the Refugee Centre in a very central location of the city, in an area where most migrants or refugees live, so they can easily have access to the aid offered by the organisation,

Caritas Athens is responsible for the Attica region, which includes Athens, Euboea, the Peloponnese, and Mainland Greece (Sterea Hellas). Thus, it has a structured territorial network. It benefits greatly economically from this network. Indeed, it has the financial support of the Catholic Community of the Attica region, as well as all Catholic Parishes and Dioceses. It also has the support of other foreign Caritas organisations, such as the Italian Caritas. Moreover, Caritas Athens, as a member of the wider Caritas Hellas, receives funds from several international entities such as Catholic Relief Services (CRS), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

Finally, Caritas Athens can rely on private donors. It gets extra food from the Food Bank and from Boroume, another non-profit organisation that reduces food waste, bringing to Caritas centres food from the bakeries, shops, etc. It also has the support of different Greek companies (both financial or with their staff or goods) as well as from private schools. Fundraising activities with local communities, such as bazaars, events, conferences are often organised as well.

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5. FAMILY HUB, FOOD BANK AND TEEN COUNSELLING - CROSSCARE



Source: <https://www.catholicireland.net/food-banks-and-other-catholic-social-services-remain-operational-in-dublin/>

Verb: to welcome

Country: Ireland

Initiative: to help refugees integrate in Ireland relieving their homelessness or food, jobs and housing scarcity

Beneficiaries: refugees

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: welcoming and integration of migrants

Duration of Project: 2013 - ongoing

Source of funds: public institutions and private donors

Website: <https://crosscare.ie/>

Catholic organisations involved and contacts: *Crosscare Dublin; Holy Cross College, Clonliffe Road, Dublin 3; Breege Keenan (breegekeenan@crosscare.ie)*

INTRODUCTION

Crosscare is the social support agency of the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin. Its main mission is to provide a range of social, community, and youth services throughout the Archdiocese of Dublin. The founding of Crosscare dates back to 1941, a very busy time for Ireland, and has continued to play a significant role in providing services to people affected by poverty in the Dublin area ever since. A central part of Crosscare's activities is also the attention to constant improvement in the development of the implemented projects. With this goal in mind, in early 2013, Catholic Youth Care joined with Crosscare to form a single organisation. The philosophy behind the work carried out by Crosscare is to develop the concept of leadership in service. By this is meant an all-around development of the human person, pushing each one to become a leader, first by serving and then, through a conscious choice, leading. In carrying out its activities, Crosscare has been impacted by the spreading of the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2020 in Ireland, it caused almost 92,000 infections with more than 2,000 deaths throughout the year.

RELEVANCE

The work carried out by Crosscare has been expanding throughout the Archdiocese of Dublin and is made possible thanks to the contributions of around 500 volunteers. The projects consist of homeless services, youth services, community and food services, and advocacy. In the context of these activities, a crucial role is played by the search for housing, which can be directed not only to refugees but, in case of need, also to Irish and European citizens, given the severe housing crisis that exists.

Homeless services are aimed at providing those in need of emergency accommodation while working to find them homes at the same time. These projects are structured through a network of outlets that take care of these people, mainly through the centres of Clonliffe Family Hub, Haven House, St Mary's, Cedar House, Amiens Street Homeless Service, and Bentley House. All these centres offer Supported Temporary Accommodation. All these services operate starting from a community approach, in an atmosphere where all residents have the opportunity to be involved. The aim of the service is to move people out of homelessness and into a long-term sustainable home and with established connections to maintain their new home.

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Youth services include working with young people in the community to help them reach their true potential. The services in this area include providing professional counselling services to adolescents and their families who may be struggling with behavioural and emotional problems.

Food services are aimed at developing innovative approaches to tackle food poverty and deprivation within the community. The final objective of these activities is to support individuals and families who need short-term food assistance.

The last area of interest for the activities of Crosscare – Ireland is Advocacy. Through these projects, the organisation is aiming at providing direct information and advocacy services in the areas of housing, homelessness, social welfare, immigration issues, health and wellbeing-related issues, emigration, returning emigrants, and asylum seeker and refugee issues. The goal of these activities is to give voice to an individual or group in order to achieve positive change. Social justice advocacy or social policy involves efforts to improve practices, procedures, policies, regulations, or legislation of state agencies and departments that negatively impact the refugees. Crosscare is always advocating for and promoting refugees, for example, Syrians or Afghan communities in the last years. This advocacy activity promotes integration through school or jobs.

IMPACT

Currently, Crosscare employs over 500 employees with over 1,500 volunteers in locations in the greater Dublin and Wicklow areas. In Dublin, much of the activity revolves around refugees, although many of them do not stay in Dublin but move around the country. They are, therefore, assisted in the practical work necessary to obtain legally recognized protection. Crosscare helps these people obtain an international protection card and an Irish residence permit. Appointments and renewals are mainly requested online, so even appointments need to be made online; this is a problem for most of them since they have no IT skills. Crosscare, supports refugees in applying for Irish naturalisation. Social assistance ensures that their rights are respected, above all through legal assistance. When they can't find accommodation, the refugees are helped by Crosscare to find an apartment. These people are therefore supported in a wide range of needs. An important strength is being able to work with local churches and parishes, a partnership that helps

a lot, especially with those refugees who do not speak English. The reliability of Crosscare is also evidenced by the fact that they do not need to advertise their activities as they can boast a track record of experience and knowledge. Crosscare's refugee service was the first of its kind in Ireland.

INNOVATIVENESS

The main point of innovation of Crosscare's activities consists in putting the idea of integration of refugees at the centre of its action. The final objective of these projects, in fact, does not consist in the simple satisfaction of primary or material needs. Indeed, Crosscare's goal is to fully integrate refugees into Irish society, so that they can one day in the future regard Ireland as their home. However, as also emerged during the interview, this goal sometimes runs the risk of being excessively vague and difficult to achieve. To overcome this type of problem, over the years Crosscare has introduced a series of innovative projects aimed at making the integration of refugees into Irish society more concrete. One of the main examples of such activities is the project of supporting a small group of refugees working with some members of the Irish government or parliament in carrying out their duties for a few days. The main purpose of such an activity is to allow refugees, who come from very different cultural and social backgrounds, to fully understand the functioning of the country's political and democratic mechanisms. The main purpose of such activity, an uncommon project in the field of refugee assistance, is to promote the full integration of these people and structured on several levels, going beyond mere material assistance, therefore, in order to fully integrate refugees into every aspect of Irish social life. It does not consist only in finding a refuge or a job, but also a future perspective that must necessarily include full insertion into the social fabric of the country.

SUSTAINABILITY

The funds to sustain the activities carried out by Crosscare derive mainly from private donors, with a small fraction provided by public institutions. The main problem in terms of sustainability concerns the funds available. The sources of support, in fact, do not have a fixed duration or a constant influx, thus inevitably impacting the development of projects. The lack of

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future certainty on the entry of new funds also forces Crosscare to limit its projects. As emerged during the interview, in fact, being able to count on certain economic revenues would allow, for example, to expand the staff available. However, over the years Crosscare has addressed these difficulties by identifying solutions that would ensure the sustainability of its projects in any case. Therefore, over the years, Crosscare has developed a network of collaboration with some Dublin parishes and with many local people and common parishioners, who contribute significantly to the integration of refugees. This happens by hosting them, providing them with goods and materials, accompanying them in social activities and involving them in the life of the city. The support of these people and small local Catholic institutions allows us to realise many of these projects and to guarantee sustainability for the future of Crosscare. The pandemic has inevitably affected Crosscare's activities by limiting them and forcing the organisation to close some services. In- person group activities were all moved to Zoom or WhatsApp programs or messages

6. DISPERSED ACCOMMODATION IN LINZ



Source: <https://www.caritas-ooe.at/hilfe-angebote/asylwerberinnen>

Verb: to welcome

Country: Austria

Initiative: to provide support and shelters for migrants and refugees

Beneficiaries: Refugees and migrants waiting for official recognition of their status

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: providing accommodation in different houses

Duration of Project: 2015 - ongoing

Source of funds: government and public institutions

Website: <https://www.caritas-ooe.at/>

Catholic organisations involved and contacts: Caritas Linz; 4021 Linz, Steingasse 25; Lisa Steinkogler (Lisa.Steinkogler@caritas-linz.at)

INTRODUCTION

As part of the episcopal curia of Upper Austria, the Caritas of the Diocese of Linz is the central coordination point for all charitable institutions in the diocese. In doing so, it supports the parishes in their charitable work and activities and has been performing a huge part of the diocesan tasks as an aid and service organisation since 1946. The aid provided by Caritas Linz is carried out in the form of offers of qualified aid and service as well as through help in special emergencies and disasters. In the last years, specific attention has been paid towards refugees arriving in Austria, and their

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needs. One of the most interesting activities is the running of several houses and centres to accommodate refugees and people seeking formal recognition of their status. There are two main departments, one for refugees who do not know if they can stay since the process is still ongoing, and another department for those who already know that they can stay in Austria. The Caritas refugee houses accommodate asylum seekers and recognized refugees (for up to 4 months after recognition) on behalf of the state of Upper Austria. The houses are self-catering quarters, which means that people provide themselves with food and cook, which is a way to provide refugees (who are not allowed to work) a way to structure their schedule during the day. In addition, advice and help are provided in dealing with everyday life, in clarifying options and in contacting authorities. All services that are provided for asylum seekers in refugee houses are financed by public institutions.

RELEVANCE

According to what was underlined by Lisa Steinkogler during an interview conducted online, integration in Austria, as in most national contexts, is a two-way process in which all involved have to take steps towards each other. Specifically, this means efforts for both sides, rights and duties, equal opportunities - for locals and immigrants. Through various projects, Caritas of Linz promotes values such as the coexistence of the people of Upper Austria and a climate of mutual respect.

The activities and projects implemented by Caritas Linz essentially revolve around providing refugees, or those waiting for status recognition, with basic support. This involves making available services that can range from helping to find a home or support for paying for it or getting food. These activities are essentially carried out on behalf of the government, which delegates the initial reception projects for refugees to Caritas Linz. The reception mechanism in Austria can sometimes be complicated and cumbersome. When refugees arrive in the country, in fact, they are immediately directed to the asylum centres in order to assess whether they can obtain formal recognition of their status in Austria. If their formal recognition is ascertained, they are then taken to other centres where Caritas Linz operators have the opportunity to establish a relationship with them. One of the specific projects aimed at that is the "Integration Caritas Express". It serves people who are accepted as refugees and who have to be integrated into the country to find work, apartments or other steps needed to integrate

them. According to the data provided on the Caritas' website, the amount of people assisted each year is usually around 40.000, with roughly 370 houses and centres throughout Upper Austria.

IMPACT

In terms of the number of people assisted, according to data provided by Lisa Steinkogler, there has been a sharp decrease in the last year, almost certainly due to the travel restrictions imposed by the pandemic. However, starting from the final months of 2020 there has been a slow rise in numbers, which are also still slowly increasing. Also in 2020, there was a strong component of people from Syria, mostly men, among those who are assisted as refugees by Caritas Linz. Most of the refugees come from Syria, Afghanistan and Morocco. The maximum number of people who can be admitted to the Caritas Linz centres is 230 people in the 8 centres, however in the past up to 1600 people have been assisted in times of particular crisis. There are currently around 3,000 people in the asylum process globally across the country. In addition to the 230 people present in the centres, others are hosted by private individuals and can be assisted by Caritas and who have the opportunity to go to their offices to receive assistance. The apartments in the past were in small villages and the refugees lived and worked together with Catholic people. This was more feasible with lower numbers and had the distinction of greatly favouring the integration of refugees into the Austrian social fabric. Now links with other organisations have also been developed, albeit loose and not very strong. The advantage of hosting refugees in private homes was that people would adopt refugees and see them as normal people at the same time, easing tensions and conflicts. However, Caritas Linz has always had a few of its own houses. In 2015/16 there were about 100 refugees hosted, now there are only 8. This made it possible, during the pandemic, to keep people separate and still give them the information they needed.

INNOVATIVENESS

According to Lisa Steinkogler, the activities carried out by Caritas Linz bear an added value consisting in the ability to continue to provide the refugee pro-

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jects even in the midst of the pandemic crisis. In the course of the interview, she highlighted several times that Caritas Linz had the will and capacity not to abandon refugees despite the difficulties posed by the health emergency. The gravity of the pandemic situation in Austria has forced many associations to drastically reduce the volume of their activities, throwing refugees who rely on charities for their livelihood and integration into the country into a state of profound crisis. Furthermore, one of the major innovations (caused by the spread of the pandemic) was the digitization of many of the activities carried out by Caritas Linz. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, all activities took place in person, but now there has been progress on the computerization front, including, for example, German courses. Although refugees increasingly need new and updated digital tools, this combination of the IT side and expertise in the field gained over many years of personal activity today represents a strong element of innovation for Caritas Linz and its projects.

SUSTAINABILITY

100% of the funds available to Caritas Linz comes from the government. It is not allowed to use the money that people spontaneously donate to the church. This can only happen if people explicitly state that the money is for refugees. The Catholic Church in Upper Austria advises Catholic organisations themselves to keep a low profile in carrying out their activities in order not to be exploited in political conflicts.

Language barriers are the main difficulties encountered in carrying out the various activities.. The health emergency represented a new and complex obstacle, even for the Caritas Linz structures themselves and for individual volunteers. This required new tools to communicate a new and complex situation, not only for refugees but also for Austrian citizens. Caritas offices have information materials usually available for refugees to communicate how to do practical things or daily activities, but the pandemic was a new situation, so they had no materials to inform people. This has led to exacerbating one of the biggest problems during the health emergency, namely disinformation. In fact, most of the refugees present in the Caritas centres have resorted to sources of information from their countries of origin, often of dubious authenticity, as in the specific case of Iranians. Refugees have their own views on Covid and vaccines and there is a misinformation problem; for example, they reject vaccines because they have heard that vaccines cause sterility. In light of Caritas Linz's link with government

authorities, however, there was no possibility of producing new material without prior authorization from the institutions. Therefore, they had to wait for the national authorities themselves to provide them with materials or directives, dramatically lengthening the deadlines and leaving the refugees in total uncertainty for a longer time. This inevitably put a strain on the sustainability of Caritas Linz projects, which was already made very complicated by the health consequences of the pandemic. In fact, Caritas had to close the offices where the refugees arrived and had to move their activities online. They are starting to carry out face-to-face activities again now. Everything is starting again, for example, day trips with refugees that could not have been done in 2020. The number of refugees is increasing; if the flow continues like this, they will receive more money and will have the possibility to do more. The health emergency has therefore led to, not only the massive use of new IT methodologies that were hitherto unknown or almost unknown, but also a general change of attitude that has led volunteers and operators to adapt quickly and learn new things.

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7. COMPREHENSIVE CARE AT RECEPTION CENTRE IN KOSOVO



Source: <https://jrs.net/en/country/kosovo/>

Verb: to welcome

Country: Kosovo

Initiative: to offer comprehensive care and welcome refugees and asylum seekers

Beneficiaries: refugees and asylum-seekers

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: reception centre, basic assistance

Duration of Project: 2018 - ongoing

Source of funds: JRS Europe; Renovabis; local churches

Website: <https://jrs.net/en/country/kosovo/>

Catholic organisations involved and contacts: *Jrs Kosovo; Orjana Shabani (orjana.shabani@jrs.net)*

INTRODUCTION

Kosovo is a unique country in the European context, due to specific social and cultural characteristics that are different from other European countries. In terms of migration, Kosovo is a transitional country, since most of the people who cross these lands do not want to stay in Kosovo but aim at reaching

other European countries. Some asylum seekers do apply in Kosovo, but many are only in transit to another destination in Europe. This has an impact also in terms of migrations processes, in light of the different goals of refugees and migrants. Asylum seekers flow into the country in considerable numbers, according to the data provided by Orjana Shabani during the interview. In 2020, more than 1000 registered people requested asylum in Kosovo but, besides these, there were also more than 1000 migrants considered illegal by the government. Kosovo has experienced displacement of its own people and is still recovering from war and unrest in its recent past. The internal scenario of the country is therefore very complicated and difficult, even for the locals themselves who have to face a very difficult economic and social scenario, a deeply divided society and a geographical framework around the country characterised by historical and enduring tensions. For all these reasons, it is challenging for asylum seekers to integrate in Kosovo. Jobs are scarce and little social assistance is available. The situation of migrants was made even more difficult by the Covid-19 pandemic, which in 2020 produced about 50,000 cases with about 1300 victims.

RELEVANCE

JRS Kosovo's main migrant assistance activities take place in the three main centres for people recognized as refugees: Magura (20 km from Pristina), Vranidoll (10 km from Pristina), and Belvedere (40 km from Pristina). Reception centres offer a variety of basic services and direct help that ensure that these refugees are effectively integrated in Kosovo. The main activities offered are Albanian language courses, computer courses, psychosocial support, medical support, as well as providing food items and hygienic supplies.

Even if the services could be better provided, for example, single rooms or apartments, they have a huge impact on the lives of the migrants. Most of them are single men, or women accompanying their husbands. The majority of the people assisted in these centres are young men coming from Greece, Macedonia or the Balkans. They want to go to Serbia, Croatia, Germany or Sweden since they see these countries as a sort of promised land where they can find a better future.

Even though Kosovo is seen as a transit country, the number of asylum seekers increases significantly from year to year. For this reason, two new

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centres for asylum seekers were opened in 2020, bringing the number to three reception centres throughout Kosovo. As highlighted by Orjana Shabani during the interview, JRS Kosovo is the only organisation present every day in the centres that accompanies asylum seekers in their daily challenges, assisting them in their welcoming in the country and their integration into the society. This entails also discovering the needs of each asylum seeker and finding solutions together with them..

IMPACT

The reception centre of Magura offers its services in collaboration with the help of the government. However, these are only basic services, as the national institutions in Kosovo are not able at the moment to offer more due to the precarious economic and social situation of the country. JRS Kosovo, therefore, intervenes to help offer sanitation, food, including specific food products for children or in case of allergies or specific diets. By law, migrants must first receive a health check. So, in light of these legal requirements, the authorities during the pandemics have equipped the reception centres with a space used as a health facility. But the procedures mandated by the government have never been fully respected because of the precarious means these centres often have. For this reason, JRS Kosovo has taken steps to equip the reception centres with all the material necessary to prevent and, if necessary, identify possible outbreaks of Covid-19. This was also made possible thanks to the close relationship developed with the Ministry of Health to expand the range of health services to be offered to migrants. Last year a new centre was opened, previously used by the military, as a reception centre precisely to meet the new needs imposed by the pandemic. However, the conditions of this reception centre are not good at all. During the pandemics, asylum seekers were very stressed, and they quarrelled a lot among themselves because they were looking for smugglers to take them out of the country but often failed to agree on the price, leading to quarrels and tensions. In one of these moments a fire was set in the centre of Mitrovica. No one was injured but the centre was closed because it was completely destroyed. For a long time, this forced the activities to be carried out in only two reception centres.

Around 1,200 people were housed there during 2020, although most were constantly looking for smugglers to help them flee Kosovo.

The precise data regarding reception in 2020 (the year with the greatest numbers of stays in the centres to date): 1266 men, 142 women, 84 families, 14 unaccompanied minors. Besides the reception centres, there are also refugee detention centres, something that looks like a prison for them. The detention centres usually host smaller numbers. In 2020 there have been only 21 refugees, now reduced to 7 in these detention centres.

INNOVATIVENESS

The main innovation embodied by the activities carried out by JRS Kosovo consists in caring for people who are often ignored in the country's social context. The government, in fact, in the light of the precarious social and economic situation in Kosovo, does not have the possibility to assist them. However, in recent times there has been a greater willingness on the part of local authorities to welcome asylum seekers, especially from the Middle East. This also helps in terms of the greater willingness of asylum seekers to choose to agree to stay and live in Kosovo. Also, for this reason, in the last few months, legal status has been granted to another 14 applicants. Thanks also to the work done by JRS Kosovo, these people are now welcomed and considered as an integral part of the local society and social fabric, despite the many difficulties. This is also leading local authorities to open a new refugee department and JRS is working with them. However, some difficulties remain on the front of the integration of these people by the Kosovar society, which is often not ready to welcome refugees and integrate them into the internal social context. Also, in light of this, JRS Kosovo is increasing efforts to try to address the social side as well: people are not yet ready to accept and integrate all these people, and this requires further effort to make these integration programs sustainable with the local and national reality.

SUSTAINABILITY

In order to ensure a future for the activities carried out by JRS Kosovo, a lot of advocacy has been carried out with the UNHCR and the IOM over the last few years, including raising awareness of public opinion and national authorities. The Covid-19 pandemic has changed many aspects of JRS Kosovo's work. On the one hand, the health emergency has changed some of the

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priorities in terms of basic services and basic necessities, shifting attention to hygienic and sanitary items and materials. JRS has changed its methodology. They were used to having a lot of contact with people while last year they were forced to perform many services through separating glass. Other activities were suspended last year, such as Albanian language courses, psychological support, and social activities outside the centre. They had many meetings with interested parties within the ministry to allow migrants to have more Internet access, phone cards, and the possibility of contacting their families. However, at an early stage, the authorities opposed these changes, because they were afraid to encourage more people to come to Kosovo. These difficulties have therefore highlighted the problems of migratory processes in Kosovo, primarily an endemic lack of visibility of these people. JRS Kosovo is working to improve these conditions, but a collective effort by all the social partners involved will increasingly be needed in order to ensure the future sustainability of these projects. Part of the funding comes not only from international organisations but also from the country's Catholic churches. As emerged in the course of the interview, donors of this type often request that the money be paid directly to the people rather than to the promotion and integration activities. Most of the money, therefore, comes from churches, JRS Europe and Renovabis. A fraction of this funding is from government sources, thus making sustainability complicated. For the future, therefore, JRS Kosovo hopes to develop an appropriate partnership with the government and other appropriate organisations. This is also very challenging due to the political issues and the social environment existing in the country. JRS Kosovo maintains a neutral and equidistant attitude towards the political life of the country.

8. PEDRO ARRUPE CENTRE IN SERBIA



Source: <https://jrs.net/en/country/serbia/>

Verb: to welcome

Country: Serbia

Initiative: to set up a shelter to take care of children without parents living in Serbia after they fled their countries

Beneficiaries: refugee children without parental care

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: child care

Duration of Project: 2017 - ongoing

Source of funds: JRS Europe

Website: <https://jrs.net/en/country/serbia/>

Catholic organisations involved and contacts: *JRS Serbia; Makedonska 23 Street, Belgrade; Jelena Djurdjevic (jelena.djurdjevic@jrs.net)*

INTRODUCTION

In light of its peculiar geographical position, along the heart of the Balkan route, and its troubled recent history of ethnic conflicts and civil wars, Serbia has a long tradition in terms of migratory processes. Specifically, it currently hosts refugees from Croatia and Bosnia, as well as internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Kosovo. Precisely because of its geographical location, like other Balkan countries, Serbia first experienced the difficulties

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posed by the Balkan wars and, years later, the influx of refugees in 2015, but has since seen a decline in the number of migrants after the closure of different borders in the region. Knowledge of the difficulties posed by migratory processes, as well as the particularly difficult historical background on this front, has made it possible over the years to develop many programs aimed at alleviating the suffering and difficulties of the human beings involved in these processes. On top of an already precarious framework, the Covid-19 pandemic has further amplified the existing problems. The total number of cases in Serbia at the moment is over 850,000 for a total of about 8000 victims since the beginning of the pandemic, which has put a strain on the stability of the country's social and economic system.

RELEVANCE

As mentioned above, Serbia is a crucial country in the framework of the migrations processes involving Europe. As mentioned on JRS Serbia's website, *"Serbia is not only a transit country for many migrants and refugees but also a country where people apply for asylum. Opportunities for inclusion must be put in place. According to World Data, in 2020 alone, there were 1,521 refugee asylum applications. According to UNICEF, since 2015, more than 1.5 million refugees and migrants have passed through Serbia, of which between a third and a quarter were children. In 2020, the number of refugees and migrants present in Serbia at any given time was around 7,000, of which around 6,000 were accommodated in reception, transit and asylum centres"*.

JRS in Serbia has set up in the last few years house shelters for refugees and unaccompanied minors. It was the first NGO to provide this service, which in most of the countries is provided by the government. After a lot of negotiations in the previous years with institutions, JRS Serbia started to open these shelters in 2017. They serve as an example also for other organisations and associations that have decided to open other shelters based on the model drafted by JRS Serbia. One of the priorities identified by JRS Serbia concerned the problem of insufficient reception capacity in the government system for the protection of unaccompanied and separated refugee and forced-migrant children in Serbia. This problem is particularly felt in a country that plays a crucial role along the Balkan migration route and which, over the years, has had to cope with an impressive flow of migrants and refugees, including an important number of unaccompanied minors. This led in May 2017 to starting the project of the *"Pedro Arrupe -*

Shelter Integration House” for refugee children. Since then, the main focus of these activities and related programs has been to provide room and board, access to health services, education, socialization and integration to more than 100 refugee children identified as victims of violence, exploitation, smuggling and potential victims of human trafficking and criminal abuse. The reception capacity of each integration house is 12 boys (15 is the maximum number). As part of the assistance and care program, children are looked after and cared for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. What emerged also during the interview conducted was the awareness of how important this activity is, since the problem of unaccompanied minors is widespread and serious in the country. Therefore, over the years, in addition to the activities of the Integration House, JRS Serbia has been implementing activities aimed at strengthening the integrated protection system for refugees and migrants in Serbia. This additional form of protection and reception is aimed at improving the location and access to government services for refugees of both genders, particularly families with children. Exchanging information and knowledge with colleagues from other NGOs and government institutions and solving problems for each child is a crucial step in the direction of creating a path to more effective advocacy and care in the future, providing these people with the most effective care possible.

IMPACT

Since 2017, the shelter has welcomed only boys, who go to school and are thus integrated with the local population. As a success story mentioned as an example, two of the boys currently hosted will start university soon; they are the first refugees in Serbia to do that. JRS Serbia carries out many activities focussed on education, English and IT classes as well as educational workshops focussed on music and psychosocial activities. The age of children hosted ranges from 7 to 19 or 20 years old. According to Serbian law, children without parental care can be hosted in shelters as long as they are regularly going to school (up to 26 years old). Once they leave the shelters, most of them are directed to Germany, France and the UK. JRS Serbia keeps in contact with the people, mainly through social media. They do not have the resources to put in place a total assessment, but they keep up contacts, at least on a personal level. The work carried out by JRS Serbia is especially relevant considering the whole context of the country. In Serbia, there are circa 300 refugee non-accompanied minors, but only 60 of them are hosted in institutions set up for children. The rest of them are with their parents or

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other adults, in reception centres or prisons, which are not facilities appropriate for children living in a foreign country and their needs.

INNOVATIVENESS

According to what has been underlined during the interview, the principal point of innovation in the activities carried out by JRS Serbia consists of the quality of its staff. The shelters have a very specialised and high-level staff working with children. They are quite young, but have a lot of experience since they have been doing this for many years. Their backgrounds are high-quality. In each shelter, every single child is approached individually, because even with the same needs they recognize and meet the specific situation of every child with individual plans of activities based on their strengths and weaknesses. In addition, a logical continuation of this project planned, since JRS Serbia intends to open another shelter in the next months (transitional accommodations) for those who are transitioning from childhood to adulthood.

SUSTAINABILITY

One of the main difficulties underlined is that in Serbia there is a lack of space and the authorities do not invest as much as would be necessary to carry out these activities well. Additionally, JRS Serbia does not receive donations from the government and can only apply to the Catholic Church or other organisations outside Serbia to receive funds. The pandemics complicated the activities of the shelter run by JRS Serbia. During Covid-19, only a few organisations continued to function, even though they still had to respect government decisions. These shelters are run 24/7, so during the pandemics, it was particularly difficult for the children. They had to re-organize shifts to protect workers and children at the same time, and it was challenging on the professional and the individual level; as a matter of fact, many of the workers were scared. They were divided into groups working for 3 days and without any contact with each other, rotating in 3 shifts. Covid-19, therefore, had a huge impact on the activities of JRS Serbia. The shelter was completely closed, nobody was allowed to go inside or out. It was very difficult for the children who could not go out. Most of them are

from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria. The staff had to explain to the children what was going on. Most of them have different cultural backgrounds and it was difficult to explain everything to them, especially about hygienic procedures. They started to have a cinema each week to entertain the children, in addition to other language courses.

A possible change for the future of these activities, as suggested by Jelena Djurdjevic during the interview, is the plan to engage more with local communities to connect with them. In 2019, they had started a lot of programmes for that, but Covid-19 forced them to suspend all these activities. Now they hope to start again to make a connection with other associations and the local society, given the high importance of this part of their job in order to integrate the children in the country.

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9. AID ALONG THE BALKAN ROUTE



Source: <https://www.karitas.si/poziv-k-odgovornemu-ravnanju-v-casu-epidemije/>

Verb: to welcome

Country: Slovenia

Initiative: to provide material assistance and holistic aid

Beneficiaries: migrants; refugees and labour-migrants

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: assistance to migrants and refugees involved in the Balkan route

Duration of Project: 2015 - ongoing

Source of funds: EU; charity actions and campaigns

Website: <https://www.karitas.si/>

Catholic organisations involved and contacts: Caritas Slovenia; Kristanova ulica 1, 1000, Ljubljana; Danilo Jesenic Jelenk Email: danilo.jesenik@karitas.si

INTRODUCTION

In the 1990s, Caritas in Slovenia was heavily involved in providing aid to the victims of the Balkans war. Caritas widely helped refugees who came to the country from Bosnia due to the conflict (at least 70,000 people). Years later, it also participated intensively in the humanitarian assistance to migrants

who travelled through Slovenia in 2015 and 2016 (over 500,000 people). The main activities of diocesan and parish Caritas organisations consist of offering material assistance, especially food and hygiene supplies, to approximately 5,000 migrants, families and individuals (the actual number recorded have been increasing in the last years). Most of the beneficiaries of these programmes in recent years are workers from the Balkans, especially Albanians, who live with their family members in poor conditions with an (irregular) minimum wage. Caritas has helped about 500 families in paying their bills.

RELEVANCE

After a first extensive migratory wave that involved the Balkans in 2015 and 2016, Caritas Slovenia, in cooperation with local Caritas organisations, has been providing help and assistance to refugees and migrants on the Balkan route since 2017, especially from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Slovenia, it has led several campaigns to collect financial aid for this purpose, contributing to raising awareness in the Slovenian society about the problems of integration and welcoming of refugees and migrants. This involvement in the public debate was witnessed by a statement for the media in January 2021 aimed at raising awareness in the public arena. The core of Caritas Slovenia activities at the moment consists of focusing on raising funds to help migrants and refugees in Bosnia Herzegovina so as to contribute to the two-year humanitarian appeal of Caritas BiH, which helps migrants inside and outside migrant centres mainly with food packages, clothes, hygiene items, by providing laundry and shower facilities and psychosocial assistance in refugee centres. The Government of the Republic of Slovenia also allocated a contribution of EUR 40,000 to Caritas BiH through the international network Caritas Internationalis for the project assisting migrants in BiH, which Caritas BiH started implementing in January 2021. Among these activities, the focus of Caritas Slovenia programmes revolves around three specific thematic areas, human trafficking, forced returns and advocacy campaigns. Each of these is addressed through specific activities.

- HELP FOR VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING
Project Care for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings - Crisis Accommodations. The main goal is offering accommodation in a hidden location for 30 days to people identified by the police as victims of human trafficking. Included in the accommodations are additional services such as food, psychosocial assistance, material assistance (clothes, hygiene items), interpretation and acquaintance with their rights in a language they understand,

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legal advice, advocacy, emergency medical care, other measures in terms of socialisation and empowerment and, if necessary, assistance with a victim's return to their homeland.

- **MONITORING OF FORCED RETURNS**

Under a partnership developed with the Ministry of the Interior, Caritas Slovenia monitors the removal of foreign nationals who have been staying in Slovenia illegally. This activity is carried out in close cooperation with the Centre for Foreigners in Postojna. Given the sensitive nature of these operations, the purpose of this work is to protect the human rights of third-country nationals in forced return procedures, as well as to monitor the legal and professional work of the Police and other services.

- **ADVOCACY**

Project MIND - Migration, Interconnectedness, Development. (October 2017-March 2021) was co-financed by the European Commission through the DEAR programme and the Slovene Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was led by Caritas Austria with Caritas Europe in the co-lead with 10 additional Caritas organisations as partners: Caritas Slovenia, Bavaria (Germany), Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Portugal, Slovakia, and Sweden. The project revolved around three pillars: drivers of forced migration, welcoming societies, and migrants as development actors. Caritas Slovenia sought to raise public awareness of the relationship between sustainable development and migration and the EU's role in developmental cooperation.

As part of the MIND project, in addition to raising public awareness and advocating for migrants and refugees on the political level, Caritas also carried out concrete assistance activities for the migrants. For the last three years, Caritas Slovenia, with the support of the MIND project, has been enabling migrant children and young people to spend their holiday camp at sea together with Slovenian children and other young people who have found themselves in need. In 2020, 23 migrant children from Democratic Republic of Congo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, Syria, Kosovo, Ukraine, Germany, Macedonia, Venezuela, and Eritrea were included in the Caritas holidays. Furthermore, migrant children are also included in learning assistance provided by young volunteers. For three years, the organisation also set up socialising activities with young Slovenes and migrants (the so-called "buddy groups") in cooperation with the African diaspora in Slovenia. Due to Covid-19, some activities took place in a truncated form and many gatherings were moved online.

IMPACT

More than 200 families are involved in counselling. Volunteers with knowledge of several languages participate. They have accommodated 15 families (and 10 individuals), who are being accompanied in their integration into Slovenian society. Among the recipients of material assistance within the Diocesan Caritas are also migrants from the countries of the Middle East and Africa, even if their communities in Slovenia are very small. For these migrants, Slovenia is usually only a transit country on their way to the West. The number of applicants for international protection has increased in recent years (1,308 in 2016, 3,821 in 2019, and 3,548 in 2020); in 2019, 85 applications were granted, whereas, in 2020, they assisted with 87 refugee statuses granted.

In 2020, Caritas started implementing the REPATICA project, in which repatriated families who have returned to Slovenia from poverty-stricken Venezuela have been assisted. They offer them comprehensive assistance: from support in finding housing and accommodation, through language learning, material and psychosocial support, to help in finding a job. Currently, Caritas Slovenia takes care of 55 such compatriots.

The Section of Organisations in the Field of Integration of Migrants operates within the Social Chamber of Slovenia. Caritas has two members in the Section. In the field of migration and human trafficking victims care, they also cooperate with other NGOs, especially in the form of coordination and working groups.

In the context of the care for victims of human trafficking, it is possible to mention the case of a Slovak citizen who was a victim of forced labour in Slovenia for three and a half years and was placed in the program. He had been rescued by a police officer. As the victim expressed a desire to return to his homeland, Caritas arranged his way back and established contact with an NGO in his home country, which provided him with further assistance upon arrival in the country of origin.

Many of the projects run in cooperation/consortium with other project partners from Slovenia and abroad. In all, approximately 10,000 volunteers around the country are involved in these activities.

INNOVATIVENESS

Accessing the labour market for migrants and refugees is rather problematic for migrants and refugees, since many migrants migrate for labour-related purposes. Slovenia has been a country of both significant emigration and immigration for several decades. The proportion of women among immigrants is about one-third, therefore employed migrants are largely men. Migrant women are more at risk of social exclusion, isolation and poverty and face greater challenges in finding a job. Migrant workers are more often exposed to poverty and social exclusion than other workers. They also face a higher proportion of fatal accidents at work. They often have inadequate housing conditions and have more limited access to health services. In the light of the protection of the right to proper work, it is also worrying that a high level of foreign workers are employed in jobs for which they are overqualified. Low-skilled migrant workers are in great demand, most often to work in low-paid sectors, characterised by job insecurity and poorer working conditions, more infringements of rights and exploitation. The majority of migrant workers are employed in some of the most crucial sectors of industrial activity, i.e. in the construction sector, followed by production, transport and storage.

With the project Care for Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings - Crisis Accommodation for recognized victims (both adults and children), Caritas Slovenia provides comprehensive 30-day care for victims who must be immediately removed from their environment.

Within the project they provide the following for the victims of trafficking: adequate accommodation, meals and other necessities of life, psychosocial support for the victims and assistance over the phone and obtaining residence permits in the Republic of Slovenia in accordance with the Aliens Act (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 64/2009) assistance in the provision of basic health care in accordance with health care law and health insurance policy; translation and interpretation services if necessary; assistance to ensure that the rights and interests of victims of human trafficking are respected during criminal proceedings against the offenders; assistance in adequate support for minor victims of human trafficking in criminal proceedings, counselling and provision of information, particularly with regard to their rights in the language they understand, protection of their lives and accommodation, ensuring the safety of victims and employees involved in the case, if necessary, resocialization or facilitating the return of victims to their country of origin. In addition to working with victims, Caritas also carries out these preventive activities: raising awareness among target populations who are potential vic-

tims of trafficking, as well as working with young people through information leaflets, workshops and drawing media attention to this phenomenon.

SUSTAINABILITY

The majority of the projects are co-funded by state and EU authorities, in the amount of approximately 85%, according to what was stated during the interview. The rest is obtained from charity actions and campaigns. A large part of these activities is also funded by the National Foundation for Funding Disability and Humanitarian Organisations (*FIHO*). The problem is that some projects are funded for only two years or less at a time. Long-term funding would allow the staff and the volunteers to provide a more efficient and stable program. They benefit from being part of both a territorial network, as well as an internal network of Caritas social care programs, which provides victims with full assistance, even when it comes to specific disorders (e.g. alcohol and drug addiction). In addition, Caritas Slovenia also cooperates with related organisations at home and abroad.

TO WELCOME

10. FAIR ASYLUM



Source: <https://frohbotschaft-heute.at/2021/01/22/zelte-fuer-die-menschlichkeit-gott-wird-mensch-und-wir-haben-platz-2/>

Verb: to welcome

Country: Austria

Initiative: to welcome and support asylum seekers on their arrival in Batschuns

Beneficiaries: asylum seekers

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: accommodation, legal advice, integration activities

Duration of project: 2014 - on going

Source of funds: private donors

Website: <https://frohbotinnen.at/home.html>

Catholic Church organisations involved and contacts: *Werk der Frohbotschaft, Brigitte Knünz, Deputy Director, Email: brigitte.knuenz@frohbotinnen.at*

INTRODUCTION

Werk der Frohbotschaft, which in English means “Work of the Good News”, is an Institute of Consecrated Life founded by Pastor Edwin Fasching in Batschuns, a town in the eastern region of Vorarlberg in Austria in 1947 and recognized as a Secular Institute under canon law in 1988. It takes its name from the Gospel verse “He sent me so that I might bring the good news to the poor” [Luke 4:18], that over the years has become the motto of the community and also the fundamental inspiration of its works.

The Institute represents a spiritual community of Catholic women, and it currently involves 40 members called *Frohbotinnen*, that is Good Messengers. They live across the world, specifically in Austria, Turkey and in different places in Latin America, with the vocation to realize the mission of “bringing the good news to the poor”.

Frohbotinnen is currently working as a volunteer social agency in support of disabled workers, the elderly, women affected by human trafficking and refugees.

Fair Asylum

The initiative Fair Asylum began when the Good Messengers moved from Batschuns to the neighbouring town of Dornbirn, leaving their previous house so that it could accommodate asylum seekers, under the coordination of the local Caritas. Despite their moving, the *Frohbotinnen* kept in contact with the new residents of the house. Since then, they have started to take care of the migrants hosted in the House and to support them on their arrival or in other relevant aspects of their life in collaboration with the Caritas that manages the structure.

To this end, a group of *Frohbotinnen*, helped by some persons connected to the Good Messengers and other citizens, was created in 2014 under the name “Fair Asylum” a new working group devoted to the migrants' cause. In particular, this group aims to support asylum seekers who are waiting in the House of Batschuns for their asylum decision and to facilitate their lives in different ways.

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Goals:

- Help asylum seekers to get good legal treatment/representation
- Support and motivate asylum seekers in their integration
- Raise awareness on the situation of asylum seekers

To achieve the first goal, the *Werk der Frohbotschaft* enables legal and financial assistance. For this purpose, a lawyer is available for legal advice and representation before the Courts, especially in asylum law. To ensure that the system would be clear and intelligible, a concept plan was drawn up and it is available for the migrants sheltered in the House.

To promote the integration of asylum seekers, every Friday evening the *Werk der Frohbotschaft* organises a meeting at the House, to which locals are invited to participate. During the occasion, guided discussions are set up to exchange ideas on a specific topic such as the culture of welcome, tolerance, gender relations, and so on. Afterwards, there is a time to express personal concerns.

Also, in the House in Batschuns the Good Messengers offer support to the asylum seeker in learning some basics of the German language once weekly.

Finally, individual actions are undertaken with asylum seekers to help them get to know the country, its habits and its people.

To raise awareness of the situation of asylum seekers the *Werk der Frohbotschaft* is committed also to networking at different levels:

First, via an email distribution list, all those who are actively involved are informed about new developments or called upon to help with what is currently needed.

In a wider dimension, the *Werk der Frohbotschaft* is a member of the Voralberg Platform for Human Rights, which often organises shared events such as dialogue forums on escape, asylum and integration.

SAUERTEIG fund

To promote the respect of human rights, the engagement against discrimination, and against violence, the integration of migrants into the society, religious harmony as well as the peaceful coexistence of cultures and religions, the *Werk der Frohbotschaft* has constituted the *Sauerteig* fund.

Thanks to this fund, other external initiatives with consistent purposes can receive from the *Werk der Frohbotschaft* financial support to achieve their goals.

"Tents for Humanity" campaign

Alongside the Institute of Consecrated Life of the *Werk der Frohbotschaft* has grown another reality, strictly connected with the first, that is the association of *Frohbotschaft Heute*, which means "Good News Today". Initially born as a branch of the group of the Good Messengers, it is a community of women and men from different life situations: couples, families, single people, young and old, from all over Austria. Although it became an independent entity in 1995, the association fits into the tradition of the *Werk der Frohbotschaft*, with which it shares a common mission and spirituality.

During the last months of 2020, the association, in coordination with Fair Asylum and several parishes, launched the campaign "Tents for Humanity". A tent was set up in front of the church as a starting point to trigger a conversation about the issue of migration. At the same time, the tent was also a symbol of help, protection and humanity. The declared message of this symbolic initiative is "we have space", to demonstrate an open attitude and the willingness to welcome newcomers. Also, it was aimed at giving an image of a supporting and helpful Church, especially in one of the hardest times that our humanity has experienced, that is, the pandemic.

Along with the initiative "Tents for Humanity", in 2020 the majority of the activities of *Werk der Frohbotschaft* in favour of the asylum seekers sheltered at the House in Batschuns were forced to stop because of the pandemic. Indeed, to prevent the transmission of the virus and guarantee a safe environment for asylum seekers, access to the House was forbidden. Notwithstanding, the concern of the Good Messengers towards the needs of these persons lasted throughout the most dramatic moments and was

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a stimulus to rethink the development of the various activities in accordance with the new challenges related to the health emergency. This was possible only in the first months of the next year when one-on-one German study sessions were organised, after participants had been tested for Covid in advance. The meetings were scheduled in a way so that no more than four people would be in a room at the same time.

RELEVANCE

Since it was converted into a reception site, the House of the *Frohbotinnen* in Batshunshas become a place of shelter, protection, warmth and community. Within the environment of the House, the secular institute is committed to allowing asylum seekers to reach a good degree of self-determination. During an interview conducted online, Brigitte Knünz, the deputy director of Fair Asylum, expressed very well the purpose of their work at the reception house: *"Our goal is to support new arrivers in finding their way in our society and connecting with local people by securing fair treatment in front of the law, providing them with legal representation, and supporting and motivating their integration in our society. Also, we want to provide a space for encounters as a place for welcoming and to taking a break"*. The foundation of the home for asylum seekers was at first criticized by some of the local residents, who expressed some reservations. Therefore, when the home was inaugurated, everyone was invited to join a meeting where information was shared, and volunteers could sign up. The core of engaged people numbers around 10. The effort of this initial group of volunteers helped to calm the tensions and to make clear the importance of a welcoming attitude.

The *Werk der Frohbotschaft* has a special concern towards the intercultural challenges that the world is living today: *"We want to respectfully meet people who are shaped by other worlds, cultures, worldviews or religions. We see this diversity as both a potential richness, but also a potential hardship, and want to deal with it in the right way."* The ultimate goal of the Good Messenger in Fair Asylum is to share life with the most vulnerable persons and get involved in a transformation of their living conditions to offer a small contribution to change the world.

INNOVATIVENESS

One of the more interesting aspects of Fair Asylum is the facilitation of the encounter between the volunteers and people in need. During the online interview, Brigitte Knünz underlined that accessibility is their strength: *"We approach the people in the home for asylum seekers, The café for encounters close to the train station is easy to reach; entry and refreshments (tea and coffee) are free of charge; all volunteers are friendly and sympathetic towards the immigrants."* The name of the volunteers involved, "Good Messengers", express very well their approach to living the Good News in today's world through the encounter with the needy in the tasks of daily life. Above all, the encounter opens their hearts to those who have no hope and who have to live without respect or care. In Fair Asylum they do everything so that people from afar can come closer to the residents so that they can grow together into a larger whole.

IMPACT

Fair Asylum makes great efforts to ensure that the people, regardless of their nationality, can find in the Church a home and experience a milieu of hope in which they can breathe a sigh of relief, knowing that they are respected and accepted. In doing so, the Good Messengers has achieved tangible results. Brigitte Knünz in the abovementioned interview said: *"Our support has provided many refugees with legal representation or training (e.g., internships), therefore enabling them to lead an independent lives. Society benefits from this in so far as the people will integrate themselves while becoming trained and working in professions that are highly sought after. Contact with locals enables integration into our society; speaking German opens the door to an independent life in Austria."* She continued telling a successful story of integration that the commitment of the Good Messengers has helped make possible: *"We supported a young Armenian woman by providing legal advice and representation from a lawyer working voluntarily. Because of these efforts, she was granted asylum. Multiple volunteers studied German with her. We enabled her to finish her required school work and financed her education in the childcare sector. We arranged an apartment for her and recommended her to her future employer. As of right now, she is happy with her employment and recently married a man from Spain."* She ended with this comment about the impact of their work: *"The sustainability shows itself in*

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the fact that the refugees no longer need us. They live, work, and manage themselves independently."

According to the deputy director, no data has been collected for Fair Asylum, as there has been a constant coming and going of asylum seekers over the years.

SUSTAINABILITY

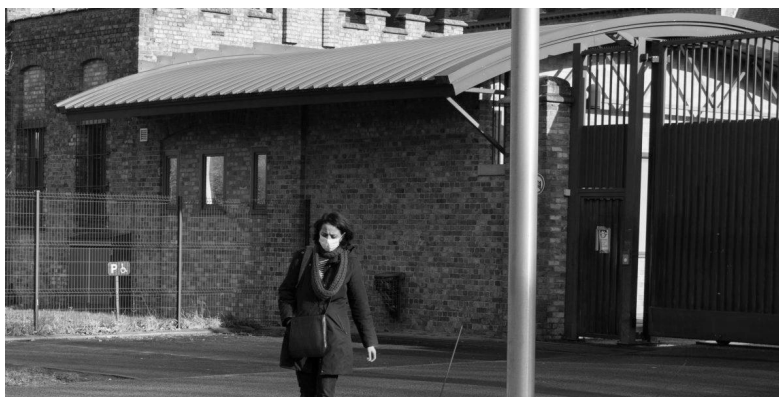
The financial sustainability of the work of Fair Asylum derives mainly from private donations. With these, the Good Messengers cover legal and educational expenses for refugees. In exceptional cases, they have also personally financed certain expenses in advance, which were repaid to some extent.

The organisation is not particularly big as it employs around 15 volunteers. Given this minimal structure, the organisational workload is manageable without significant troubles.

Despite its small size, Fair Asylum is part of multiple networks in Austria, such as, among others, Die Vorarlberger Plattform für Menschenrechte (Vorarlberg's Platform for Human Rights), das Dialogforum Flucht und Asyl (Forum for dialogue on refugees and asylum). However, the most relevant partnership is with Caritas. Indeed, it is Caritas that currently runs the House for asylum seekers and opens its doors to the volunteers of the *Werk der Frohbotschaft*, which, on the other hand, remains the owner of the structure.

TO PROTECT

1. PLAN TOGETHER



Source: <https://jrs.net/en/country/belgium/>

Verb: to protect

Country: Belgium

Initiative: to fight against the detention of migrants

Beneficiaries: detained migrants, detained families or families at risk of being detained.

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: counselling families in order to regularise their status and avoid detention; support in detention centres.

Duration of project: 2020 – to present.

Source of funds: JRS, Society of Jesus and private donors.

Website: <https://www.jrsbelgium.org/?lang=en>

Catholic Church organisations involved and contacts: *JRS Belgium, Ruben Bruynooghe lawyer, visitor to closed centres and advocacy officer Email: ruben@jrsbelgium.org*

TO PROTECT

INTRODUCTION

Since its foundation twenty years ago, the core of the work of JRS in Belgium has always been focused on the needs of migrant people deprived of their liberty.

Twenty years ago, the Belgian Jesuit Eddy Jadot founded JRS Belgium with the express intention to guide, serve and defend people at the borders who were locked up in closed centres. He expressly affirmed: *"I would describe the creation of JRS as the meeting of people who want to serve people on the border"*. Since then, the mission of JRS Belgium has been to accompany, serve and defend people in detention centres and return homes. Aligning with the Church's social teaching, JRS Belgium thus works for the most forgotten refugees.

JRS Belgium is part of a network of organisations that is accredited by the Belgian Immigration Department to visit closed centres. JRS staff visits the closed centres every week to offer a wide range of services and assistance:

- listening to the detainees;
- providing mental and psychological support;
- providing information;
- defending the rights of detainees by providing legal assistance;

In addition to volunteers and paid employees who carry out the visiting work at the detention centres, there are also advocacy officers who defend the rights of the migrant population by discussing with the authorities the most concerning challenges that involve migration in Belgium. They advocate for an improvement of the status of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants, which remains a priority, and for the respect of their basic human rights in detention. The visitors' stories and reports play a role in this struggle since they provide material for these lawyers committed to advocacy.

JRS BELGIUM in numbers:

- Number of volunteers: 23
- Number of employees: 14
- Jesuits working at the organisation: 2

The corona crisis prevented visitors between March and July 2020 from

visiting the closed centres, due to imposed movement restrictions and related limitations of social contacts. Nonetheless, JRS continued to accompany and stand close to the migrants, especially in these moments of exceptional vulnerability. Thus, the telephone numbers of the visitors of JRS were posted on the walls of the closed centres, inviting the detainees to establish contact with the volunteers to express their feeling, fears and anxiety. Moreover, the same services of legal and mental support were provided over the telephone. During the second lockdown, JRS staff were admitted to the detention services and visits were allowed. A special space reserved for conversation was set up in the structure, where Plexiglas was installed to prevent the transmission of the virus. The meetings between the population of the centres and volunteers were strictly scheduled to avoid overcrowded situations.

Also, the usual awareness campaigns at secondary education schools could not continue because of the measures in force, but thanks to IT tools it was possible to work together on communication and the development of appropriate policies.

During the pandemic, the team of JRS proved to be able to search and find new ways to continue to accompany and serve migrants. There were months of spontaneous exchange, in which insights, inspiration, motivation and team spirit consistently grew.

Clear proof of this renewed enthusiasm was the birth of a new project, ***Plan Together***, which was born in the difficult context of lockdown.

With the project *Plan Together*, JRS Belgium strives to provide families with children under sixteen without a legal residence permit with assistance and legal, social, and psychological support to build a sustainable future.

The project aims to empower these families, by accompanying them in their own homes and helping to resolve their cases to avoid detention in the long run. This resolution may result in a legal stay in Belgium or a safe and sustainable return to their home country or another country.

Plan Together follows three tracks:

- Accompaniment of **15** families with minor children without legal residence. JRS staff wants these people to be able to provide for themselves or with the help of others in providing their housing and live-

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lihood. Mutual trust is a key element. Each family, supported by the family counsellor, works on a sustainable solution for its residence situation. This can be the return to the country of origin, but also the right of residence in Belgium or another country. JRS Belgium does not consider the choice of illegal residence as a sustainable solution in the long term.

- Communication to politicians, governments, civil society and the general public what it has learned from its experiences with these families, particularly involving alternatives to detention.
- Exchange with European partners and provide for the policy work of the network for alternatives to detention at the EU level. JRS hopes that this will increase EU support and pressure on the Member States to develop alternatives, reduce detention and put an end to the detention of children.

RELEVANCE

The vocation of JRS Belgium has always concerned the challenges related to the detention of migrants. It does not run a multitude of projects, but it concentrates all its strengths on this core task. Detention makes people vulnerable, sometimes resulting in physical and psychological problems. Since detainees live isolated from the outside world, detention centres are often difficult to reach. They feel abandoned. Thus, the visits of volunteers address the root of the problem. The main goal of JRS is to encourage and bring peace to these persons who suffer because of their condition as strangers and detainees at the same time. This work requires depth, intellectually and spiritually. JRS believes that when people are supported in their dignity and their strength, they can indeed take steps towards a stable future.

Besides the work at detention centres, JRS Belgium wants to foster as much as possible community-based alternatives to detention. Demonstrating that alternative solutions are possible is one of the main aims of JRS Belgium. That is the reason why families are intensively guided by JRS staff in their search for a future in the host country. To this end, JRS wants to inspire and encourage people without a lawful residence by standing by their side in their trusted environment and meanwhile looking together with them for a sustainable solution for their life. Ruben Bruynooghe – who used to be active as a lawyer, but now is a visitor of JRS to closed centres and also a member of the advocacy team – during an interview conducted

online, pointed out the importance of the trust in these kinds of activities: *"Detainees look for someone who seems reliable and who manages to build a bond of trust. We are reliable because of the information we get, we try to remain as objective as possible we do not judge anybody. When I visit them they tell me 'it's good to see you because inside I couldn't tell other detainees my story because they have the same kind of problems'"* In this critical situation in closed centres, sometimes migrants have no one to talk to and JRS is the only friendly contact they can have.

INNOVATIVENESS

This Good Practice reveals important points of innovation since it combines actions on the ground with long-range actions. Indeed, it guides families at risk of being detained and, at the same time, it struggles to raise public awareness about this topic. The efforts of JRS are aimed at avoiding detention both as a solution in the concrete case, and in general as a solution to manage migration flows. The work in the field serves as a basis from which to understand the challenges and to get inspiration to develop new ideas and solutions.

Furthermore, *Plan Together* has the merit of engaging migrant people in their migration process so that they can act within the framework of their settlement process. In this way, all decisions taken in the context of this project are joined in by all the subjects involved, appropriately understood and freely chosen.

IMPACT

As Ruben explained during the interview, the real impact is very difficult to measure and assess since the confinement of migrants in the closed centre is temporary. Nonetheless, it's possible to affirm that the visits of volunteers can prevent actions of desperation in closed centres. Indeed, the stressful environment of closed centres often causes major depression, self-mutilation, aggression, hunger strikes, and even suicides.

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Moreover, JRS Belgium has developed alternatives to incarceration, thinking that by offering valuable alternatives, detention will become less attractive to the government.

Important milestones have been achieved in this field: in collaboration with other organisations such as Vluchtelingenwerk and Caritas, the government has put an end to the detention of children.

IN BRUGES:

- Accredited visitors: 3 (including 2 volunteers)
- Day visits in Bruges: 27
- Accompanied persons: 133
- Friendly visitors: 2 (since no visiting took place from March to December due to Covid)

IN MERKSPLAS

- Accredited visitors: 2
- Day visits in Merksplas: 31
- Accompanied persons: 104
- Friendly visitors: 2 (11 visits to 3 people)

IN CARICOLE

- Accredited visitors: 3
- Day visits in Caricole: 29
- Accompanied persons: 102
- Friendly visitors: 4 (19 visits to 10 people)

RETURNED HOUSE

- Number of visits: 28
- Visited families: 28
- 93 persons visited

PLAN TOGETHER

- Number of families: 3, consisting of 6 adults and 11 children. The families have been in Belgium 5 years, 12 years and 13 years, respectively
- Number of visits: 11

SUSTAINABILITY

One of the main points of strength of JRS Belgium, which can assure the sustainability of its projects, is the proficiency and expertise of the staff. Detainees and families are visited and accompanied by an assorted team of volunteers coming from different professional backgrounds, ready to offer their wealth of knowledge to the most vulnerable migrants.

As for the advocacy piece, the organisation is well integrated with the network of other entities committed to putting an end to detention on the sole ground of irregular migration. The advocacy work of JRS Belgium relies on the model of alternatives to detention promoted by the International Detention Coalition (IDC). Unicef Belgium, the Children's Platform on the Run, the League for Human Rights and the law firm Antigone support them in this effort with an advisory board.

JRS Belgium is now - via *Plan Together* - also a formal member of the European Alternatives to Detention Network. Regularly an exchange takes place with policy officers and case management from other projects in different EU countries (Italy, Greece, Poland, Bulgaria, Cyprus and the UK).

JRS Belgium has good financial stability that has been proven all over the year. In addition to the faithful donation of the Society of Jesus, hundreds of private donors allow them to operate and to cover the costs of the visits in detention centres and related services.

JRS Belgium has received the renewal of its tax clearance for the years 2020 until 2023. So gifts still enjoy a tax reduction of at least 45%.

TO PROTECT

2. UBUNTU PROJECT



Source: https://issuu.com/caritas.luxembourg/docs/ubuntu_plakat_a3_-2

Verb: to protect

Country: Luxembourg

Initiative: to offer psychological and social support

Beneficiaries: rejected asylum seekers

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: psychotherapeutic sessions and social activities

Duration of project: 2017 – to present

Source of funds: public funds

Website: <https://www.caritas.lu/en/projet/ubuntu-rebounds>

Catholic Church organisations involved and contacts: Caritas, Jesuit Refugees Service and Reech eng Hand, Ndzebir Andrew Vernyuy Email: andrew.ndzebir@jrs.net

INTRODUCTION

Launched at the end of 2017 from the collaboration between three Catholic organisations active in Luxembourg - Caritas, Jesuit Refugees Service and

Reech eng Hand - *Ubuntu* Project is the charitable initiative aimed at providing psychotherapeutic and psychosocial support to people accommodated at the so-called SHUK (Structure d'Hébergement Urgent à Kirchberg) of Kirchberg. This emergency accommodation facility hosts applicants for international protection who are subject to an expulsion procedure under Dublin Regulation III. The initiative takes place both at the SHUK and at the new inviting space dedicated specifically to the activities of the project, where people affected by the expulsion order and volunteers can meet in a warm and peaceful atmosphere. The *Ubuntu* Project focuses on the mental health of beneficiaries, most of them having experienced the worst violence, persecutions and even torture in their country of origin or during their journey to arrive in Europe. To foster the well-being of these people, volunteers are committed in two dimensions, interrelated to each other to achieve the same objective.

The first dimension regards, more generally, the social aspect of the life of the migrant and consists mainly of playful activities or sport. Outdoor activities, fitness, swimming, cycling are organised daily by the volunteers to involve young migrants and to offer them the possibility to simply take a breath from the heaviness of the SHUK. Project volunteers also try to meet the needs of the migrant population of the SHUK, providing information or individual counselling and also put them in contact with humanitarian actors in the countries responsible for taking back the so-called "dublined people".

The second dimension concerns, more specifically, the mental health of migrants, since it consists of psychotherapeutic support offered by professionals in the form of individual counselling and therapies. It regards the migrants who have undergone particularly traumatic events and is carried out through a particular therapeutic approach called "narrative exposure therapy" with which migrants are invited to share their stories and finally to write a diary.

The process of identifying people who have experienced trauma can take place during the activities at the SHUK or the *Ubuntu* reception facility or even during outdoor activities. These represent occasions for volunteers to get to know the beneficiaries thoroughly and, at the same time, for migrants to express themselves freely. This approach allows psychotherapists to access their feelings in a non-intrusive way before they move on to the therapy. The first step is to stabilise migrants, navigating within their psyche and their stories through extended exposure, aimed at reconstructing the episodic autobiographical memory and helping people rethink the traumatic event, express their emotions and positively integrate them. In

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most cases, it takes multiple sessions because people are sometimes reluctant at first. The therapy ends with the detailed editing of the story by the individual concerned.

The commitment of *the Ubuntu Project* toward migrants and their mental well-being at the emergency accommodation facility in Kirchberg is expressed also throughout activities of sensitization. To this end, the Project has strengthened collaboration with local institutions, first of all with the universities, considered as a strategic spot to raise awareness among the new generations.

In 2020 the breakthrough of the pandemic worsened the fragile equilibrium of these migrants who normally struggle with trauma or other mental problem. The health crisis rapidly turned into a real psychological emergency. During the first lockdown, access at the SHUK was forbidden and the facilities of Ubuntu were forcibly closed so that reaching the beneficiaries was very hard. At this time the anxiety level of these people increased and became unsustainable, so that it was necessary to intervene to manage the situation. For this reason, the staff of Project *Ubuntu* decided to not leave their beneficiaries alone and strove to ensure them the psychological support they needed. They developed a new way of intervention on an individual basis, adjusting their concrete actions depending on the case. All recreational activities had to stop, but the psychotherapy continued. Depending on the gravity of the situation of the patient, Project *Ubuntu* made available two different channels to give its support: for ordinary cases, they made use of IT tools and digital platforms such as Zoom to have access to their minds and emotions and accompany them in their pathways towards stabilisation, while for the most difficult cases the staff considered it appropriate to make an appointment in person to better cope with the extreme mental difficulties of some persons. In front of this unprecedented crisis Project *Ubuntu* has shown its ability not only to accompany the most vulnerable migrants but also to deal with a psychological emergency avoiding the danger that many migrants would make extreme gestures.

RELEVANCE

The main goal of Project *Ubuntu* is to strengthen the resilience of asylum seekers whose requests for international protection have been denied and who are thus exposed to an expulsion procedure. Having gone through

the worst atrocities, their mental health is often compromised, and they need specific attention to recover from their problems. Throughout the psychological sessions, post-traumatic symptoms are addressed, and the traumatic experiences are overcome by the victims, preventing also a risk of eroticization. It contributes to rebuilding their minds with patience and respect. Moreover, this specific intervention aimed at restoring the mental well-being of migrants with psychological problems is particularly relevant since it avoids the further risk that these persons also become victims of special stigmatisation.

This initiative, through professional psychological aid combined with psychosocial support, has the final intention to improve tangibly the quality of life of these vulnerable persons while offering them also a place of trust and listening. Since it is aimed to provide to the most fragile asylum seekers the necessary resources to regain their stability and their confidence, the Good Practice fosters their ability to make the autonomous and conscious choices needed to take back their lives and re-start their path.

INNOVATIVENESS

Volunteers and psychologists of Project *Ubuntu* work in a complex environment since they have to deal with people coming from distant cultures in which psychological issues are often not taken into account. These people are unaware of the importance of the techniques of mental support and, consequently, they are wary and suspicious towards the idea of consulting with somebody. Thus, the staff of the Project had to think of a way to reach them to handle their fragilities. Ndzebir Andrew Vernyuy, the manager of the Project, during an interview conducted online, explained how they deal with this challenge: *"Our added value is the way we approach these people: we don't wait for them but we move towards them. The specificity is that we do this through activities, so it is a non-intrusive approach. We can reach everyone; through activities we come to know the individual who has gone through difficult times, maybe living with some trauma. We have this time to create a good level of intimacy and closeness."* The attitude of volunteers has been non-invasive and always respectful to avoid scaring the beneficiaries and driving them away. In doing so, they first come close to them and, in the context of the recreational activities, build a constructive interaction aimed at creating a comfortable atmosphere. Thus, these activities represent the occasion to realize a constructive interaction between professionals and

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asylum seekers in need of mental help and they are a necessary step to open their hearts and, only then, open their minds.

IMPACT

Some asylum seekers accommodated at the SHUK have to deal with mental disorders related both to their past experiences and to the uncertainty of their future. They refer to multiple troubles in their daily lives such as constant anxiety and fear, confusion, nightmares, or even the impossibility of falling asleep and getting rest. This Good Practice, focusing on narrative exposure therapy, has responded effectively to the need for the serenity of these vulnerable persons, helping them to overcome the shocks and traumas they have suffered. The initiative has ensured a minimum standard of well-being necessary to live a decent existence and has led to a general improvement in the quality of life of the asylum seekers involved. As Andrew Ndzebir stressed during the interview, in this long journey towards mental well-being, simply the transmission of motivation represents a great achievement, since it is a necessary step to open their life to new opportunities.

The practice was useful from several perspectives, not necessarily strictly related to the mental health of the beneficiaries. The therapeutic approach called "narrative exposure therapy", which entails written notes about the story of the migrants involved, has taken on considerable practical importance since this written story can then be used to prove vulnerability in front of the authorities deputed to decide the appeal of the refusal of the international protection.

- **426 persons served at the *Ubuntu* facility**
- **312 persons served at the SHUK**
- **76 persons referred to Caritas**
- **205 beneficiaries involved in playing football**
- **130 beneficiaries involved in the swimming pool**
- **126 beneficiaries participated in other social activities**

SUSTAINABILITY

In order to run a proficient activity, Project *Ubuntu* invests particularly in human capital. To ensure a good job, the team, about ten volunteers, is supervised, supported, and trained on an ongoing basis. During 2020, face-to-face and/or via zoom, 10 volunteers followed the entire training, which focused on these themes: techniques, animations, the empathetic relationship, non-violent communication and psychological self-protection in contact with others, active listening, vulnerability, welcome, and expression via roles games. They participate regularly at reception supporting people and creating this special atmosphere that characterised *Ubuntu*. Notwithstanding, since the emotional load is sometimes too heavy, Andrew Ndzebir noted that many volunteers decide to leave their assignments. To avoid this phenomenon, Ubuntu Project addresses the emotions brought by its staff inquiring about their difficulties and helping them cope with them.

To guarantee the high standard of the service, this Good Practice relies on the collaboration of various Catholic organisations which make their resources available to the project. The efforts of different entities allow a more efficient response to the needs of the beneficiaries. For instance, people are continuously informed both at the SHUK and the *Ubuntu* Facility and referred to the social service of Caritas Luxembourg where they are informed about the legal framework that regulates their situation. The reunion under the same umbrella of these Catholic actors makes the project a unique experience and a model for all the humanitarian aid realities. Nevertheless, this collaboration is simply the fruit of a common passion and enthusiasm for the task at hand. Thus, they are working to transform these contacts into a more formal network, which would be able to act together in favour of vulnerable migrants.

As for financial sustainability, Project *Ubuntu* depends mainly on private donors. Despite the support of the Oeuvre Nationale de Secours Grande-Duchesse Charlotte - a public Institution in Luxembourg - the initiative hopes to empower the relationship with the local authorities to gain their protection and realise forms of continued collaboration that would allow greater stability and more sustained funds.

3. RECEPTION CENTRE



Source: <https://jrseurope.org/en/country/croatia/>

Verb: to protect

Country: Croatia

Initiative: to aid and welcome refugees and asylum seekers

Beneficiaries: refugees and asylum-seekers

Duration of Project: 2015 - ongoing

Source of funds: EU

Website: <https://hrv.jrs.net/hr/home/>

Catholic organisations involved and contacts: *Jrs Croatia; Maksimirska cesta 286, Zagreb; Martina Prokl (martina.prokl@jrs.net)*

INTRODUCTION

The health emergency in Croatia has so far produced almost 400,000 cases with over 8000 victims. Strong growth in the number of infections occurred above all starting from autumn 2020, also producing heavy repercussions on the activities of volunteers and Catholic associations in favour of migrants,

refugees, and asylum seekers. Among others, this program provides education, legal assistance, and psychosocial support to forced migrants in the Ježevo detention centre. With support from UNICEF, it also runs a Child-Friendly Space in the reception centre for asylum seekers in Zagreb, offering children a safe space to stay. JRS Croatia has a long tradition of addressing the challenges posed by large migratory flows. In light of the experience accumulated at the time of the Balkan wars, over the years various assistance and reception programs have been put in place with the aim of promoting the integration into Croatian society of those arriving in the country on the Balkan route. Furthermore, during 2020, Croatia and in particular the city of Zagreb suffered from a violent earthquake that produced considerable damage and victims. This event, combined with the pandemic and the already difficult living conditions of migrants, has further aggravated the situation of these people and made assistance programs even more complex.

RELEVANCE

In the Croatian context, JRS provides assistance and help to meet the needs of refugees and other displaced people who have been forced to flee from their countries because of war, persecution, poverty, or difficult life conditions, as well as other reasons. In particular, since 2010, JRS Croatia has faced the task of supporting and providing assistance mainly to the needs of people coming from Africa and Asia. These people are usually searching for security and protection and the task of JRS Croatia is to provide a variety of services to these migrants and asylum seekers. Among these efforts, it is possible to mention educational, legal, and psychosocial support to forced migrants in the Ježevo detention centre. JRS Croatia, with support from UNICEF, also runs a Child-Friendly Space in the reception centre for asylum seekers in Zagreb. The main goal of these spaces is to provide different activities and workshops (for example, language courses, painting workshops, handicrafts, etc.), with the ultimate goal to help children enjoy a reliable environment in which they can finally feel safe and secure. The setup of these integration centres was one of the consequences of the large migration crisis during 2015 and 2016, in order to provide support and orientation to people and families seeking international protection in Zagreb. Among the activities developed within these centres, there are workshops to favour the integration of these people and provide connections with the local communities.

IMPACT

The number of people served in 2020, accorded to JRS Croatia data, amounted to a total of 1,253. About 350 asylum seekers are currently staying in Croatia, mostly in refugee reception centres supported by several government departments and different institutions. Although a majority of refugees consider Croatia as a transit country and manifest the intention to move on to different European countries, a part of the refugees and asylum seekers actually choose to stay.

Some of the most relevant activities carried out throughout 2020:

- The explosion of Covid-19 in 2020 forced JRS Croatia to review some of its programs to adapt them to the needs of the emergency. JRS professional staff, therefore, through the collaboration of cultural mediators and translators, distributed packages of food and hygiene aid (for a total of 186 packages, covering 372 people, including 104 minors) to the families of Karlovac, Sisak, and Zagreb who arrived in Croatia last year as part of a resettlement project, as well as other people and families in refugee status in the country. JRS has also opened several telephone lines to make translators and cultural mediators in Croatia available 24 hours a day for all urgent needs, advice, instructions, and clarifications. In addition, it has regularly translated, visually adapted, and promoted all the news and recommendations of epidemiologists, to Arabic and Farsi users (video materials, support group brochures, online consultancy, etc.). This allowed migrants to stay up-to-date on all the most important developments in the emergency even without a thorough knowledge of the Croatian language.
- In the framework of integration centres, professionals, translators, and cultural mediators work with the goal to provide children with a protected environment so they can participate in organised activities. These include, educational, psychosocial, creative, and sports programs, which provide developmental support to refugee children. The integration centres are also places of intercultural integration where children develop cooperation and social skills with children of different cultural backgrounds, with special emphasis placed on strengthening the sense of security and self-confidence. Living in facilities like these means a time of waiting, of temporary residence, in which peace and privacy are often lacking. Waiting for a final decision on obtaining or being denied international protection is a very stressful period for many refugee families. After March 2020, JRS Croatia implemented the Safe Place for Children

project at the Shelter for Asylum Seekers in Zagreb. The main goal of this initiative is to provide a safe place for children, so they have the opportunity to be part of various organised activities. This initiative has the additional goal of providing children with a protected and stimulating environment during or after a crisis situation, so that they can receive support and feel safe. Among the activities included were educational, psychosocial, creative, and sports programs that encouraged children's development in a healthy environment. All the activities carried out were adapted and targeted to the needs and interests of children. A total of over 250 children aged 0-18 participated in the project, and most of the children were aged 3-9. They most often came from Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Afghanistan and spoke Arabic, Farsi, or Kurdish. Unfortunately, since the outbreak of the pandemics, the work program in the Shelter has been temporarily suspended.

JRS employs a "*Handbook for working with refugee children*", created by the experts from the organisation, to share their knowledge and their experience of working with refugee children at the Shelter for Asylum Seekers in Zagreb. The aim of this Handbook is to combine such a valuable practical skill with a professional theoretical framework so as to give a comprehensive picture of this kind of work with refugee and unaccompanied minors that could be relevant for other organisations too.

INNOVATIVENESS

JRS Croatia was the first organisation in the country to provide telephone lines to migrants so they could receive assistance 24 hours per day. One of the main difficulties during the lockdown, as well as in the second phase of the pandemics in autumn, was the access to information. Most of the refugees and asylum-seekers do not speak Croatian, so they were not able to get the information disseminated by the national authorities. Communication is an essential part of the fight against Covid-19. JRS Croatia deems that providing foreigners without proper knowledge of the language or access to the official information channels is essential. Being able to speak out and to receive counselling is crucial in the survival of these people and their successful integration. In April and May 2020, JRS Croatia maintained its presence on the ground and in the streets, distributing food, hygiene items, and making available the assistance of translators for more than 600 people last year. The language and communication barrier represents the first and main obstacle to the integration of migrants and refugees into Croatian society.

TO PROTECT

Furthermore, during the health emergency, this element also added a risk factor for the health of both migrants and citizens. Having proposed and implemented a mechanism capable of giving migrants and refugees access to official and institutional information, albeit in simplified form, represented an element of strong innovation in the country. Its added value, as underlined by Martina Prokl during the interview, is the ability to create a platform and a space where these people can be assisted, helped, and integrated.

SUSTAINABILITY

The main source of funds for the projects and activities carried out by JRS Croatia come from EU financing programmes. Before the pandemics, as long as JRS was able to be present for the activities of the integration centres, they received funding also from the government. Due to the current situation, they cannot be present within these centres, and this means they are losing donors and support because of the decision of the Home Affairs minister not to let NGOs receive access to these places. Other current weaknesses of these projects also derives from the restrictions posed by the pandemics, such as the provision to develop assistance to refugees mainly online. As stressed by Martina Prokl, online support cannot provide these people with the same support of activities carried out in their person, causing refugees and asylum-seekers a loss in terms of the quality of the help they receive.

4. HUMANITARIAN AID IN REFUGEE CAMPS IN RHODES



Source: <https://migrants-refugees.va/it/blog/2020/11/16/john-luke-prendersi-cura-dei-rifugiati/>

Verb: to protect

Country: Greece

Initiative: to provide humanitarian aid

Beneficiaries: migrants in the refugee camp

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: responding to the refugee crisis with basic goods

Duration of project: 2015 – to present

Source of funds: Pro Terra Sancta

Website: <http://www.catholicchurchrhodes.com/default.asp?id=348>

Catholic Church organisations involved and contacts: *Custody of the Holy Land, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Rhodes, Fr. John Luke Gregory O.F.M., Vicar General Email: frlukeofm@hotmail.com*

INTRODUCTION

Since 2015, in Rhodes and the neighbouring island of Kos, the organisation *Pro Terra Sancta* regularly provides support to refugees landed mostly from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

Pro Terra Sancta is a non-profit organisation that operates mainly in the Middle East with the Franciscan friars of the Custody of the Holy Land, the province of the Franciscan order in the Holy Land.

Through the effort of Fr. John Luke Gregory, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Rhodes and Franciscan friar of the Custody of the Holy Land, who since 2004 has carried out his ministry on the Greek island, the NGO *Pro Terra Sancta* offers its humanitarian aid distributing food and other basic goods to the most vulnerable.

Migrants have always arrived in Rhodes and Kos, but in 2016 with the escalating crisis caused by the war in Syria, thousands of these people began to land on the Greek coasts. From that moment, refugees have been sheltered in an old slaughterhouse that is now considered as the refugee centre of Rhodes, despite its not being officially recognized by the Greek Government and thus receiving no funding whatsoever.

In front of this dramatic situation, Father Luke began to support these poor refugees with the goods needed to survive. With the funds sent by *Pro Terra Sancta*, he has been able to offer enough food each week to feed these people housed in the old slaughterhouse. He also supplies other necessities daily such as soap, toothpaste, washing detergent, and cleaning products.

Certainly, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated an already difficult situation. One of the saddest and most dangerous consequences that has impacted migrants of the camp of Rhodes was the fact that they were blamed for being responsible for bringing the infection to the island. This brought the risk not only that they would be deprived of assistance but also exposed to violence and further marginalisation, as well as making them feel even more alone and vulnerable. During an interview conducted via Skype, Father Luke told us how it happened: "*Before Christmas, a Somali woman coming from the refugee camp gave birth to a newborn in the obstetric unit of the General Hospital. She tested positive for Covid-19 and the whole department had to be closed for a quarantine of ten days. Afterward, it was discovered that many refugees residing in the camp*

were Covid positive. For this reason, the locals who sporadically brought clothes and other items for the refugees ceased to visit the centre for fear of contracting the virus. I can understand their thinking and I know that many people think I am crazy if I continue to go there, but as the scriptures say: *"The charity of Christ leaves us no choice!"*. In this difficult context of a health emergency, the commitment of Father Luke in the camp bears witness before the local community that the fear of approaching refugees has no sense. On the contrary, the Vicar General of Rhodes reminded us in the interview: *"Our duty as Christians is to visit and support the needy, putting into practice the culture of fraternity and love to remain next to them"*.

Despite all of these troubles, during the confinement imposed by the Greek government, Father Luke continued to visit the refugee centre incessantly, bringing food and other basic goods, as well as hygiene materials to the inhabitant of the camp, giving in this way a concrete example of solidarity. To better understand the value of his action it should be borne in mind that the risk of transmission of Covid in refugee camps is seriously aggravated due to the overcrowding and the lack of adequate sanitation. Thus, the provision of masks, gloves, and sanitising gel has been of vital importance to prevent the transmission of the virus and avoid a catastrophe.

The Franciscan friar, during the same Skype interview, then reported other initiatives carried out with the migrants in the camp as they faced the hardest months of the lockdown in 2020. Among the projects was the realisation of two gardens and two chicken coops. In doing so, they have been able to have fresh food every day, overcoming all the barriers to access to food that was created by the imposition of restriction measures. Furthermore, this initiative was a profitable and responsible way to spend time in the refugee camp in itself.

The charitable work of Fr. Luke and the Custody of the Holy Land has earned recognition from several media and he also has obtained various official awards, even beyond the confines of the island. The President of the Italian Republic, Sergio Mattarella, wanted to express his appreciation for Fr Luke's work with refugees, honouring him with the title of Knight of the Order of the Star of Italy. The Ambassador of Italy in Athens said that Fr Luke is a profound connoisseur of the eastern Mediterranean and the tensions associated with it. *"As well as being an extraordinary example of dedication and generosity in his work in favour of the needy, refugees and migrants, Fr Luke also represents a fundamental point of reference for the Italian community in Rhodes and the promotion of Italian culture and values"*

TO PROTECT

on the island. This is why the President wanted to honour him with this recognition, at the recommendation of the Italian Ambassador to Greece”.

RELEVANCE

Life in decaying camps is very hard and challenging primarily because of the lack of several necessities. In this situation migrants may find themselves in particularly vulnerable conditions, being deprived not only of their physical freedom but often even of any means of livelihood. The pandemic has exacerbated all these difficulties and has driven the migrant population of the Rhodes refugee camp to despair. Due to this dramatic scenario, the brave effort of Father Luke is fundamental to ensure dignity to all these lives that are at the periphery of the world. With the economic aid of *Pro Terra Sancta*, he offers a concrete contribution to improving the living conditions of the residents of the camp. Without the tireless work of Father Luke, migrants would have been reduced to hunger. In this way, the provided humanitarian support represents not only a question of survival but also a matter of respect for the fundamental rights of each person.

INNOVATIVENESS

The innovative aspect of this Good Practice lies mainly in the attitude of simplicity which characterises the work carried out by Father Luke. During the interview conducted with him via Skype, he underlined the importance of small gestures: *“Things don't necessarily have always to be big. You can give love to these people even with very simple gestures. Often the simplest of things can give the most pleasure”*. It was with this perspective of humility and discretion, that the chicken coops and vegetable gardens were set up. Despite the simplicity of these initiatives, they have given great satisfaction to the migrants involved, as well as fresh food to eat.

Moreover, the Practice seems to have brought some innovation in the local context since among the native population there was little sensitivity toward the challenges that migration involves for the individuals concerned.

IMPACT

The commitment of Father Luke has proven to be essential from different perspectives. Besides the material aid through the donation of goods of immediate necessity such as food, clothes, and medicines, he offers to migrants also spiritual accompaniment. He is always available to listen to their stories, their suffering and their trauma, showing kindness, openness and friendship to them. As Father Luke himself says, he "*carries a human face among them*". For sure, this closeness encourages a person in a very vulnerable condition and ensures that they do not feel abandoned, but supported. Especially in this time of great troubles provoked by the pandemic more than ever it has been important to remain attentive and reactive in front of the needs of the least to avoid their falling into oblivion.

The effort to serve these people of the refugee camp has significantly grown over the years, regardless of the current number of its inhabitants. Fr Luke and his diocese are now taking care of about 500 needy people, and they have recently had to move the operation from the monastery to the Church hall to be able to prepare so many food parcels and distribute them.

- 500 migrants served.
- 60 families served in the refugee camp.

SUSTAINABILITY

The Custody of the Holy Land, through the NGO Pro Terra Sancta, has supported the mission in Rhodes since 2015, financing the purchase of food, clothes, and personal hygiene items. Also, the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development has always been very supportive.

The contribution of the local population and communities of believers on the island has also been generous. Given the prevalence of Orthodox Catholics among the residents of Rhodes, their solidarity represents a very good example of collaboration and a sign of openness of the Eastern Church toward the Roman Catholic Church "*We are a small mission on an island that is predominantly Greek Orthodox, yet we feel supported and in solidarity with the Universal Church*" said Father Luke.

TO PROTECT

Also, tourists passing through the island many times express their solidarity toward migrants by making donations for them. From this experience has thus emerged the strategic importance of raising awareness worldwide of the problems in refugee camps to obtain wider support, as well as economic aid.

The diocese of Rhodes was involved in organisational aspects. To ensure better and more complete management of the mission, Father Luke, since he arrived in Rhodes, has started a parish council composed of laypeople coming from different backgrounds. In the view of Father Luke as it emerged in the interview, without laypeople all the charitable activities would be impossible to realise, since they have additional knowledge and experience in different fields, for example in finance or in law, to put at the service of the mission: *"We use the talents of the parish; it's just that we have to give up some power."* They are all volunteers, no one is employed.

Nonetheless, there is a need to implement the human resources of the mission, to offer more specialised services. Very often refugees are fleeing from war or persecution, so they have deep and unresolved psychological problems. Even if Father Luke spends hours and hours listening to them, they may still need professional help. Also, it would be helpful to have an expert teacher who would be able to teach languages to migrants. In the meanwhile, the absence of experts will be covered by the goodwill of Father Luke: *"When the pandemic ends, I am hoping to dedicate some time to teaching them some basic Greek if we can set this up. It will be very basic as I am no expert. I may also try and teach the children a little Arabic, at least the alphabet. We will see."*

5. DEFENCE OF THE RIGHTS OF DETAINED MIGRANTS



Source: <https://jrs.net/en/country/macedonia/>

Verb: to protect

Country: North Macedonia

Initiative: to defend and support migrants in detention

Beneficiaries: detained migrants

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: social protection, advocacy

Duration of project: 2016 – to present

Source of funds: JRE Europe

Catholic Church organisations involved and contacts: *JRS Macedonia, Dejan Strackovski Email: dejan.strackovski@jrs.net*

INTRODUCTION

Because of its strategic location, Macedonia is regarded as a transit country and the so-called Western Balkan Route that crosses its territory is by now one of the main migration routes that lead into the European Union.

Macedonia knew the peak of the migration crisis in 2015 when roughly one million people transited the country. The response of the Macedonian authorities to the crisis was chaotic and it revealed pre-existing vulnerabilities related to the rule of law and democratic governance.

TO PROTECT

From that moment, Macedonia began depriving migrants of liberty at the so-called "transit centre" in the town of Gevgelija, called the "Vinojug". In addition, it started detaining people in another transit centre in the north, in Tabanovce. These centres were originally built to assist the transit of refugees during the border tensions in 2014-2016. Yet, they have become semi-open or closed detention centres since March 2016. The legal status of the transit reception centres in the country has still not been defined, leaving the asylum seekers staying there also without any legal status. Irregular entry into North Macedonia is itself legal grounds for detention and forced removal.

In this complex scenario where forced migrants' and asylum seekers' fundamental rights are not properly respected and their basic needs (shelter, food, health, education) are not met by authorities, the demanding work of JRS Macedonia in favour of migrants passing along the Balkan Route through Macedonian territory is taking place.

Jesuit Refugee Service Macedonia accompanies and serves asylum seekers accommodated at the Reception Centre for asylum or in private accommodations providing - with the approval from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy - comprehensive support. It also helps migrants at the Reception Centre for foreigners of Skopje (Detention centre) and the Transit Centres near the border with Greece and Serbia. Moreover, JRS Macedonia shelters the most vulnerable migrants such as people with injuries, pregnant women, babies, and unaccompanied children at a Safe House.

The activities and services provided vary between each centre and can be summed up as the following:

Reception Centre:

- 1 Social protection;
- 2 Social corner (interaction, games, TV, coffee, tea, cookies, reading books, food supplements);
- 3 Pre-school kindergarten; sports activities (football, basketball, Ping-Pong, athletic gymnastic);
- 4 Free legal aid and legal counselling;

Reception Centre for foreigners (Detention Centre):

- 1 Psycho-social support;
- 2 Food supplements, coffee, tea, cookies, Ping-Pong, social games, basic medicine support, basic hygiene kit;

- 3 Communication room; gym room managed by the JRS Macedonia;
- 4 Free legal aid and legal counselling;

Transit Centre Vinojug and Transit Centre Tabanovce:

- 1 Social protection;
- 2 Psychosocial support for basic needs and services;
- 3 Social activities (interaction, coffee, tea, cookies), food supplements, basic medicine support, basic hygiene kit;
- 4 Free legal aid and legal counselling.

With the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020 the situation in detention and transit centres was a matter of concern due to the increasing number of migrants detained and forced to stay there. The lack of adequate hygiene standards and personal protective equipment aggravated the situation. Even though the access to centres was closed to most organisations of volunteers, JRS had special permission to continue its work inside the detention structures. In this way, JRS has continued to provide its usual services to migrants. In addition, due to the fresh necessity to implement safety measures to prevent the Covid infection, JRS Macedonia focused on providing masks, gloves, and sanitiser to asylum seekers accommodated in the reception centre in Vizbegovo and to migrants in the detention centre in Skopje.

Besides the assistance provided in reception, detention and transit centres, Jesuit Refugee Service Macedonia starting in January 2019 to expand its mission through a special commitment to advocacy activities. To this end, JRS Macedonia has presented several advocacy workshops with members of other organisations to address the restrictions on the freedom of movement of asylum seekers in the country. At the same time, it promotes and actively encourages changes in legislation and policy and, calls the attention of the political bodies to the challenges that migration poses, especially regarding immigration detention (which is for sure one of the most concerning issues). In this regard, many goals have been achieved, such as: a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Justice, a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ombudsman, a Memorandum of Understanding with the Red Cross of the City of Skopje were signed; approval of the Director of the Public Security Bureau for visits to the Reception Centre for Foreigners in Skopje (Detention Center) was obtained; a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy is in the extension phase.

TO PROTECT

The advocacy activities take place also at the ground level since the staff frequently advocate on behalf of individual refugees who require help in protecting their rights.

Moreover, within its advocacy mission, JRS Macedonia is committed to enhancing the public perception of refugees, countering xenophobia and indifference.

At the end of 2020, when States began to prepare for vaccination campaigns against Covid-19 disease, JRS Macedonia was particularly committed to ensuring that migrants, even irregular ones, were guaranteed the possibility of being vaccinated.

RELEVANCE

Through the work of the Advocacy & Legal Officer, JRS Macedonia aims to find more sustainable solutions and options for forced migrants and asylum seekers who often find themselves stuck in the territory of North Macedonia. To appreciate the relevance of this Good Practice it should be kept in mind that North Macedonia still does not show great understanding of the migrant issue so that migrants are not cared for by the State but rather by international organisations. Neither does the local population show a very open attitude. Dejan Strackovski, in an interview conducted by email, describes the situation, taking children as a significant example: *"Children under international protection still have problems in the kindergartens they attend. Their parents are still not accepted by the local community where they live, and the local population still needs time to accept them as a reality in North Macedonia"*. In order to promote integration and social cohesion, the advocacy service of Jesuit Refugee Service wants to develop a communication strategy to raise awareness in the local community and instil in them the culture of hospitality.

INNOVATIVENESS

JRS Macedonia carries out a parallel collaboration both with different religious and secular realities. Cooperation is pursued mostly with non-gov-

ernmental and humanitarian organisations working in the field of asylum and migration in North Macedonia. Noteworthy is the close partnership with Milosrdie, the charity organisation of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. This highlights the Ecumenical perspective from which JRS operates in Macedonia, bringing together the strengths of all Christian actors, regardless of their denomination or affiliation, in order to provide stronger action. In doing so, JRS Macedonia proved to be able to offer an ecumenical response to migrants needs, forming communion between the Catholic Church and the Eastern Churches.

IMPACT

According to the words of Dejan Strackovski expressed in the aforementioned interview: *"Since JRS Macedonia started to implement the Advocacy part of its mission, we believe that we have made at least one step forward for our beneficiaries relating their rights, obligations, opportunities, access to services and therefore we would say that the benefits for improving the well-being of individuals are at the medium level".*

During the interview it also emerged that one of the most satisfying milestones that has been reached is the recognition by migrants themselves of JRS as the protector of their human rights, fighting for them in order to obtain legal status and a new safe and peaceful life in North Macedonia. Beneficiaries of this Good Practice *"know that someone stands behind them, supports them in securing basic needs which they provide by themselves, takes care of their basic human rights, follows them every step of the asylum procedure, and last but not least believes their story."*

SUSTAINABILITY

Although JRS Macedonia has a long-term presence in detention centres, it still has to struggle to defend the basic rights of migrants. In an environment where the government doesn't look favourably on migration, advocacy strategies have always to be cautious and balanced in order to establish a healthy and fruitful collaboration with the authorities and to avoid the risk of being denied access to the facilities.

TO PROTECT

However, in the long term, JRS Macedonia hopes to expand its advocacy activities including (1) litigation as a strategy to change practices by the North Macedonian authorities that violate human rights, and (2) implementing advocacy strategies before European and international institutions such as The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) and the Council of Europe.

As for the financial aspect and organisational aspects, Jesuit Refugee Service Macedonia realizes its projects with the economic support of private donors and foundations. It also receives ongoing support from Jesuit Refugee Service Europe based in Brussels. Indeed, JRS Europe assists JRS Macedonia with coordination support in areas such as strategic planning, financial sustainability, and staff training. JRS Europe also provides the necessary support to JRS Macedonia to find funding sources and to find other potential private and public donors. There is as well a collaboration with the other offices of JRS along the Balkan Route, so that JRS Macedonia is in contact with colleagues from Greece, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia.

Results of the activities are monitored on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis in coordination with the President and the Director of JRS North Macedonia. Tables related to services provided for all beneficiaries through - in which the good but also the bad sides are highlighted - are drawn up and stored in order to continuously improve and implement the mission of the Jesuit Refugee Service Macedonia. All tables are data protected according to the Law on Personal Data Protection in North Macedonia.

6. PROYECTO ESPERANZA



Source: <https://www.proyectoesperanza.org/que-es-la-trata/la-lucha-contra-la-trata-en-espana/>

Verb: to protect

Country: Spain

Initiative: to support women victims of human trafficking to recovery and to fight against human trafficking

Beneficiaries: women victims of human trafficking

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: comprehensive care, advocacy

Duration of project: 2000 to present

Source of funds: public funds

Website: <https://www.proyectoesperanza.org/>

Catholic Church organisations involved and contacts: *Congregation of Religious Adorers Slaves of the Blessed Sacrament and Charity, Marta González Manchón, Coordinator, Email: marta@proyectoesperanza.org*

TO PROTECT

INTRODUCTION

Proyecto Esperanza is a project of the Congregation of Religious Adorers Slaves of the Blessed Sacrament and of Charity aimed at dealing with the phenomenon of trafficking in women, providing direct and comprehensive support to the victims and advocating for their rights and their maximum protection at the national and international level.

Based in Madrid, Proyecto ESPERANZA has a multidisciplinary team of 25 professionals (educators and social workers, psychologists, mediators, lawyers and employment specialists, among others) and 25 volunteers, allocated in three different departments: Direct Intervention, Awareness and Management.

The **Direct Intervention Area**, working directly with women who have suffered trafficking for exploitation purposes, is the fundamental axis of the Project and revolves around the provision of residential resources and support services in the medical, psychological, educational, legal and socio-labour fields.

The gateway to the project is through the detection and identification Service. To facilitate the detection of cases of trafficking, an emergency telephone service is available 24 hours a day, every day of the year and a specialised team immediately attends to calls made both by private persons and by professionals. The objective is the early detection of possible signs of trafficking in human beings to offer the alleged victim information and advice for their immediate assistance and protection. The staff also carries out at this moment the first assessment of the needs and the risk of the victims and then refers them to specialized resources to facilitate their recovery and access to their rights as victims of human trafficking.

To those women who need accommodation, *Proyecto Esperanza* offers shelter and the coverage of basic needs, providing a safe and confidential environment for their recovery.

Once a victim of trafficking is detected, she is supported and accompanied in her adaptation and integration process, providing resources that can allow her to resume her life and independence. In this framework, comprehensive support is offered to the women identified as victims of human trafficking in the following areas of intervention:

- **Social Intervention Service**
- **Integral Health Service**
- **Legal Service**
- **Training and Employment Service**

Finally, within *Proyecto Esperanza*, a team is committed to facilitating the **voluntary return**, in safe conditions, for those women who freely choose to return to their country of origin. Also, the possibility is offered of coordinating their return along with a public or private institution in her country that can offer her support and assistance to face the possible difficulties and risks that may arise.

As mentioned above, besides the Direct Intervention Department which provides comprehensive care in different fields, *Proyecto Esperanza* has also the **Awareness Department**, intending to raise awareness of human trafficking as a serious violation of human rights both among policymakers and the population. In this Department, the staff serves as the spokesperson of the needs of women trafficked and, to this end, makes recommendations and constructive proposals to advance awareness of this phenomenon, interacting with numerous institutions and social agents.

During the health emergency in 2020, *Proyecto Esperanza* had to pass through a lot of changes and critical situations, but it continued to generate strategies and tools to address the situations that were emerging in this new context.

Since it was regarded as an essential service by the authorities, the team was able to carry on all the areas of intervention in favour of women victims of human trafficking. Indeed, they obtained a special permit to meet in person with the women to assess and evaluate their situations.

The team of the Detection Service, dealing with the hotline, kept working exactly in the same way as before the pandemic..

The shelter was always open, properly adapted to the current safety measures. For this reason, the reception was conceived as two different moments: the first was a period of quarantine, in which the newly received woman had to stay in a closed space, maintaining physical distance, and the second part, in which the woman, having already performed the PCR test and waited 10 days, could begin to enjoy the common spaces and to live with her companions.

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Also, the social workers and lawyers continued to provide counselling, information and support online. Fortunately, the database containing all the required documents and materials is in the cloud so that the staff was able to work from home.

Besides its usual work, in 2020 *Proyecto Esperanza* decided to deal with the emergency originated by the pandemic, setting up a crisis program with the funds of the Congregations of Adorers. Indeed, some women who had already started the integration process living autonomously lost their job so that they did not have any income anymore to cover their basic needs. Thus, *Proyecto Esperanza* was committed to supporting economically women in these situations and, in collaboration with other organisations, set up also a food support program to ensure adequate nourishment for women in need.

The work of 2020 in numbers:

- 248 victims of trafficking treated;
- The Detection Service answered 233 calls;
- The Legal Department provided specialised advice to 115 female victims of trafficking;
- The Training and Employment Department served 22 women;
- 61 group workshops were given with the participation of 23 women in modules on different topics such as sexuality, rights, employment, mindfulness, etc;
- Collaboration in 8 investigations;
- 232 impact reports in the media;
- 15 training activities, reaching 1,168 professionals from public and private entities;
- 6 meetings with institutions and work on the net;
- 19 position papers and/or contributions were prepared, along with 5 statements and communications.

RELEVANCE

Proyecto ESPERANZA has intended from the outset to articulate responses that offer adequate support to victims and also work to sensitise authorities, professionals and society in general and formulate proposals and recommendations that improve the global situation.

Specifically, regarding the first aspect, the main goal of *Proyecto Esperanza* is to offer a meaningful intervention that allows women victims of trafficking to completely recover. The care is comprehensive, focusing on all dimensions and needs of women's lives to favour progressive and time-adjusted processes for the recovery of their lives, the development of their potentialities and capacities, adaptation to society, and achieving a full life.

INNOVATIVENESS

During an interview conducted online, Marta González Manchón, Coordinator of the Project, highlighted the innovative scope of this Good Practice, given a general lack previously of attention and, consequently, of the means to face the phenomenon of human trafficking as a whole, not only related to the specific case of sexual exploitation: *"In Spain, we do not have a comprehensive program against trafficking. Here the focus is mainly on sexual exploitation so many cases, for example, of slave labour exploitation, or forced marriage remain undetected. We provide support and we strive to assure that public authorities but also society, in general, are aware of this form of trafficking. These victims are invisible and under-protected, while they also need to have access to their rights"*.

Regardless of the type of exploitation suffered, every trafficked woman faces obstacles when seeking help, such as fear of reprisals, blackmail and manipulation by traffickers, isolation, lack of freedom, ignorance of the language, distrust, as well as the impact of crime on their physical and psychological health. Thus, the Congregation of Adorers decided to set up *Proyecto Esperanza* to bravely and creatively seek adequate answers that allow these women to overcome the exploitation they have suffered. Through this Good Practice, the Congregation of Adorers copes with this challenging demand that has arisen in Spain and supports the recovery journey of each victim of trafficking.

This special commitment was officially recognised: the Adorers received the King of Spain Human Rights Award granted by the Ombudsman's Office and the University of Alcalá de Henares in 2014.

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IMPACT

Trafficked women, as a consequence of the violence exerted on them, suffer a profound impact that affects all their dimensions as a person so that their recovery journey requires time and dedication. Thanks to this Good Practice, they regain a sense of security, dignity, and control over their lives, bodies, minds, and actions.

Proyecto Esperanza fosters the autonomy of its users, their social integration and access to available resources. To this end, it has woven a network of alliances with different companies to promote labour insertion agreements for these vulnerable women.

Moreover, the Project has demonstrated an important impact in the fight against this regrettable crime. As an entity specialized in the detection of women victims of trafficking, it collaborates in the formal identification process, in close collaboration with the Security Forces and Bodies of the State. Likewise, in recent years, it has collaborated with the Asylum and Refugee Office in the detection of signs of trafficking, especially at the border at Madrid Barajas Airport, when it responds to a report that a woman seeking asylum could be, or have lived, in a trafficking situation. Since 2019 it has also collaborated with the General Directorate of Integration and Humanitarian Assistance of the Secretary of State for Migration, and with the Government Delegation for Gender Violence, in the development and implementation of a Referral Procedure for potential victims of Trafficking in Human Beings. As for the concrete cases detected within the Project, the legal service has assisted women in reporting violence to the competent authorities and it has ensured that, throughout the police investigation and the prosecution of the guilty, their interests are guaranteed and their rights are respected.

Finally, the impact of networking at the international level in case of the return of the victim to the homeland should be recalled. Cross-border alliances strengthen the protection of victims since women can count on reliable support when they return to their country of origin to avoid new situations of exploitation and "re-trafficking".

SUSTAINABILITY

Within its organisation, *Proyecto Esperanza* has a specific working group, known as the Management Area, aimed at guarantying the sustainability of the project, attracting economic resources and implementing manage-

ment tools that allow the project to advance in terms of technical quality. The management of the Project also emphasises the importance of transparency and accountability. Its accounts have been audited by an external accounts audit since 2018. In addition, the Project has been working since 2012 within the framework of the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) Quality and Excellence model, through a process of review, auditing and continuous improvement, and has achieved an EFQM 300+ approved evaluation. Within the framework of the quality system, in April of 2020, a delegation of the Adorers achieved the first step of certification of the system, complying with level I of the recommendations and good practices of the Institute of Innovation, Development and Social Impact in Spain.

The Management Area is also committed to continuing to innovate and to provide other areas with the necessary infrastructure to better serve trafficked women, according to ongoing demands.

Notwithstanding, there are some aspects that requires more attention. Marta González Manchón highlighted during the interview: *"Many public funds are grants that come every year that you have to apply for them each time. This means that every year you have to go through the whole process to ask for the funding, report what you do with the funding and then apply again for the next year. This implies a lot of work, but also uncertainty because you don't know from one year to another what will happen"*.

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7. MEDICAL CARE IN BRNO



Source: <https://brno.charita.cz/>

Verb: to protect

Country: Czech Republic

Initiative: to provide social and health services to migrants in Brno

Beneficiaries: labour migrants

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: social and health assistance to migrants in the country to find better economic opportunities for them. Assistance in navigating bureaucratic processes

Source of funds: public institutions, government and the EU

Website: <https://brno.charita.cz/o-nas/>

Catholic organisations involved and contacts: Caritas Brno; Diecézní charita Brno Bratislavská 775/58, 602 00 Brno; Dagmar Sára Norková (dagmar.norkova@brno.charita.cz)

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the entire city of Brno, the local Caritas office already provides 23 social and health services, in addition to other forms of help to people who find themselves in a difficult life situation. The geographic position of the Czech Republic in the European context, combined with its own economic situation, make the country a unique piece in the framework of migratory processes. In fact, most of the migrants assisted by Caritas Brno are economic migrants and not refugees or asylum-seekers. In addition to the endemic difficulties, Covid-19 has had a significant impact on the social and economic fabric of the country. In fact, in 2020, about 700,000 cases of infections were recorded, for a total of over 11,000 victims.

RELEVANCE

The migratory context in the Czech Republic shows different characteristics than those observed in other countries. First of all, most of the migrants who are in the country have moved there in search of better economic and working conditions. According to the data provided during the interview, around 500,000 economic and working migrants are present throughout the Czech Republic. This means that, on the one hand, only a small part of the migrants assisted by Caritas Brno is made up of asylum seekers or refugees. On the other hand, there is little public awareness of these issues. The activities carried out by Caritas Brno, therefore, primarily concern providing consultation services on how to legally remain in the country and helping migrants to make use of the welfare system in case of need for social services. These activities also include providing support to migrants who need to contact doctors, employers, or housing. Another service provided by Caritas Brno concerns translation activities for those who are in contact with institutions, such as migrants who need to be regularised from a financial point of view, or if they want to contact a university or if they are looking for accommodation. Furthermore, part of the social services implemented by Caritas Brno also consists in helping migrants to obtain documents that can be useful in their countries of origin. Therefore, a large part of the activities consists in providing social and legal consultation. Medical services, in particular acting as a link with health institutions, is another large slice of Caritas Brno's activities. There is, however, little attention to psychological services or engagement activities.

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IMPACT

According to the data provided during the interview and those detectable on the organisation's website, in 2020 Caritas Brno provided the following services to these numbers of migrants and refugees:

- EARLY CARE: number of registered services 1, number of users (families) 76
- TELEPHONE CRISIS ASSISTANCE: number of registered services 1, number of users 8682
- INTERPRETING SERVICES: in 2020, there were no services of this kind provided to these people
- ASYLUM HOUSES: MOTHERS /FATHER WITH CHILDREN IN NEED: number of registered shelters 7, number of persons (mothers/fathers and children) 829, number of concluded contracts (number of families) 227. Total number amounts to 324
- ASYLUM HOMES: MEN AND WOMEN, number of registered shelters 2, number of clients 106, number of concluded contracts 106, total number 60
- HALFWAY HOUSES: no services of this kind were provided throughout 2020
- CONTACT CENTRES: number of registered services 4, number of users 882
- CRISIS ASSISTANCE: number of registered services 2, number of users 563
- LOW THRESHOLD DAY CENTRES: number of registered services 4, number of visits (1 client in the facility per day = 1 visit) 30273
- number of users: 33664
- SOCIAL THERAPEUTIC WORKSHOPS: Number of registered services 3, number of users 65
- FIELD PROGRAMS: Number of registered services 4, Number of contacts 9795, Number of interventions 26398. The sum of the number of contacts and the number of interventions 36193
- Number of users 1085

INNOVATIVENESS

An element of innovation compared to what normally happens in the activities of NGOs in the Czech Republic was the digitization of the activities. While this has also been pushed and forced by the pandemic, they have

been able to turn the crisis into an opportunity. The main NGOs in the city joined in various Messenger chats to organize translations to be disseminated among migrants. In this way, they experienced the great usefulness of this method, compared to the use of social media as a means to reach migrants which proved to be rather unsuccessful. In fact, they tried to communicate with them with social media, but social media have not been effective in reaching these people. Many migrants, in fact, use social media only to communicate with their countries of origin and are not easily contactable by users in the Czech Republic. Another element of strong innovation is the inclusion of some of these migrants in the staff of Caritas Brno. Over time, in fact, a bond of trust has been established that allows the integration of part of the migrants, those now more integrated, into the working staff. This in turn creates a further bond of trust with new migrants, who see themselves approached by people from similar backgrounds to theirs, so that they open up and establish an honest relationship with Caritas.

The main difficulties encountered by Caritas Brno do not concern so much the carrying out of the activities per se, but rather in the often conflicting relationships with other organisations and associations present in the same sector. Some of them, according to what was reported during the interview, are not focused on training migrants with the tools to be autonomous in their life in the Czech Republic. They are interested in explaining to these people what they need in order to get the services they need. In this way, however, migrants do not become independent and are forced to turn to these organisations again and again. Caritas, on the contrary, aims to make these people completely independent, which often results in frictions or conflicts with other organisations.

SUSTAINABILITY

The funds used by Caritas Brno in carrying out its activities come mainly from the Czech national government. These funds are then allocated to the regions which have the task of distributing them to the various organisations and associations. A part of these resources is also financed directly by the European Union. The offices have to provide detailed information to their donors and funding sources about how Caritas invests all the resources

Over the years close, deep and solid partnerships have not been established with other institutions and other organisations, due in part to the lack of in-

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stitutional sensitivity to these issues and also to the small size of the reality in Brno. Institutional meetings are held periodically and obviously, funding is foreseen for these activities. Consultations take place with the police, ministries and lawyers, but not so much with the parishes.

The Covid-19 pandemic obviously had a heavy impact on the conduct of Caritas Brno's activities. Although the government of the Czech Republic proceeded to close almost all work activities, it nevertheless gave permission for social services to continue with their programs. Still, most of the migrants did not go to the offices of Caritas Brno as they were afraid of the possible contagion. This exacerbated an already existing problem, namely the lack of clear communication between the migrant community and national authorities. In fact, communication with the government is not fluid, information on the pandemic is often not translated, and only legal provisions are announced that in almost all cases are not understood by the migrants. This put migrants in serious difficulty and made the carrying out of Caritas Brno's activities more complex, as it was more difficult to reach migrants. Most people did not come to social services even though they had an exemption from the government to do so. The consultation activity, therefore, began online and via telephone, but this method was complicated especially for the homeless, some of whom still went to the offices but did not know the rules (masks, hands, etc.). This required an effort on the part of Caritas Brno to go out into the streets in order to meet these people, support them and help them there. However, the shift towards the digital space of activities has made it possible to overcome these difficulties, at least in the most difficult phase of the pandemic, safeguarding the sustainability of the projects.

8. COUNSELLING SERVICES TO REFUGEE AND MIGRANT WOMEN



Source: <https://www.solwodi-berlin.de/>

Verb: to protect

Country: Germany

Initiative: counselling and support to refugee and migrant women; support to women and public authorities in fighting human trafficking

Beneficiaries: Migrant and refugee women

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: counselling services

Duration of Project: 2006 - ongoing

Source of funds: public institutions; Berlin municipality

Website: <https://www.solwodi-berlin.de/>

Catholic organisations involved and contacts: *Solwodi Berlin; Kranoldstrasse 24, 12051 Berlin; Monika Grötzinger (groetzinger@solwodi.de)*

INTRODUCTION

SOLWODI is the abbreviation for "Solidarity with Women in Distress", meaning providing support and assistance and solidarity to women in need, mostly migrants and refugees. As a matter of fact, Solwodi is an aid organisation for migrant women and refugee women in emergency situations. In addition to this specific element, the organisation provides also a specialist advice centre for those affected by human trafficking and other forms of violence, exploitation

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and human rights violations specific to women. Therefore, the projects and the activities of the organisation develop along these two lines. The target groups around which the activities of the centre in Berlin revolve are particularly vulnerable migrants and refugee women with a focus on Africans and victims of human trafficking. As stated on the organisation's website, in carrying out these projects Solwodi Berlin pursues some specific goals, which mainly are:

- Promotion of security, stabilization, social connection, self-efficacy and participation of the clients, as well as strengthening their identity;
- Promotion of peaceful social coexistence through culturally sensitive, anti-discrimination and human rights-oriented work; and
- Development of resources and broadening of perspectives through cooperation, networking and the involvement of clients.

RELEVANCE

The material support and psychological help provided to women by Solwodi Berlin basically falls to two distinct working groups: on the one hand, special protection for refugee and migrant women from African countries; on the other hand, the victims of trafficking in human beings regardless of their nationality. Given the specific migratory and social needs on the part of the African continent, and also by virtue of the high numbers of women from those countries, Solwodi Berlin has chosen to dedicate a specific part of its projects and its own activities to these women. The women who come to the centres of the organisation and the centre connected to it receive help based on the specific needs of each migrant or refugee woman. Each case, in fact, requires specific care and attention that must be agreed upon according to each woman assisted. Some, for example, need legal assistance and therefore need to be assisted by a lawyer, others need to be helped with the bureaucratic process of applying for asylum. Still, other women need support in turning to the German authorities for a passport or their embassies or the police. The Solwodi Berlin staff, therefore, undertakes to accompany these women through all the phases of this process, also providing crisis interventions, counselling, and help in finding accommodation. Most of the activities carried out by Solwodi Berlin, therefore, revolve around consulting works and projects. However, a part of these activities is also necessarily aimed at the formation of networks with similar organisations in the city of Berlin, as well as a strong commitment to finding resources. Part of the counselling is also through integration groups, acting groups or computer courses but, due to the pandemics, these had to be interrupted.

IMPACT

As regards the data relating to the number of women assisted in 2020, according to what Monika Grötzingler provided during the interview, Solwodi Berlin provided assistance and help to about 330 women in 2020, of which about 125 were victims of trafficking in human beings. As for the average age of the women involved, the 30-49 age group is the one most affected by the phenomenon. However, in the course of the interview, it was pointed out several times that in recent years the average age has progressively decreased. Therefore, also in 2020, there were numerous cases involving women in the 18-21 age group. Most of the women come from African countries, in 2020 alone about 90 women, mostly from Nigeria, about 65. In the vast majority of cases, these women initially disembarked in Italy and only later reached, through makeshift means, Germany. Some want to return to their countries and Solwodi Berlin has plans to help them, but most of the time these women want to stay in Germany. There is also a strong presence of women from French-speaking countries, as well as from East Africa. Numbers from other nationalities are lower. In 2020, there were only 2 cases of women from America, while 38 were from Asia. In all, 67% are aged between 30 and 49, 42% are between 22 and 29, 25% are minors up to 21 years of age.

INNOVATIVENESS

The main element of innovation that distinguishes the activities carried out by Solwodi Berlin, according to what emerged during the interview, is that it has set a low threshold in terms of women's initial involvement. This means that those who decide to contact the Solwodi centre are not required to identify themselves or provide any documentation. As Monika Grötzingler pointed out during the interview, one of the main problems for these victims is having to undergo numerous questions that often end up intimidating or discouraging them. This allows, on the one hand, these women to feel more at ease, not judged; on the other hand, it brings out the real scope of a very vast phenomenon that, however, often remains hidden, makes it difficult to reach the victims. Sometimes such women do not even have the adequate tools to recognize their victim status, so a high degree of tolerance towards them and a low threshold of requirements for access to such services is important to first build a bond of trust. This sometimes takes years. It takes time, in fact, to establish this link. To do this, Solwodi's activities are developed in a holistic way, trying to deal with the different fields of

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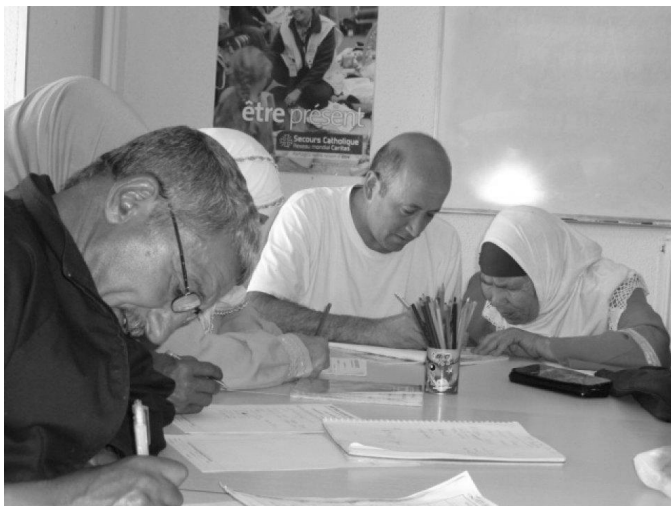
their needs, without judging or questioning the lives of these women. They don't ask questions, for example, until the women themselves feel ready to talk. To explain how this trust mechanism develops, and how important it is to approach these women in this way, Monika Grötzinger said that once one of the assisted women told them "*I like you because I can lie to you*". If Solwodi were to judge and remain on the surface, in fact, they would not provide any help to these women. It is a complex situation and therefore there is a need to fully understand the cultural and social background from which these women come. Alongside the strengths and innovation, however, there are also some difficulties. These, for example, involve a local bureaucracy considered excessively slow and cumbersome. These women in fact find themselves suffering in an extremely delicate condition and often cannot wait that long. The law is difficult for these people to understand, as they don't even fully realise if they can get help or not, and in many cases, they don't want to go to the police because they don't trust them.

SUSTAINABILITY

Funding comes from mixed sources, partly from the government, partly from Catholic foundations and Catholic organisations. However, most of the funding enabling Solwodi Berlin's activities to continue is publicly sourced, i.e. the counselling centre staff costs are mainly funded by the Department of Health, Nursing and Equal Opportunities of the Senate of Berlin, as well as from non-profit donors and donations. As regards the costs of materials, in particular for creative projects and direct costs for assisted women, they are largely financed through donations. Although Solwodi Berlin, therefore, can count on sufficiently solid sources of livelihood at the moment, there is a problem common to the various organisations throughout Europe, namely the discontinuity of the funds available. Solwodi applies every 2 years to receive these amounts, however, it is not sure that they will receive them every time. In addition, more funds would be needed to cover additional expenses, such as hiring new workers to carry out the activities. It would also take more manpower to be able to help more fully in the investigation of cases of trafficking in human beings. Furthermore, an essential element to guarantee the sustainability of the Solwodi projects is the collaboration with the police forces of Berlin, which are part of the German network of welfare associations and with which various types of agreements have been developed during the years.

As regards the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the performance of the organisation's activities, the health emergency did not have serious repercussions on the consultancy activities. This was made possible by the use of alternative tools such as digital platforms or the shifting of interviews from in-person to telephone, which has not been perceived as a negative element but a better option in addition to the others. This allowed, therefore, also in 2020, a higher number of cases instead of fewer. Thus, around 330 women were assisted in 2020. Whenever the government has made new rules, they have had to find new structures and change their routines and practices in order to implement and comply with the new guidelines against Covid-19.

9. ACCUEIL MIGRANTS PROJECT



Source: <https://bdr-marseille.secours-catholique.org/qui-sommes-nous/presentation/nos-actions>

Verb: to protect

Country: France

Initiative: to offer legal support

Beneficiaries: newly arrived migrants

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: application for visa, asylum procedures and other administrative issues.

Duration of project: on going

Source of funds: Secours Catholique

Website: <https://bdr-marseille.secours-catholique.org/Action-migrants>

Catholic Church organisations involved and contacts: *Secours Catholique Marseille, Françoise Lecompte legal volunteer, Email: accueilmigrants.131@secours-catholique.org*

INTRODUCTION

Accueil Migrants, which means "welcome migrants", is one of the programs carried out in favour of migrants in Marseille by Secours Catholique, the

largest charitable organisation in France and a member of the Caritas Internationalis network.

The Program provides a humanitarian response to newly arrived migrants in town. It intervenes at the first moments of their arrival, offering them protection and assistance. The main goal of the project is to respond to the urgency of their situations mainly through legal advice and, secondly, with other humanitarian aid.

Given the high number of migrants without proper documents staying legally in France or who are struggling with the process to obtain international protection, the Program is particularly committed to providing legal counselling and assistance, especially with administrative procedures or asylum proceedings. Besides the provision of advice and information about refugee law and other immigration matters, the staff mainly helps its users with the filing of papers, with applications for an entry visa or residence permits. Moreover, *Accueil Migrants* supports the preparation and submission of asylum claims or appeals of the denial of asylum assessing the merits of a judicial review application. These activities may require accompanying the migrant to the relevant offices and also to the mandatory interview before the Immigration Office in Paris. This work also might include the payment of fees required by courts or other bodies for processing applications, as well as the price of the train ticket to reach the Office in Paris, which is sometimes very expensive for these people.

Since it is particularly focused on the immediate necessities that migrants have to face in the first moments of their arrival in France, in addition to legal assistance, *Secours Catholique* through *Accueil Migrants* also seeks to help them to find suitable accommodation and provides them with food and clothes. Furthermore, the organisation is sensitive also towards the financial needs of some people who are not able to pay for some essential goods, such, for instance, electricity, gas, or even a bed to sleep. Thus, *Accueil Migrants* make cash available to help them cope with these necessities.

In 2020 the greatest difficulty, which adversely impacted the entire legal intervention process, was certainly the outbreak of the COVID 19 virus. Especially at the beginning of the pandemic, all the judicial procedures came to a standstill and most of the competent offices closed. Not knowing what was going to happen was the hardest thing to deal with for these people. Indeed, as the world was struggling with the virus, migrants were experiencing the worst impacts of the pandemic. Their futures became even

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more insecure, as their futures were depending on the suspended procedures. Because of their irregular status, many migrants faced additional problems such as the lack of access to healthcare, which during a health emergency is vital, as well as to social protection programs. Furthermore, those living in already extremely difficult economic conditions had to face challenges with access to food, protection and other basic services.

For all these reasons, *Accueil Migrants* remained open during the pandemic, offering answers and orientation in this confusing situation. Its work was fundamental to encourage these scared and disoriented people. Besides the legal matters, the commitment of *Accueil Migrants* was focused on providing migrants with information on COVID-19 in languages and formats accessible to them. This included information on infection control, prevention measures, lockdown restrictions, and obtaining permission for local travel or work. Secours Catholique served its beneficiaries by also providing them with hygiene kits composed of ffp2 masks, gloves and disinfectant gel.

RELEVANCE

Applying for refugee status is very hard and most migrants arrive in Europe with no experience of going through a legal system. The legal landscape of the host country is complex, and procedures related to immigration are often unclear, lengthy and expensive. In addition, the newly arrived are often left alone dealing with a language they might not understand. All these challenges create insurmountable barriers to asserting their appropriate rights, leading often to confusion and delays for asylum seekers. To address these issues and support the individuals in navigating these challenges and asserting their rights, *Accueil Migrants* strives to provide legal counselling and assistance to those migrants in need of help in facing bureaucratic and judicial procedures. This service is free of charge and is set out to help persons who do not have sufficient resources to pay for assistance by a lawyer.

This is a vital program for these people since, through regularisation of their legal status in France, they can have access to a range of essential rights that normally belong to citizens. Thus, the granting of a residence permit or refugee status represents the key to eliminating inequalities between the migrant population and the local population. In the meantime, it represents also the gateway to the integration into the local community, as well as the prerequisite for accessing essential services, education and the world of work. The

work of *Accueil Migrants* is further noteworthy for their way of relating with the users of the service. Françoise Lecompte, a legal volunteer, during an interview conducted online, described their activities like this: *"Accompany' is the verb that better describe us. It's our way to do it. Our added value is that we meet migrants not simply as users but mainly as persons, individuals. We are attentive with them, we spend much time with them and listen to them. We are determined to defend their cause. Thus, we are very happy when they obtain the permit to stay in France."* In Secours Catholique in Marseilles the volunteers serve real life persons and their stories, not profiles or stereotypes.

INNOVATIVENESS

Within the provision of legal assistance, this Good Practice also takes on an aspect that is frequently neglected, that is the necessity of economic resources to face the relevant procedures, in particular, to pay the journey to Paris, where the audition before the Immigration Office takes place. To this end, Secours Catholique shows its solidarity towards these persons in need to ensure them the possibility to reach the competent authorities and obtain the due protection and the access to the proper rights.

Another innovative point emerged from the interview with Françoise Lecompte. She noted that sometimes the spaces available are not large enough to receive the beneficiaries individually. Notwithstanding, this difficulty turns out to be a great resource for the migrants themselves. Indeed, they have begun to get to know each other, share their experiences, and learn from each other. Thus, in *Accueil Migrants* help comes not only from the volunteers but also from other migrants who are living or have experienced the same situation.

IMPACT

For migrants, life in a host country is extremely precarious if they do not obtain their documents, both civil registration documents and asylum-related documents. Access to civil documentation has a great impact on these people ability to access basic services, including education, healthcare and social protection programmes. Without documents, there can be se-

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vere limitations on people's freedom of movement, since sometimes papers are required to cross a border without the risk of being returned to the country of origin or, in certain territories, even arrested and detained. Obtaining documentation is also essential to resettle in France long-term, as when is necessary to rent or to have accommodations or to access to employment and livelihoods. Even buying a SIM card for communication requires having regular documentation. Given the significant effect that a lack of a regular administrative situation may have on migrants, *Accueil Migrant* helps them to navigate the legal system and helps them have a fair chance at a better life. Experience shows that this important activity prevents these people from becoming even more vulnerable. Moreover, this legal assistance has proven to be a tool to minimise their distress, especially in the moments of disorientation when they first arrive in Marseille.

From a practical point of view, the work of the volunteers represents also a strategic effort able to maximise the prospect for success before the Immigration Commission or Immigration Courts.

This Good Practice changes and improves the lives of its users. Françoise Lecompte, during the online interview, talked about several successful stories: *"Many times some of our beneficiaries, once they obtain the residence permit, decide to become volunteers and come to help us. This is a great success because it means that they have integrated, have learned how to make their way in France and, having experience, can better help other people who have just arrived"*. The work of these people is precious since they are ideal linguistic and cultural mediators.

Finally, the Program has an impact also on the volunteers involved, since the legal service represents a challenge, both on a personal and professional level. Caring for people who have suffered such extreme situations requires a great deal of empathy and, at the same time, professionalism. It surely will be a great lesson for life.

SUSTAINABILITY

The *Accueil Migrant* Program is part of a wider and very stable organisation on which it relies, that is, Secours Catholique. The Delegation of Secours Catholique of Marseille includes 4 territories; 17 reception centres and a total of 523 volunteers, 10 employees, including 5 animators and 2 civic

volunteers. Specifically, in *Accueil Migrant* there are currently at least ten volunteers who provide legal aid resources two or three days a week. Secours Catholique runs all its programmes strategically. To this end, it has a body, the Delegation Bureau, that meets approximately every two weeks to plan and deliberate about its action as a charitable entity. Furthermore, the members of the Bureau meet the Archbishop several times in the year, to sustain the bond with the local Catholic Church.

Secours Catholique represents the main funding source of *Accueil Migrant*.

Volunteers of *Accueil Migrant* are often in contact with national and local authorities, especially with those offices competent in migration issues, to have exact information and thus facilitate effective legal assistance.

Since it works in geographical areas where it is not the only humanitarian actor operating in the migration field, *Accueil Migrant* participates in coordination mechanisms to better allocate and diversify resources and services, ensuring full coverage of the demands for aid in the territory. In particular, *Accueil Migrant* works in collaboration with another charitable association in Marseille named Secours Populaire. The two organisations complement each other, since the first one usually refers its users to the latter one to receive what it is not able to provide, that is food and clothes.

Regarding internal organisational aspects, from the interview with Françoise Lecompte emerged the necessity to choose carefully the space available to dedicate to each migrant the provision of legal services involves handling sensitive information, which must be managed safely and confidentially, ensuring greater privacy.

There is another critical point to improve upon in the managing of the Program. It concerns the lack of data collection or statistics about the activities carried out, which would be useful to better assess past actions and to optimise the forthcoming steps. Still, it's possible to state that the Program receives about **1000 people a year**.

Notwithstanding, *Accueil Migrant* has thought about future good resolutions to grow and improve its services. Among these is the empowering of the proficiency of the volunteers of Secours Catholique concerning the rights of foreigners. At the same time, it will be committed to strengthening their team.

TO PROTECT

10. INFOLINE FOR FOREIGNERS



Source: <https://www.charita.cz/aktuality/z-domova/nabizime-pomoc-cizincum-v-ceske-republice/>

Verb: to protect

Country: Czech Republic

Initiative: to provide counselling and information

Beneficiaries: foreigners

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: hotline service for foreigners, counselling centres

Duration of project: 2008 - on going

Source of funds: public funds and private donors

Website: <https://svet.charita.cz/>

Catholic Church organisations involved and contacts: *Caritas Czech Republic, Klára Boumová, Migration Coordinator of Caritas Czech Republic, Email: klara.boumova@charita.cz*

INTRODUCTION

The tradition of Caritas Czech Republic in helping the poor and the suffering began during the First Republic in 1919.

Among a wide range of assistance aimed at people in need of aid, part of its action is dedicated to fostering the integration of foreigners into the social fabric of the country, mostly through activities carried out by counselling centres.

At Caritas's counselling centres the staff helps users in several fields, depending on the individual needs. It provides information and orientation about housing, healthcare services, and employment. It offers also social assistance and legal advice, especially on foreign law and, more specifically, residence permits. To ensure more effective service, when the situation requires more attention, the staff of Caritas accompanies clients to government offices, including to meetings at the Department of Asylum and Migration Policy of the Ministry of the Interior. When it is necessary, the staff also accompanies foreigners to other essential services, such as schools or hospitals, and ensures interpreting and translation. Moreover, Caritas Czech Republic provides food and material assistance to foreigners in need, as well as to residents in precarious situations.

Individual Caritas organisations offer basic Czech-language classes and socio-cultural skills courses focused on the integration of foreign nationals into society. In addition, they organise music and sewing workshops and a second-hand clothing collection.

Furthermore, Caritas organises various social events with an intercultural theme, which help to break down stereotypes and prejudices between the majority society and minorities, as well as lectures and discussions for students.

Infolines for foreigners

In addition to the aforementioned services scattered in different dioceses, Caritas has activated since 2008 a hotline service for foreigners, who can use it throughout the country.

The helpline is specifically targeted at Ukrainians, Vietnamese and Mongolians who live and work in the Czech Republic, as well as the authorities and institutions that come into contact with them via telephone or other digital communication platforms. The service is anonymous and free of charge and all the operators are of the Ukrainians, Vietnamese and Mongolian mother tongues, to ensure better understanding between

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them and the users. The Infoline provides a wide range of information and assistance, but the issues covered by the Infoline differ by nationality. Interpreting and translation receive the greatest interest on the Vietnamese Infoline, while matters connected with residence status are most frequently addressed on the Mongolian and Ukrainian lines.

The Infoline operators provide the following assistance:

- information on the stay of foreigners in the Czech Republic;
- information on employment, social services, health care and education;
- information and psychosocial support in dealing with difficult life situations;
- support in filling out official forms by phone;
- translation and interpreting in cases related to the above-mentioned topics.

With the outbreak of the pandemic of COVID-19 and the multitude of challenges that it provoked, the Infoline for foreigners was the only service that was not forced to stop or to make significant changes. On the contrary, it was extremely active during the health emergency, because an extraordinary increase in the number of calls occurred. In the first wave, the inquiries mainly pertained to residence issues and current regulations, which were constantly changing and were not sufficiently clear for the population. To cope with this new high demand for assistance and to cover as many requests as possible, the service expanded its working hours. The Infoline for Ukrainians in these times was especially busy. Klára Boumová, the Migration Coordinator of Caritas Czech Republic, during an interview conducted online, underlined the dramatic situation that many Ukrainians lived through especially during the first wave of the virus and explained: *"The migration from Ukraine to the Czech Republic is circular and always on the move. Therefore, when the government closed the borders, a lot of families were forced to remain separated. Certainly, it was big trouble! Thus, they often called us to have information on the rules to return to their home country"*. Also, there was an increase in calls because many persons were fired and lost their incomes.

The Infoline received a total of 1.947 enquiries in 2020 (in 2019 the enquiries were 1.313).

Beyond the work of the Infoline, to deal with the emergencies triggered by the COVID-19, Caritas Czech Republic was committed on several fronts, and, through its network of counselling centres, it assisted people who were often completely helpless.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought several challenges and changes to the services. Caritas was the only institution that worked in these troubled times without pause to give people hope and reassurance.

Immediately at the beginning of the pandemic, Caritas set up a crisis staff, which coordinated the singular steps to be taken nationwide.

In March 2020, before the declaration of the state of emergency and the subsequent measures implemented by the Czech government, Caritas Czech Republic took the initiative and implemented measures that were necessary to protect the health of its beneficiaries and employees and cancelled all mass events. Many employees were transferred to other services that needed additional staff. Thanks to these measures, it was possible to halt the transmission of the disease among both our clients and employees and, in the meanwhile, to ensure the functionality of the services.

When in-person group meetings became impossible in the spring of 2020, Caritas quickly found a solution and began organising online courses to continue the previous work. Furthermore, to show closeness to the most vulnerable it offered psychological assistance through its crisis lines.

The Caritas Czech Republic played a significant role in facing the total lack of personal protective equipment that initially occurred in the country. To deal with this necessity, it organised a workshop in several dioceses aimed at sewing masks. Once they were able to produce these in substantial quantities, distribution centres were established in several locations. Moreover, Caritas ordered a reserve of protective and other medical equipment at the end of summer. The order included respirators, protective clothing and vinyl gloves. Some Caritas organisations purchased test kits and, thanks to the nurses involved in Caritas, they started testing their employees and users in October 2020, far in advance of the implementation of government requirements. Nearly 280.000 tests were purchased. The Caritas Czech Republic also launched the fundraising campaign *On a Wave of Help against Helplessness* and then used the profits to buy oxygenators.

RELEVANCE

Caritas helps foreign nationals living in the Czech Republic to become good members of the host society with all associated rights, as well as responsibilities. Through the provision of free professional social and legal counselling and of the Infoline, the work of Caritas is essential as it offers help to foreigners who find themselves in an emergency or situations that they cannot resolve on their own. Fostering the resolution of their biggest challenges in integration, Caritas strives to ensure that the coexistence of migrants and the rest of the society is not accompanied by troubles and misunderstandings.

Furthermore, the work of Caritas in the Czech Republic significantly flanks the action of state institutions in dealing with the issue related to the presence of foreigners in the territory and gives a valuable contribution to the management of this complex reality.

INNOVATIVENESS

Though it may seem banal, one of the most remarkable aspects of this Good Practice is that it works by telephone. Indeed, in the Czech Republic services for immigrants are concentrated only in the biggest cities, leaving a gap of assistance in the rest of the country. Therefore, there was a great necessity of this support provided by the Infolines, since without this many people living in small villages would have been helpless. Klára Boumová in the abovementioned online interview highlighted also other important aspects: *"The workers at the hotline are Ukrainians, Vietnamese and Mongolian citizens so the clients trust them. Moreover, because the contact is by phone it's anonymous and they are not scared due to their legal status that often is irregular. Sometimes they have some big issue to report, such as violence, so for them this is easier by phone."* The Infolines guarantee anonymity and confidentiality, which in challenging situations is very important to foster so people in need feel comfortable asking for help. Moreover, the nationality of the operators facilitates communication, understanding and, to some extent, trust and confidence. Added Klára Boumová: *"We simply serve people, for us it is the same if they are citizens or foreigners".*

IMPACT

Caritas has extensive experience assisting refugees, i.e., applicants for asylum and persons who have been granted international protection. In 2020, it helped persons from various countries such as Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Syria, Russia, Iraq, Uzbekistan, China, and Myanmar for instance, to whom it provided professional social and legal counselling services.

Regarding more specifically the helplines, they serve the Ukrainians, Vietnamese and Mongolians who live and work in the Czech Republic, as well as the authorities and institutions that serve them. They can all use the interpreting service, for example.

During the first waves of the pandemic, the Good Practice had a major impact, given the limited operation and sometimes unavailability of government offices and the closure of borders. These closures provoked large complications for foreign nationals. The anti-epidemic measures sometimes made it impossible for families to be together. Thus, Caritas worked with the Department of Asylum and Migration Policy of the Ministry of the Interior and other migration authorities to provide people with the information they needed and to help them deal with their immediate needs.

Statistics of services provided

- number of professional social counselling clients: 20,583
- number of consultations in the area of professional social counselling: 34,695
- number of legal counselling clients: 396
- number of clients receiving assistance at the Department of Asylum and Migration: 3,488
- number of applicants for asylum and persons granted international protection: 99
- number of clients in Czech language courses: 556
- number of clients in sociocultural orientation courses: 119
- number of Infoline enquiries: 1947
- number of employees: 120

SUSTAINABILITY

Operations of the service are mainly supported with funding from an aid programme of the Ministry of the Interior and by the City of Prague. Additional funding for the projects is provided by the Three Kings Collection, the biggest fundraiser in the country, organised by Caritas. It consists of a charity drive that every Christmas involves children dressed up as Kašpar, Melichar and Baltazar, the three wise men going from house to house, carolling and leaving their initials – 'K + M + B' – above the door frames as a symbol of blessing, as they collect money for the needy. The "Three-Kings Collection" includes a collection of 14.727 cashboxes that generate millions of Euros every year to support local charities, diocesan projects, and provide relief to humanitarian aid projects such as after the devastating Southeast Asia tsunami in 2004.

The largest volume of financial support covers costs of professional services, office operations and costs associated with the development of information technologies and meeting requirements for the technical quality of access to information systems.

Efficient use of financial resources and maximum transparency is essential in the Caritas Czech Republic. Therefore, the accounts are kept by professional external auditors and the financial statements are compiled as required by law.

Representatives of Caritas Czech Republic are active in several working groups focused on migration and integration. They collaborate with local authorities, the state administration, non-profit organisations, and other entities in the field of migration and strive to ensure peaceful coexistence and fair conditions for all. At the same time, Caritas Czech Republic is a partner of UN agencies (UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, etc.) and the European Commission, and cooperates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Czech Development Agency, embassies and other international organisations.

TO PROMOTE

1. SPARE TIME IN MACEDONIA



Verb: to promote

Country: North Macedonia

Initiative: to offer support and to organize spare time activities

Beneficiaries: asylum seeker of the asylum centre

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: cultural visits, trips, gardening

Duration of project: ongoing

Source of funds: Caritas

Website: <https://www.caritas.org/where-caritas-work/europe/macedonia/>

Catholic Church organisations involved and contacts: *Caritas Macedonia. Dolores Poletto, Email dpolettomc@gmail.com*

INTRODUCTION

Caritas Macedonia is the humanitarian organisation of the Catholic Church in Macedonia. It was founded in 1991 in Skopje to help those who are most in need regardless of nationality, religion and political ideologies.

From the outset, Caritas Macedonia's humanitarian assistance has provided vital relief items such as food, clothing and medical assistance to the most vulnerable groups of people, especially after the war in Kosovo in 1999 and the Macedonian conflict of 2001. When in 2015 tens of thousands of migrants, mostly from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, crossed through Macedonian territory to reach Europe throughout the so-called "Balkan Route", Caritas promptly responded, locating its resources at the border crossing point at the entrance and at the exit of the country, where the two Transit centres of Gevgelija and Tabanovce are now located. Here migrant people used to live in unacceptable conditions marked by poor hygiene and poor nutrition, sometimes enduring degrading treatment. The condition of the majority of migrants, who often arrive in Macedonia outside legal pathways, sometimes falling into the dangerous traps of the smugglers, is exacerbated by the lack of any kind of recognition of their legal status, so that is not simple for them to enjoy civil rights, such as, among others, the access to the health system.

The challenging situation in Macedonia has received visibility before the eyes of the world thanks to the Apostolic Journey of Pope Francis in 2019, who spoke on that occasion words of encouragement in regard to the troubling issue of migration that the country needed to tackle. This was reported in his general audience on Wednesday, 8 May 2019: "*With my visit, I wanted to encourage above all its traditional ability to host different ethnic and religious groups; as well as its commitment to welcoming and assisting a large number of migrants and refugees during the critical period of 2015 and 2016. There is great welcome there. They have a big heart. The migrants create some issues for them, but they welcome them and they love them and they resolve the issues. A round of applause for these people! North Macedonia is a young nation from an institutional point of view; a small country in need of opening up to wide horizons without losing its roots. This is why it was significant that the encounter with young people took place precisely there. **Young people of different Christian denominations and also of other religions – Muslims, for example** – all of them united in their desire to build something beautiful in life [...]*"

Currently, Caritas Macedonia is committed in the two transit centres of the country and the centre for asylum seekers. In the first facilities, it offers a service of cooking and distribution of meals, while in the latter the main goal is to accompany migrants during their free time. To his end, the volunteers organise meetings to explain the local culture, excursions, as well as practical workshops. Among these practical activities, the practice of horticulture has a special relevance, with which asylum seekers learn to grow fresh vegetables. Besides all these structured initiatives, volunteers accompany beneficiaries simply by spending their time with them or offering friendship with a chat.

In front of the COVID-19 health emergency, the staff of Caritas Macedonia have been making brave efforts to maintain contact with refugees and migrants and it has done so in increasingly creative ways. Access to facilities was denied to volunteers from the beginning of the pandemic until the summer of 2020. Thus, in-person collaboration had to stop for a while, but this time proved to be fruitful since it was used to re-think ways to stand close to migrants, in compliance with the recommended health precautions. Then, as the confinement measures were loosened, they implemented outdoor activities and organised several excursions. Asylum seekers were taken outside the reception centre and led through nature or the streets of the city to better know and understand the local environment and culture.

For most of these people, these initiatives represented their first experience with life abroad, where they discovered a place different from their hometown. Therefore, it became an important experience before they resumed their journeys to other European countries. Despite Macedonia having its own specific culture which does not coincide in many respects with the European one, for these migrants the visits to Skopje were a kind of taste of life in western countries. They started to gain confidence not only in themselves in a new situation, but also with the surrounding reality. It was an occasion to prepare them to deal with new environments, but with the safe accompaniment of the volunteers of Caritas.

RELEVANCE

The main goal of this Good Practice is to use well the spare time of the asylum seekers stuck in the reception centre. During an interview conducted via Skype, Dolores Poletto, a volunteer in Caritas Macedonia said: "*They freely*

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say they don't want to stay in Macedonia, but we want to stay close, to become friends, make sure they can find someone to talk to. We go on trips, we take them to the museum, to the zoo, we introduce them to something about us and our culture. Or we organise some laboratory or workshop, lately we have planned to hold a photography course. But now we take advantage of the good weather to take them out. Let's have a coffee with them!"

Macedonia has always traditionally been considered by migrants as a land of passage before arriving in other countries in Europe so that they usually plan to stay as short a time as possible. Notwithstanding, volunteers of Caritas Macedonia seek to create occasions of encounter with the asylum seekers. They do not simply strive to make these people feel welcomed, but, more than this, they aim to open the way towards sharing and achieving a real communion of human beings.

According to the words of Dolores Poletto expressed in the interview: *"Our strength is that we are a small organisation. Since there are not too many structures, we are more familiar. With migrants we have a more direct relationship, we know their names, we have a coffee together, we say goodbye: there is a warmer relationship"*. Rather than provide a kind of assistance that is perceived as imposed and intrusive by the beneficiaries, the volunteers are focused on the exchange of perspectives with the migrants. Volunteers are always careful about respecting the dignity and diversity, as well as the cultural backgrounds, of the migrants. The relevance of this Good Practice resides mainly in the mutual recognition and understanding that characterises the relationship between volunteers and beneficiaries. It is also a bond based on reciprocity where both parties are actively involved to realise a fraternal and peaceful meeting. Dolores Poletto added during the interview: *"We should learn about their culture from them and they should learn about ours. This should be a natural exchange. Sometimes I feel that there are difficulties on both sides since it's hard to awaken the motivation of people who have suffered so much. There are certain things that we cannot understand; we still have to learn how they communicate. It takes time to get to know each other and to create the conditions for this; it is a long process"*.

INNOVATIVENESS

To better understand the innovation brought by this Good Practice it is important to consider the environment in which all these efforts take place.

Indeed, the social context in Macedonia is a quite troubling matter, being afflicted by several other social problems, first of all, poverty, so that there is not a great sensitivity towards migrants whose rights are often neglected. In this context without the courageous commitment of the volunteers, the needs of these vulnerable persons would be completely forgotten.

IMPACT

According to the words of Dolores Poletto expressed in the interview: *"We cannot report great results in terms of integration in Macedonian society, since migrants plan to stay here just for the time necessary to obtain asylum, but we can talk about preparation for integration"*. Indeed, thanks to these initiatives, asylum seekers at least begin to learn to familiarise themselves with different habits and lifestyles. Moreover, through the encounter with the volunteers, they start to approach different local environments. But the most important goal that Dolores Poletto referred to is another: *"However, there is an integration in our hearts by creating this relationship. Just giving a smile means a lot"*.

To sustain this friendly relationship, Caritas Macedonia is constantly present and available to listen to the beneficiaries' needs. Being present, volunteers have a concrete occasion to know of their feelings and their opinions. Furthermore, by doing so, they can give voice to these particularly vulnerable people that very often are voiceless.

SUSTAINABILITY

Assuring the stability of the work towards migrants requires networking with other charitable organisations. Caritas Macedonia has carried out several initiatives with the support of other members of the Caritas network. Indeed, it is a member of Caritas International as well as of Caritas Europa, even though Macedonia is still not part of the European Union but is only a candidate. This fact should be underlined, since the exclusion from the European Union means also the exclusion from several opportunities, such as calls or joined projects. As a consequence, Caritas Macedonia cannot rely on European funding to implement its activities. Notwithstanding,

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Caritas Macedonia can count on the economic support of the network to which it belongs.

Indeed, to guarantee the financial sustainability of this Good Practice, external fund are essential, given the lack of financial resources of Caritas Macedonia. Specifically, as for the current activities, Caritas Macedonia is economically supported by the Italian Caritas.

Moreover, if on one side there is not a significant interaction with local authorities, on the other side there is a very close relationship with the local Catholic Church and this is also witnessed by the fact that the local bishop serves as President of Caritas Macedonia.

Regarding the operational dimension of this Good Practice, there is a critical point that remains a significant obstacle to the interaction with local communities. It is represented by the locations of the two transit centres, that are at the border of the country, far from the towns, so it is hard to reach them. Thus, citizens are discouraged from going there and so helping the migrants resident in these places is very difficult. The volunteers involved are currently only four. To find new volunteers Caritas also tries to work with individuals from the parishes. However, the Catholic community is small; in Skopje there is only one Catholic parish, the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Notwithstanding, there are also Orthodox among the volunteers.. Dolores Poletto said: *"We do not make distinctions; it is important that they share our values and that they want to help"*.

2. INTEGRATION SERVICES IN THE SWISS SOCIETY



Source: <https://jrs-schweiz.ch/projekte/>

Verb: to promote

Country: Switzerland

Initiative: reception and integration of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers

Beneficiaries: refugees and asylum-seekers

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: integration services

Duration of Project: from 2010 - ongoing

Source of funds: private donors

Website: <https://jrs-schweiz.ch/>

Catholic organisations involved and contacts: *JRS Switzerland; Hirschengraben 74 - CH 8001 Zürich; Christoph Albrecht (christoph.albrecht@jesuiten.org)*

INTRODUCTION

JRS Switzerland has been active in the field of reception and integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers for a long time. Several smaller projects have been launched in Switzerland since 2010 in Basel and since 2017

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also in Zurich, such as the establishment of meeting points, an internet café and German courses. In addition, pastoral care and support for people, visits to the prison, visits to emergency structures, international networking in case of forced departures and deportations have also been organised over time. The projects are integrated into the European Jesuit Refugee Service and in cooperation with other solidarity groups and networks. One of the crucial purposes that permeate the work of JRS Switzerland is to advise parishes and communities that grant ecclesiastical asylum to refugees, in order to support them in all legal issues that may arise from the asylum process. In this way, it helps to give public visibility to these people on the one hand, and on the other hand to foster debate in Swiss society about developments in asylum policy. Additionally, during the years a wide network has been set up, composed by other organisations such as the Observatory, Vivre Ensemble, European Citizens' Forum, Solidarité sans frontières, and Sant'Egidio.

RELEVANCE

JRS Switzerland has the primary purpose of providing accompaniment and support to unrecognised asylum seekers. As these activities are wide-ranging and far-reaching, additional activities related to these objectives are carried out in the course of these projects that broaden the sphere of support and protection towards these people. Therefore, activities are carried out aimed at breaking the sphere of isolation in which these people live, often due to institutional bureaucratic inefficiencies. This is to ensure that even the unrecognised refugees have the possibility of social integration as long as they remain in Switzerland. The activities carried out by JRS Switzerland, therefore, contribute to creating a culture of welcome that is socially and culturally appropriate in Switzerland. The two main areas where the activities of JRS Switzerland develop are accompaniment and support.

The first area aims at accompanying these people in their difficult journey, especially those refugees whose story does not provide sufficient evidence for the acknowledgement of refugee status. The return journey to their country of origin is not an option for them, which means that they do not know to which country they could go. This has the consequence that they cannot be forcibly evicted by the authorities, and they can remain as emergency aid recipients for an indefinite period - that is possible for years, hidden as Sans-Papiers in Switzerland. In this case, they have no

right of residence, no right to education and work. This is the reason why JRS Switzerland supports solidarity groups and individual committed people in their efforts not to leave these people alone through casual offers for German conversation and exchange on various topics, depending on the interests of the people involved. Pastoral care is another fundamental element in the strategy of assisting and helping refugees, apart from their religious affiliation, mainly as a spiritual accompaniment that can help them gain a new view of their own reality.

According to what has been specified on the website of the organisation, pastoral care *"related to a practice that can be described as mental hygiene. Getting involved for and with people in need can in itself be a sensible step in dealing with outrage and pain about the unjust and marginalising processes in our society."*

The second main area of activity is providing support for refugees. Those who apply for asylum in Switzerland need to make many decisions, like, for example, their place of residence for perhaps several years, how they will get around, the choice of a doctor, setting up their apartment, etc. Sometimes these choices are forced upon asylum seekers by authorities or employees of private care organisations. Asylum seekers find themselves forced into incapacitating situations in different ways. According to what has been highlighted during the interview, JRS Switzerland focuses on active steps aimed at increasing autonomy and freedom of choice of asylum-seekers. This happens by supporting those who are confronted with a negative decision in their self-chosen integration efforts. This includes, among other possibilities, arranging German or other courses, co-financing tickets and subscriptions, which are particularly important for those who are housed in remote locations, as well as general support in the search for finding accommodation, equipping them with (used) laptops, etc.

IMPACT

Among the results highlighted by Christoph Albrecht during the interview, a specific place has been established for a group of young Afghans that received protection from deportation and received then a legal status that permits them to stay in Switzerland. Additionally, they also received professional training and have found opportunities in the Swiss labour market. According to the data provided by JRS Switzerland, in the last 11 years, the organisation

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has been able to assist roughly 1000 people, which is a relevant amount of people in a relatively small country such as Switzerland. Moreover, JRS has been able to promote a profound change in the situation of the non-recognized refugees in Swiss society. It helped in raising awareness about the conditions of these people, advocating for their integration in the country. This aspect, often neglected in the past in migration and reception policies, is one of the results most emphasised during the interview. Although difficult to quantify, the effects of this awareness emerge from the public, media and political debate, now much more aware of the criticality of this situation and the need for a holistic approach in order to solve these problems.

INNOVATIVENESS

The most innovative aspect underlined during the interview is the ability of these activities to bring refugees together, developing a sense of community even among themselves. Most of them discover, throughout the days spent with JRS, ways to help each other in order to build a community. This aims not just at integrating these people inside Swiss society, but also among themselves. Through the difficult experiences they have faced in their lives, they are able to share their knowledge, enriching each other and making their integration in the new country easier. The construction of a community, in fact, according to what Christoph Albrecht stressed several times during the interview, is a crucial element for promoting a complete integration of refugees. The purpose of these projects, therefore, and the element that would distinguish them from other similar experiments attempted in Switzerland, is to heal the person as a whole, not merely to satisfy material needs. The growth of the person through the encounter and knowledge of the experiences of each refugee can allow them to heal the wounds produced by a terrible past, and at the same time connect them with the deep feelings of Swiss society. As highlighted above, this method of interaction has raised public awareness in the country of the stories and difficulties of these people.

SUSTAINABILITY

JRS Switzerland has developed an important network of collaborations with other organisations, especially in areas outside of its major areas of

service. For example, legal advice and support is not a strong point of JRS Switzerland. This is the reason why it developed a network of alliances with lawyers and other associations able to provide such a crucial service to refugees and asylum-seekers. The relationship with local parishes is another crucial step in guaranteeing future sustainability and efficiency to the activities of JRS Switzerland. Since 2010, all of the funds available for JRS Switzerland were derived from donations, both private and from organisations. In the last months, following the pandemics, the income of funds has been drastically reduced, impacting the sustainability of these activities in the medium-long period.

In addition, a vast network of partner organisations has been built over the years to ensure greater sustainability for the projects developed by JRS Switzerland. These include the following:

- *Charta migration network*
- *Swiss National Commission Justitia et Pax*
- *Swiss Observatory for Asylum and Immigration Law*
- *Vivre Ensemble*
- *European Citizens' Forum*
- *Sant'Egidio Switzerland*
- *Solidarité sans Frontières*
- *Contact points for Sans-Papiers*
- *Solinetz Zurich*
- *Solinetz Bern*
- *Solinetz Luzern*
- *Freiplatz-Aktion*
- *Where injustice becomes just ...*
- *Mitenand Community Basel*
- *Jesuit Refugee Service Germany*
- *Service des Jésuites au Réfugés in France*
- *Centro Astalli Italy*
- *JRS Austria*
- *Jesuit Refugee Service in Europe*
- *JRS International*

The Covid-19 pandemic has deeply affected the activities of JRS Switzerland and has had a huge impact on the whole country. In 2020, there were more than 450.000 cases with more than 7000 victims in Switzerland. JRS Switzerland, accordingly, has been forced to put in place some measures

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to tackle this issue. During the time of measures against the Covid pandemic, visits and common meals have not been allowed. Most of the meetings among the volunteers in different organisations were held by Zoom or other digital platforms. But during the whole period, the staff continued to meet the non-recognised refugees twice a week - not in the camp, but just outside on the street, always with the required physical distance. So, everybody who needed to keep in touch with the organisation had the opportunity to do so. Additionally, JRS led a campaign to force public administrations to implement all the anti-Covid measures in refugee accommodations. All these efforts allowed JRS Switzerland to go on with their projects and to assure sustainability for their activities and the people assisted.

3. MIGRANTS PROJECT – SICILY



Source: <http://www.internationalunionsuperiorsgeneral.org/mission/migrants/>

Verb: to promote

Country: Italy

Initiative: to support migrants in their daily life

Beneficiaries: migrants and refugees

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: accompaniment, inclusion

Duration of project: 2015 to present

Source of funds: UISG -International Union Superiors General, Catholic Church, private donors

Website: <http://www.internationalunionsuperiorsgeneral.org/it/missione/migranti/>

Catholic Church organisations involved and contacts: *UISG -International Union Superiors General, Sr. Florence de la Villeon, Sr. Celina Stangherlin*
Email: rete.migranti@uisg.org

INTRODUCTION

On the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life, in 2014, Pope Francis urged all consecrated people *to come out of themselves and go forth to the **existential peripheries**. "Go into all the world"; these were the last words which Jesus spoke to his followers and which he continues to address to us (cf. Mk 16:15). [..] He also asks you to work concretely in welcoming refugees, drawing near to the poor, and finding creative ways to catechize,*

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proclaim the Gospel and teach others how to pray." In response to the call of Pope Francis in 2015 UISG -the International Union Superiors General - launched the Migrants-Sicily Project, a new inter-congregational and intercultural initiative to bear witness to the message of the Gospel and show that different cultures, nationalities and languages can live together. It involves Sisters coming from different countries and different congregations, who create a network to become the bridge between migrants and the local population of the Sicilian dioceses of Agrigento, Caltanissetta and Caltagirone. With different charisms, the consecrated women are committed to being a presence alongside migrants offering them help and solidarity.

The mission of UISG in Sicily is broad and it entails both initiatives aimed at satisfying immediate material needs and activities designed to foster the integration process of the migrant population. Essentially, it comprises two main areas of work: accompaniment and integration into the community.

In the framework of the first dimensions, the sisters offer assistance to cope with the challenges that migrants have to deal with in their daily lives from the moment of their arrival in Sicily. The first question "Where to go?". Thus, accompaniment means primarily an orientation about the specific services located in the territory, such as offices of doctors and lawyers, depending on the specific demands of each person. Often, the nuns even accompany physically their beneficiaries, to ensure they have access to the assistance they need. Moreover, since one of the main points of trouble is language barriers, sisters act as interpreters and provide translations.

Regarding the second area of work, UISG strives to approach and introduce the foreign community to the local community. To this end, they collaborate with the diocesan *Migrantes* Office and with the local parishes, which represent the first point of meeting between nuns and migrants. The core moment of this encounter has been the celebration of sacraments, including confirmation and baptism, for some of them. Indeed, some parishioners have decided to be a godparent, becoming in this way both a point of reference and a friend for the newly arrived. Furthermore, preparation sessions were organised in the parish with the main purpose of helping young migrants live the experience of being a community. The participation of these people in the local Church people is constant and steady by now.

To foster integration, UISG focuses also on job insertion. It struggles to find a job for migrants, and, towards this purpose, it makes contact with local enterprises, especially in the countryside. In particular, the job insertion of

women is a matter of particular concern for UISG since they are particularly at risk of falling into the trap of sexual exploitation.

However, the UISG's work in Sicily is hard to classify into strict schemes due to the variety of circumstances that they have to face. As Sr. Celina Stangherlin, a Sister who works in the mission of Caltanissetta reported during an interview: *"The project changes day by day because new realities arise every day. For instance, one day maybe they come with an expulsion order and then you have to call the lawyers, another day they need to go to the hospital and so on. It is a job that changes and becomes new every day. It requires a lot of flexibility; every day is like starting over. We simply walk with them, we do a work of accompaniment and presence"*.

The creativity and flexibility of the Sisters reached their peak in the time of the pandemic. Due to the stoppage of some working activities in the towns, it was possible to involve more people in the charitable activities of UISG. Thus, many parishioners have offered their willingness to help. Thanks to the effort of some volunteers and of the nuns, an online workshop was organised with the purpose to teach migrant women about the profession of caregiver for the elderly, with the final aim to train them for an occupation and remove them from the street. Local professionals, such as doctors, social workers and even a physiotherapist took part in this initiative so that everyone could add their expertise to carry out the work.

Furthermore, in these challenging times, UISG has been called on to express their charity towards the most in need also economically. Since distance learning in schools has revealed the lack of informatics tools among the migrant population, UISG bought a tablet for all the children who otherwise would not have been able to attend the lessons.

RELEVANCE

The final goal of the project is to ensure that migrants can acquire the tools and conditions which are necessary for them to continue their path. The sisters tirelessly offer an accompaniment towards integration into the host society, allowing these young people to move forward and carry out their projects and their goals for the future. With this purpose in mind, they are committed to fostering the increase of working autonomy, a good knowledge of the language - Italian - and studies that also allow them to be able

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to integrate better and better in society. At the same time, bearing witness with their own life of the richness of living together, sisters go on tiptoes and educate the local community how to live with others.

INNOVATIVENESS

The project of UISG in Sicily involves and bring together nuns coming from different countries, different congregations and different charisms making diversity the common ground with migrants and, in the meanwhile, the point of strength. Sr. Celina in the interview pointed out this aspect very well: *"We realised we were like them because we came here from all over the world. We are from different congregations and backgrounds, each of us has our own culture, experience, etc., so that living together is not easy and it requires a deep acceptance of each other. This coexistence has helped us to know how to welcome the other. Thus, I have experienced inside this thing that makes me say "this is what I have to give to migrants in need". They are waiting and they are hungry to be welcomed and accepted and recognized"*.

The sisters of UISG have experienced interculturality and integration throughout community life, which has taught them that, despite the difficulties, living together is possible starting from our differences.

They are more sensitive and attentive to the suffering and fatigue of those who arrive in a foreign land, having personally experienced, in a certain sense on their skin, what it means to feel foreigners and guests not always desired, or barely tolerated by some services in which they thought that they would be accepted.

Another advantage of the multicultural background of the sisters regards the language and the related removal of the barriers deriving from linguistic diversity. Indeed, speaking different languages facilitates contacts and often allows them to create free relationships with migrants who land on the coasts of Sicily, listening to their terrible stories. The language skills of the nuns have also proved to be relevant in a more practical way since they can offer support in translation and as interpreters.

Coming from different realities, the sisters of UISG carry out this project through the eloquence of their lives, becoming a testimony of hospitality and of the spirit of living together.

IMPACT

Sisters in the dioceses of Agrigento, Caltanissetta and Caltagirone go throughout the streets to meet migrants, really perceive their needs and intercept the most problematic challenges to deal with. Due to this way of proceeding that is open to everyone, it is difficult to estimate the number of subjects assisted, but it's possible to estimate the value of this work. In the abovementioned interview, Sr. Celine underlined the impact that their work has on these people: *"Our job is to be sisters alongside families, young people, those we meet day by day; we always walk along the road. They say that it is difficult for them to be accepted there so, when they find someone who listens to them, they take courage and hope. I feel they see us as people they can share with. Now they no longer have the same problems as when they arrived, for instance with the residence permit. Now they just try to live, not survive, living with relationships, having close people, people they can turn to for help"*.

Also, the parishes have expressed welcoming signs and taken important steps towards these foreigners, inviting them to participate in the community's life. Thus, migrants have started to regularly participate in the celebration of the Mass, which is celebrated also in English, and they are becoming active members of the local Church, that on the other hand is opening its doors to the newly arrived on the island. Migrants are familiarising themselves with the territory and its inhabitants, developing a sense of belonging and, in the meanwhile, reducing the sense of isolation and social irrelevance. These should be regarded as positive signs that tell us there is a positive movement on-going among the locals, who are opening up and approaching, without any prejudice, with a spirit of welcome and hospitality.

Furthermore, UISG is by now well introduced into the local environment weaving relationships and creating networks useful to better cope with their mission to help migrants in their material needs and their integration.

SUSTAINABILITY

Before the launching of the project, UISG proposed to the Sisters a specific training on the migratory phenomenon and during this time they also started to learn to live together in a community. Thanks to this experience they arrived in Sicily very well prepared for the challenges of the mission with

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the necessary skills and capacities. Moreover, the nuns in Sicily are always supervised by UISG and the superiors to verify and ensure the efficiency of their work. From the beginning, the team from Rome, where UISG is based, has come down regularly to Sicily almost every month. On one hand, the visits are essential to be aware of the situation to offer accompaniment, support and encouragement to the nuns. The accompaniment is important not only for the individual sister but for the whole community and for the respective bishops who recognize the presence of the Institutes alongside their sisters. On the other hand, these visits allow UISG to make an evaluation, and then, if necessary, to make a revision of the projects and a redefinition of its objective.

UISG also weaves relations with civil and ecclesial authorities to collaborate in building and achieving shared goals and to this end, it works together with the parish, Migrants Office, Caritas and UISG.

UISG takes charge of the economic sustainability of the project, procuring both from religious congregations and from private donors the necessary funds to financially support the Sisters' mission.

Despite the firmness and stability of the project, it needs to involve a greater number of nuns, since the work is too hard to be faced by just a few.

4. AWALE PROJECT



Source: <https://www.fisat.es/proyecto-awale-cartagena/>

Verb: to promote

Country: Spain

Initiative: to foster the integration process through the development of language skills

Beneficiaries: regular refugees

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: Spanish lessons

Duration of project: 2008 – to present.

Source of funds: public funds

Website: <https://www.fisat.es/>

Catholic Church organisations involved and contacts: *Fundación Iniciativa Solidaria Ángel Tomás (FISAT) of Cartagena; David Barqueros Húngaros, Director Plataforma Social Salesiana Cartagena, Email: david.barqueros@fisat.es.*

INTRODUCTION

The **Fundación Iniciativa Solidaria Ángel Tomás (FISAT)** was born in 2008, continuing the work carried out by the Don Bosco Association for Cooperation, to promote the social projects of the Salesian Province of Valencia. After more than a decade of activity, it now represents the network of all the social programmes carried out by the Salesians in the Valencian Community and the Region of Murcia.

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Through several projects, FISAT offers residential, socio-educational and labour insertion resources targeting the most vulnerable groups, especially for minors and young people in situations of social exclusion, but also migrants, people with addictions, women and men deprived of liberty or former inmates who need accompaniment in their social and labour insertion.

FISAT currently runs a total of 34 projects spread across eight different locations (Saragossa, Burriana, Valencia San Antonio Abad, Valencia San Juan Bosco, Alcoy, Villena, Alicante, Elche, Cartagena), where it offers a wide range of services, including childcare centres, day centres, emancipation flats, educational support projects, immigrant care projects, urban camps for young people at risk of social exclusion, training programs, and volunteer promotion.

As a part of the Salesian Foundation, **FISAT Cartagena** also is committed to promoting paths of social inclusion of the most vulnerable, with a special concern for the youngest, consistent with Don Bosco's sensitivity. The activities of the Salesians family in Cartagena have long roots since they started even before the birth of the Foundation, eighteen years ago. It all started with work with the inmates of the prison, offering educational activities and means of social reintegration at the end of the time of reclusion. A flat was even bought with the help of the Salesian Congregation, recalls José Joaquín Coma, director of the Casa Salesiana de Cartagena during an interview on Instagram [SOURCE: https://www.instagram.com/tv/CQwFvtaKmE5/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link].

With the closure of the Cartagena prison, projects began to serve another vulnerable social reality: the migrant population. This is how the first project with migrants arose. It was the *Awalé* Project, which offers classes of Spanish language and culture. After these practices were integrated into FISAT, which welcomes the various social resources of the Salesian houses, the *Awalé* projects was replicated in other cities such as Valencia and Alicante, which also have a very significant migrant population.

Awalé is a project that involves many resources, both human and material. It has demonstrated the capacity to reach the highest number of migrants and to be one of the most attractive services for the immigrant community.

This Good Practice aims to promote the social insertion of immigrants, launching a series of designed and structured actions based on cultural and linguistic learning. The project is aimed at migrants, men and women, of dif-

ferent nationalities and ages, residents in Cartagena or its surroundings. To participate in the program, they must own a residence permit.

The main actions carried out are:

- Spanish and literacy classes.
- Cultural, leisure and free-time activities.
- Informatics courses.
- Gender equality workshop.
- Toy lending service (for children of participants, especially women).
- Sports workshop.
- Assemblies.

Awalé Project aims to develop to the maximum the linguistic capacities of the participants but also to make known to them the culture of the host country, as well as of the various countries of origin of each participant, from an intercultural perspective. The final goal is to raise the communicative competencies in the language of the host country of migrants who have arrived in Europe.

With the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, FISAT continued to run all of its programmes, adapted to the restrictions related to the pandemic. During lockdowns, activities moved online in digital communication platforms, developing new learning processes and tools. Indeed, teachers made an exceptional effort preparing special material to continue their work from home and to keep the attention of the students even in these troubled times. Online classes were held and this has also represented a very efficient way to help young migrants come out from the isolation of the confinement.

However, this change has brought unpleasant challenges for these people. Indeed, as services and activities moved online during the lockdown, migrants experienced digital exclusion caused by limited access to equipment and/or the internet and to the common streaming services. During an interview conducted online, David Barqueros Húngaros underlined this concerning aspect: *"During the pandemic, the difficulty was to be connected. There are a lot of people who live without pc, internet connection. These days if you don't have internet you are disconnected from the world"*. If an internet connection is normally considered an essential service in our daily lives, with the pandemic it has turned to be even vital since during the confinement it has been the only tools to figuratively go out, go on with the life and have social contacts.

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Therefore, FISAT had to respond to this new demand and it strived as much as possible to ensure its users had the possibility to stay in contact with the language classes.

After lockdown, FISAT Cartagena reorganised their structures and their programmes to guarantee the resumption of in-person activities. Every measure to prevent transmission was taken: social distancing, reduced number of participants, masks, etc.

The Foundation in figures

- Projects: 34
- Locations: 8
- Volunteers and collaborators: 214
- Paid staff: 156
- Direct beneficiaries: 1,304

RELEVANCE

FISAT Cartagena endorses the values of the Salesian education system with a preferential option for the neediest young people, having confidence in them. FISAT has a positive and hopeful look at the world of young people, helping them to unleash all their potential. In a broader perspective, through educational processes, the project seeks to educate young migrants to integrate into society as responsible citizens for a more just, fraternal and supportive world. For this purpose, the learning of the language of the host country represents a method to be able to participate equally in society. According to the words of José Joaquín Coma, the abovementioned director of FISAT Cartagena, the objective of these resources is "to serve this migrant population so that it can fend for itself." To this end, the learning of the language of the host country has a major role to play in supporting the integration of young migrants into education systems, the labour market and society at large. Being fluent in Spanish is a key element to start any kind of communication. It is also a vehicle for inclusion since it is necessary to create a relationship of proximity with the other and to actively participate in the social environment. Furthermore, mastery of the language helps migrants deal with bureaucratic issues such as papers or other formalities.

Awalé Project works with a methodology that encourages the active participation of users, an aspect that is considered essential to achieve full social

integration of the participants. The core value of its activities is the centrality of the person. In FISAT each person is considered as an active subject, the main protagonist in their process of change and improvement through educational processes. Involving the participants throughout the process, classes represent spaces for debate, reflection and decision-making regarding the direction of the project.

Moreover, in *Awalé* the educational relationship is based on unconditional respect and the presence of educators among migrants is continuous to create a family atmosphere. In FISAT projects the family atmosphere is always a priority, emphasising dialogue and care.

INNOVATIVENESS

This Good Practice stands out as it combines the learning of Spanish with other teaching relevant to the life of each individual. It is a great opportunity that offers various cultural inputs indispensable to fully integrate into the host society. It also gives the occasion to practise some sports, fostering the physical well-being of the users, as well as their social life. Moreover, within *Awalé* Project, classes represent also a moment when teachers promote an attitude of respect and appreciation of gender differences and create resources that encourage participation in equal conditions for women. Doing so, FISAT tries to fill a cultural gap that often exists between migrants and the local population.

Thanks to all these different results that the course can produce, the motivation of the migrants involved to learn the language is more likely to increase since they can see the results in their daily lives. As a consequence, they demonstrate a personal engagement with the language learning process, which is necessary to success.

Besides this aspect, to achieve good results is essential what David Barqueros Húngaros in the interview called charisma: *"We have a special charisma: we never leave people outside. We are always open, we don't close the door to anyone. The environment is very important. People must feel good in our environment"*.

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IMPACT

Awalé is the oldest project in Cartagena and, therefore, the one with the longest trajectory and stability over time. It is a project in which many volunteers participate and in which there is much interaction between people of different nationalities. For all this, it is one of the richest projects in terms of intercultural learning. Through the language course, migrants have achieved personal development, as well as proficiency in the language of the host country. This result has an important impact since sometimes it is required as a necessary step to obtain a regular administrative status. Indeed, some European States are increasingly requiring migrants to attain certain minimum levels of proficiency in the language of the country before they are granted the right to long-term residence and, beyond that, to citizenship.

- 45 migrants learned Spanish from their laptop or telephone in 2020

SUSTAINABILITY

FISAT is committed to quality, responsible volunteering, for the benefit of both the recipients and society and, for this purpose, it provides follow-up, recognition and training. When a person decides to volunteer, they are informed about the different projects of the Foundation. Once they choose the project in which they want to collaborate, they are appointed a tutor who accompanies them in their volunteer work. Then, if a person excels in their involvement, effectiveness and efficiency in the exercise of their work, they are proposed to be a collaborating partner of the Foundation and also to be able to assume some responsibility in the different work teams. Moreover, the Foundation facilitates participation in the training courses organised each year and in the training of the State Coordinator of Salesian Social Platforms of which the Foundation is a member.

Awalé Project FISAT relies on public funds coming mainly from the Region of Murcia, in particular from the General Direction of Social Service and Relation with the Third Sector.

5. WIP PROJECT



Source: <https://www.cser.it/wip-web4neet-due-progetti-di-formazione-per-giovani-migranti-e-rifugiati/>

Verb: to integrate

Country: Italy

Initiative: training aimed at fostering the employability of the beneficiaries

Beneficiaries: young migrants

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: training in digital skills

Duration of project: 2019 to present

Source of funds: ASCS - Scalabrinian Agency for Development Cooperation; Italian Episcopal Conference

Website: www.cser.it

Catholic Church organisations involved and contacts: *CSER Foundation; ASCS - Scalabrinian Agency for Development Cooperation; Lorenzo Prencipe, President of CSER Email presidente@cser.it*

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INTRODUCTION

Launched by the Scalabrinian Missionaries of San Carlo in 1963, the CSER (*Centro Studi Emigrazione* of Rome) is a foundation aimed mainly at studying the phenomenon of migration.

The research activities are aimed at studying human mobility to raise awareness and to train those responsible in the various sectors of migration and, in a broader sense, to shape public opinion, through clarifications and insights.

In addition to its institutional activities, CSER Foundation carries out projects aimed at fostering the inclusion of the migrants in their host community and their integral development in a concrete way, supporting and training migrants and refugees to offer them the opportunity to obtain a job.

In this area, in recent years the CSER Foundation has followed two main lines: on one hand, there are projects focused on innovative communication and awareness-raising intended for citizens and, in particular, for the new generations; on the other hand, there are projects focused on the development of communication and digital skills for the professional integration of young refugees.

To raise awareness of the demanding topic of migration, CSER has worked on enhancing empathic communication mediated by new technologies through the project *Ponte di Dialoghi – Bridges of Dialogues*. It is an immersive and multimedia experience that puts the visitor in a position to relive the migratory journey of the migrant "first-hand" by wearing special viewers.

From this experience, still in progress in schools and also available at the Library of the Emigration Studies Center, synergies and collaborations are born. Thus, other projects for young migrants and refugees for the development of digital skills and the enhancement of communication skills were developed: the "WIP" and "WEB4NEET" Projects.

The *WIP "Professional Training and Culture"* project is aimed at young migrants and refugees who arrived in Italy as unaccompanied foreign minors, while the *WEB4NEET* project is aimed at young migrants in the so-called "neet" condition (Neither in Employment or Education or Training). Both projects offer the opportunity to acquire digital skills useful in the artistic-cultural field and to complete a professional internship in the cultural and non-profit sector.

In particular, this first training cycle is divided into the following courses:

- Digital skills for digital publishing and libraries
- Digital skills for web design
- Digital skills for the creation of photo and video campaigns for social communication

The second phase foresees a period of work in collaboration with the CSER Foundation to concretely carry out projects and activities started in the training phase.

Despite the pandemic and the health emergency, the first training phase took place between February and June 2020 throughout online digital classes. CSER decided to start online courses by putting into practice the digital profile that was the core of the projects. The online meeting with young people has become not only a daily moment of training but of sharing. Online training is a professionalisation tool and also an important community moment in which fears and other difficulties emerge. The enthusiasm of the students and the great professionalism of the teachers made the experience a success.

Between the first and the second waves of coronavirus, when the prevention measures became softer, the modalities of the courses switched to in-person intensive training. In September 2020 the second phase started, alternating the online mode with that in-person instruction, depending on the evolution of the pandemic. Young migrants collaborated at the CSER Foundation in the realisation of various communication and cultural projects, ranging from video narration of life stories to collaboration with the digital library, to supporting the creation of the website.

As for the institutional activities, during 2020 the CSER Foundation continued to work without any stop. Overall, the projects and institutional activities of the CSER have not been severely affected by the restrictions of the health emergency, thanks to an implementation of the digital support used for many activities, such as the library or the magazine.

As a research institute, the CSER Foundation carried out, in addition to the previously mentioned activities, an international research work that led to the production of the report titled *Unasolacasa. Humanity under the test of Covid-19*. It documents the Scalabrinian action to support migrants in the

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current health emergency in the five continents. Furthermore, the CSER Foundation was a partner in the **Unasolacasa fundraising** campaign created by ASCS - Scalabrinian Agency for Development Cooperation - for SIMN - Scalabrini International Migration Network - Europe Africa. Launched at the end of March 2020 by the Scalabrinian missionaries of Europe-Africa, in the first pandemic phase it supported over 14,000 people on the aforementioned continents, raising a total of **80.000 euro**.

RELEVANCE

Over the past few years, CSER Foundation was especially committed to finding new ways to involve young migrants in the local environment and to avoid any kind of stigmatization from their peers. *WIP* Project, as well as *WEB4NEET*, are at first sight aimed at improving the digital and professional skills of young migrants in the view of a future insertion into the job market. The training and professional integration projects, like all Scalabrinian hospitality activities, are also aimed at developing the autonomy of the person. Thus, the final goal of these projects is to ensure an integral and complete development for its beneficiaries, offering them not only skills to find a job but also opportunities to have friends and a friendly environment. Father Lorenzo Prencipe, the President of the Foundation CSER, on the occasion of an interview conducted via email, explained: "*By integral human development we mean precisely this: to accompany the young people who are part of our projects not only to respond independently, like everyone else, to the primary needs of working, having a home and an income, but of having a full community life that allows them to express themselves*". Indeed, throughout these projects, CSER invests not simply in the socio-economic integration of young migrants but fosters their complete growth as a person.

Throughout these initiatives, the Scalabrinian Foundation wants to focus on the voice of the people concerned: young migrants and refugees. The staff puts migrants at the centre of the activity and encourages the expression of their point of view and to share it with other participants. Therefore, young migrants become the principal actors of the awareness process, to allow a narration of the phenomenon that offers both a point of view and a style of communication that is current and above all without filters and superstructures.

INNOVATIVENESS

The main innovative point of this Good Practice resides in the tools that it uses to accomplish such a great mission of raising awareness among the young local population. It brings young migrants to talk to young people through the tools of all young people: blogs, photos, social networks and digital technologies. CSER is one step ahead as it has chosen new channels to reach out to the recipients of its message, that is principally the new generations. This better enables the overcoming of social barriers that often exist between locals and foreigners thanks to the use of common tools that are familiar to everyone.

CSER is deliberately committed to revolutionising and modernising the way with which awareness actions have been traditionally carried out. Lorenzo Prencipe in the abovementioned interview specified further: *"Aware of the value of the institutional scientific work we have been carrying out for over 50 years, we wanted to renew the Scalabrinian commitment to innovation and awareness. We wanted to combine our institutional role with new communications capable of deconstructing stereotypes starting from the emotional involvement and the tools which the young trust to tell their story in the world"*.

Furthermore, CSER makes strategic use of these means because, while they are valuable tools of communication, at the same time their employment allows these young migrants to empower their skills. Moreover, these are very technical skills, so that the level of competence achieved by the migrants involved is professional. This fosters their employability in the host country as well as the opportunity to gain an income to live autonomously.

IMPACT

All 15 young people who have been involved in *WIP* and *WEB4Neet* are working today, despite the health emergency and the economic crisis that was inevitably accentuated by the pandemic. All the young migrants currently work thanks to the digital skills they have acquired, and they are by now able to provide for themselves. They also have gained some stability and are now in a good place to start to think about long-term solutions for their lives.

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The stories of some young migrants are particularly remarkable who, in addition to the work that allows them to achieve a stable income, have decided to continue to collaborate with the CSER Foundation in projects and cultural activities.

However, besides these successful cases, it is also important to note that this Good Practice has generally improved the well-being of the persons concerned making available for them these experiences of growth and contact with the host population, while opening a pathway towards integration. Lorenzo Prencipe expressed the impact of this kind of initiative during the interview: *"We cannot foresee long-term impacts, but offering a space of serenity, communication and development of one's passions (as well as an increase in income) seems to us a way of approaching the well-being of individuals in the sense of full integral development."*

The projects dedicated to raising awareness and innovation are also giving significant results: in all, the users reached, informed and who have shown interest exceed 2000 people.

- **15 young migrants involved.**
- **More than 2000 persons were reached.**

SUSTAINABILITY

The Good Practice has proven to be sustainable without significant troubles. The CSER Foundation, being part of the SIMN Europe Africa network, ensures study and research activities and constantly collaborates with ASCS for integration and awareness-raising projects in Italy. Awareness and training projects are supported by the Scalabrinian network and in particular by the staff of the Emigration Studies Center who lend their skills and tools to increasingly disseminate global citizenship education free of stereotypes and prejudices towards people in migration. On the other hand, CSER participates in ASCS projects in partnership both as a monitoring and evaluation body of the network in Italy, and in terms of reporting and common reflection on the actions taken. Empowering the coordination and collaboration between Scalabrinian institutions was one of the objectives of the Director of SIMN Europe Africa and this has been gradually implemented in each project activity of the various bodies and individual programs.

Within the CSER Foundation, the volunteers are members of the Board of Directors and Board of Directors of the Foundation and the Head of Communications, for a total of 6 people.

All the training and professional integration projects conducted by CSER and ASCS are developed in collaboration with both institutional and private local actors.

The good results of the projects have opened up new opportunities for interaction with public and private institutions, allowing the Foundation to re-enter, by way of example, the network of institutions recognized by MIBACT (the Italian Ministry of Culture) and to confirm its ownership of the institutions operating in favour of migrants at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies.

Regarding the financial sustainability of these projects, they are supported by various entities, mainly from the Italian Episcopal Council or *Migrantes* Foundation, which is a pastoral body of the Italian Episcopal Conference. Funds come also from the CSER Foundation itself and the partner ASCS - Scalabrinian Agency for Development Cooperation.

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6. ENGLISH CLASSES WITH ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY



Source: <https://www.svp.org.uk/support-centres>

Verb: to promote

Country: United Kingdom

Initiative: providing English classes to refugees, in addition to responses to basic needs

Beneficiaries: refugees and migrants

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: practical assistance to refugees and migrants

Duration of Project: 2017 - ongoing

Source of funds: private donors

Website: <https://www.svp.org.uk/>

Catholic organisations involved and contacts: *St. Vincent de Paul Society; Romero House 55 Westminster Bridge Road, London, SE1 7JB; Alessandra Sciarra (alessandras@svp.org.uk)*

INTRODUCTION

The St. Vincent de Paul Society (England & Wales) is part of an international Christian voluntary network dedicated to tackling poverty in all its forms by providing practical assistance to people in need. The assistance is composed of several help programmes, spanning different areas of interest. The 10,000 members visit vulnerable or isolated people across England and Wales and offer them friendship and practical support. At the basis of this work is a person-to-person approach and contact. The activities carried out by the St. Vincent de Paul Society have been deeply affected by the pandemic, which hit hard the UK. In 2020, in the country, there were over 2,500,000 cases of contagion registered, with over 72,000 victims.

RELEVANCE

As pointed out in the interview, St. Vincent de Paul Society is a different organisation than others in the same sector in the UK. This implies that its structure and membership also follow a different framework. It is first and foremost a registered charity, with a central national office in London and branched out to other parts of the UK, 6 cities specifically. Most of their fieldwork with refugees is done according to the organisation's mission and is conducted by volunteers. Overall, the St Vincent de Paul Society is made up of around 10,000 volunteers across the country, most of whom carry out various activities on a local voluntary basis in their communities, are self-sufficient and identify needs in their communities and take action. One of the most important centres of activity is the one located in the city of Leeds, in the north of the United Kingdom, an area particularly affected in recent years by the economic crisis that has inevitably affected both the local and refugee communities. The national centre in London and the various offices located in the more peripheral areas have different tasks. Specifically, individual local centres conduct most of the field activities, such as English language learning programs, free for all, regardless of immigration status. The programs are structured in such a way as to be useful to migrants with different cultural backgrounds and with different needs (e.g. refugees, labour migrants, etc.). Language programs are one of the main activities carried out by the St Vincent de Paul Society, being also one of the main requests made by migrants and refugees themselves. The knowledge of the local language represents, in fact, the first barrier that these people face when asking for work, access to housing or integration into the community. Other

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programs provided, in addition to the English language, concern help with integration into the world of work, support for migrants in bureaucratic and legal terms, advice on immigration, food, advocacy and lobbying, etc. Advocacy and lobbying are other areas of interest for the St. Vincent de Paul Society. By this we mean the attention paid by many groups of volunteers involved in the refugee resettlement program, thus providing support to vulnerable people. They also manage women's groups, as well as groups on domestic abuse and gender-based violence.

IMPACT

According to the data available on the organisation's website, in 2020 "SVP in England and Wales generates at least £11m per year in economic welfare improvement through its befriending programmes alone. Last year our 8,857 visiting members made 475,064 visits and spent 625,084 hours visiting people in need and gave out food parcels on over 25,000 occasions. In addition to our visiting work, the Society makes an impact through its many and varied projects. Our community project in Bradford provided debt advice to 242 people with £400 or more of rent arrears. In addition to preventing evictions, the debt team have made sustainable repayment offers totalling £2,295 per week or £119,340 per year, enabling clients to remain in their home. Our two hostels for men on bail and released on parole or licence helped 178 offenders move on to independent accommodation and successfully reintegrate into the community. Our annual summer holiday camps enabled 1,500 disadvantaged children and young people to experience their first-ever holiday and gave over 400 young people invaluable leadership training."

Our interview was conducted with the people in charge of the community centre in Leeds, who provided a detailed account of the local context of the city. Migrants in the community needed practical things (opening a bank account, enrolling in school, dental care, etc.) so they also provided immigration advice for these people, as this kind of need was increasing. With the pandemic, the needs of migrants and refugees have also changed. The St. Vincent de Paul Society has been contacted by far more older people than usual who are in need of support and advice. Throughout the year 2020, St. Vincent de Paul Society volunteers helped around 2,000 people, according to their various needs and requirements. The main countries of origin were Iran, Iraq, Syria, Eritrea (in particular in Leeds), Somalia, Libya, as well as many Albanian women who have experienced slavery and human

trafficking. Generally, it has been observed that in areas where a conflict breaks out there is a time frame of about 1-2 years preceding the strong migratory waves coming from those war scenarios. As regards, the courses offered, the classes of the English courses were able to gather up to 200 people before the pandemic. Another specific need for assistance for material goods that arose with the pandemic, for example, was for food, shampoo, and other essential household items. The health emergency has increased these necessities. While people were losing their jobs and could not benefit from subsidies, local parishes stepped in financially and provided boxes of food. Thus, the association decided to undertake a path of closeness to these people, setting aside part of its main assistance programs to turn towards other purposes.

In terms of advocacy projects, in 2020 St Vincent de Paul published a campaign toolkit together with JRS (Jesuit Refugee Service UK) on the Nationality and Borders Bill. The toolkit explains eight things to know about the bill and why it would make life so much more difficult for people seeking safety. They also promoted a letter to the Minister of the Interior, now signed by over 250 religious leaders and groups. This has been approved by several Bishops and large organisations including the Salvation Army, the Jesuit Refugee Service, National Justice and Peace, Quakers and many others. The organisation also submitted a written response to the government consultation on the new immigration plan that included their experience and case studies. Finally, St. Vincent de Paul also produced a political briefing on the bill for inter-party parliamentarians and promoted collaboration with the Bishops' Conferences to amplify the message.

INNOVATIVENESS

According to what emerged during the interview, the added value provided by these programs consists in creating access to services for people. This facilitation component is fundamental to making refugees and migrants who live in a condition of great hardship and suffering feel better; even the little things can have an impact even if it is difficult to measure it. But this is necessary in order to increase their dignity. Furthermore, unlike other programs devoted primarily to material needs, such activities also produce the interesting spill over of creating an impact on the whole community, a community that is learning from others and is struggling. In this

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way, a connection is created between people, and this creates a wealth of identity and belonging. In order to improve these activities, however, greater involvement of local communities would be needed, with even more people becoming interested and involved. With more funding they could do even more, but services are limited by financial constraints.

Another added value is silence, a value that is considered fundamental as anonymity and the lack of advertising make it possible to reach many more people. Furthermore, in terms of innovation, the role played by advocacy and lobbying activities is underlined, as there are few such Catholic associations in the UK, and most of them provide frontline support but not advocacy and lobbying about asylum and immigration policies in the UK. They also collaborate with the Episcopal Conference and Parliament in this area. People are unaware of the living conditions of these people; volunteers are shocked that there is no public support for these people, especially from the government.

SUSTAINABILITY

The majority of the funds used to finance the activities of the St. Vincent de Paul Society comes from private donors.

The Covid-19 pandemic has, inevitably, profoundly changed the activities carried out by the St. Vincent de Paul Society. During the health emergency, the association was forced to stop face-to-face lessons in classrooms. They had to change and experiment with online learning lessons, but many people lacked technology or internet connection. It was also expensive for them, so the online lessons were not able to meet everyone's needs. For this reason, they began to give lessons in person (partially and compatibly with what was established by the authorities) and above all through telephone conversations. This continuity was intended not only to ensure the sustainability of the projects but also to make people feel part of the community. When the restrictions were lifted in Leeds, for example, they ran some face-to-face programs, in small groups with spacing, opening windows, masks, etc. The main challenge to the St Vincent de Paul Society's ability to continue its programs has been the logistical challenge posed by the pandemic. If initially, in fact, there was room for about 200 people, later it was for only 14.

7. LEGAL AND ADVOCACY SERVICES IN ROMANIA



Source: <https://www.jrsromania.org/>

Verb: to promote

Country: Romania

Initiative: taking care of migrants and refugees through a holistic approach spanning a variety of assistance activities

Beneficiaries: migrants and refugees

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: to provide material and legal assistance to migrants and refugees. Advocacy activities

Duration of Project: 2012 - ongoing

Source of funds: EU; UNCHR

Website: <https://www.jrsromania.org/>

Catholic organisations involved and contacts: *JRS Romania; Opris Ilie Street n. 54, Bucarest; don Florin Petru (centrulumisionar.is@gmail.com)*

INTRODUCTION

JRS Romania is based on Catholic social teaching and is inspired by the principles of Ignatian spirituality in making decisions about who should be helped. This is achieved by applying values and principles inspired by a sense of justice, dignity and responsibility to complete the mission of the

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Church. To achieve these goals, JRS Romania carries out various projects in a variety of areas, including programs for the benefit of people in vulnerable situations: the homeless, unemployed, suffering from various medical conditions, victims of torture, families with children and single parents, single women, unaccompanied minors, the elderly, and people with disabilities. The Covid-19 pandemic forced JRS Romania to face an unprecedented situation in order to continue offering support and solutions to migrants and refugees. In 2020, there were over 630,000 cases of contagion in Romania, with about 16,000 victims.

RELEVANCE

JRS Romania is providing holistic assistance: social, educational, medical, legal, financial, and housing. An integral part of this approach is also the provision of Romanian language courses and the carrying out of cultural and recreational activities.

In addition to this, the organisation aims to monitor the legislative process to propose improvements. This lobbying activity in favour of migrants and refugees involves carrying out research and analysis aimed at understanding more deeply the living conditions of these people. In this regard, best practice manuals are being produced, in collaboration with other organisations, to share what has been done by JRS Romania and its partners over the years. The Covid-19 pandemic has forced the reshaping of the activities carried out by JRS Romania, on the one hand by expanding the range of projects and, on the other by flexibly reshaping the work according to the needs and requirements of migrants and refugees. Part of this work also involved organising awareness campaigns within the mass media, in the online environment and in working groups to raise public awareness of the status of these people, aggravated by the pandemic crisis. In addition to the aforementioned services, JRS Romania also provides support to organisations and authorities through training, seminars for judges, lawyers and others. One activity that is constantly carried out is the training of future practitioners and volunteers. From their first arrival as asylum seekers in Romania or as undocumented migrants, JRS welcomes them by providing information, advice, guidance and assistance at the border, in open or closed migrant centres or various other locations in the country. Through legal services, on the other hand, JRS Romania ensures that their rights are respected, their voices are heard and that special attention is paid to the most vulnerable groups. Based on the

assistance provided in practice, therefore, the organisation seeks to promote their rights, both with the authorities and other civilian groups. JRS Romania has 3 integration centres for refugees and migrants in the country, which provide specific activities to individuals and families, including children. The beneficiaries of these programs are involved in the planning of activities such as, for example, cultural, educational, social, hospitality activities. Although a wide range of services and programs is offered, all JRS Romania activities are designed around the needs of migrants and refugees. In addition, to evaluate the effectiveness and results achieved by these programs, an evaluation is carried out annually to assess the impact of the activities. To conduct these programs and activities, JRS has between 20 and 30 volunteers each year.

IMPACT

The effectiveness of the projects is shown by how the results and indicators are achieved. The measurement of results has a quantitative component which, according to what was underlined during the interview, is often difficult to estimate and find. As for the qualitative part, this is ensured through implementation methodologies, coordination, and discussions, through work in the spirit of the general principles of JRS (including Ignatian principles). According to the data provided by the organisation's website, 3932 people were assisted in 2020, with 8 projects carried out and over 5,000 activities carried out for a total of invested funds equal to 4,580,447.42 lei.

As pointed out in the interview, the practices implemented by JRS Romania have led to facilitating the integration of refugees, the provision of some form of protection, the restoration of dignity or voluntary safe repatriation. All these supportive actions offered another step in the lives of foreign citizens, both for those who remained and those who returned. As evidence of the impact of these activities, some success stories were mentioned during the interview. As the result of lawsuits in court, for example, some vulnerable people have been released from public custody centres. The JRS reception centre functions as a centre that offers an alternative to public custody, where people are hosted by us and are no longer detained. Many refugee children were enrolled in school, seen by a family doctor, reimbursed for the costs of supplies and food at school, and received material assistance. Many people with health problems received medical care, including people with chronic diseases, people who have undergone surgery, etc. Refugees benefited from rent subsidies for several months and managed to find work. Romanian language courses are

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very successful, run by teachers. Many volunteers offer additional homework support. For example, in the integration process, refugees received material and financial support, in the form of courses and counselling, accompaniment in meetings with institutions, etc. The asylum seekers who had well-founded cases benefited from all the legal support available; many of their cases were won, or positively resolved. For some people, their forced return was prevented and other lasting support measures have been identified. Numerous steps have been taken through advocacy actions, improvements in practical conditions regarding housing, asylum procedures, protection of their rights, etc. JRS actions are aimed both at the immediate resolution of urgent needs and at improving the legislative framework and procedures in practice over time to implement sustainable solutions for different categories of foreign citizens. JRS has implemented a methodology for implementation, reporting of activities, recording data and issuing statistics on results, activities and more for all of its projects. The only problem is the lack of financing based on real needs and sometimes the lack of flexibility due to formalities. As highlighted during the interview, all these projects, even those of advocacy, research, training or campaigns are based on long-standing practices, being focused on data collected from the field, from direct assistance, from direct contact with beneficiaries.

INNOVATIVENESS

The innovativeness of the projects carried out by JRS Romania consists in the multidisciplinary approach to the cases through which we try to deal with each case posed by migrants and refugees in its entirety. In the light of the experience gained in the implementation of the projects in recent years, it was possible to develop activities and budgets tailored to the specific needs of migrants and dedicated personnel. JRS projects have focused on providing direct services to migrants that cover their basic needs and, at the same time, have been concerned with finding long-term solutions through advocacy. The needs of refugees have not changed, but over the years it has been necessary to identify different formulas through which to carry out the same activities in a different way, trying to find new solutions that make the activities more impactful. According to what was stated during the interview, the greatest impact made possible by these practices came from both the flexibility and the desire to adapt to the always unstable context of care. The context of Romania does not always make it easy to identify solutions to the problems of migrants, also in light of the social fabric that is also going through a difficult time due to the pandemic.

According to what was underlined during the interview, this aspect requires the ability to not face these problems with pre-conceived solutions. This necessitates an element often neglected in the context of assistance and aid practices for migrants in Romania, namely the identification of solutions outside the projects, not limited only to their procedure and methodology.

The difficulties concerning these programs, on the other hand, are generally caused by the bureaucracy and by the multiple administrative actions that must be carried out for accurate accounting and justification of the project implementation.

SUSTAINABILITY

The health emergency caused by Covid-19 inevitably slowed down JRS Romania's activities. The totality of these practices before the pandemic necessarily involved a personal involvement through face-to-face meetings with the people to be assisted. In line with what has been found in other European contexts, there was a first phase in which the lockdown forced the suspension of any in-person activity, at the behest of national institutions. This led over time to a shift towards digital platforms able to maintain contact with migrants and refugees, although reduced due to the impossibility of many to procure technological tools. The gradual loosening of restrictions made it possible to partially resume activities in person. Although the first phase of the pandemic did not threaten the sustainability of JRS Romania projects, the country is currently experiencing a resurgence of the pandemic emergency which casts great uncertainty on these practices and activities in terms of implementation at least for the immediate future.

A very significant percentage of the projects carried out by JRS Romania is financed through funds from the EU and the UNHCR, this being a constant due to good implementation practices. Essential help is provided through the Jesuit community, also supported by volunteers and donations from other communities, especially Catholics but also from other benefactors. Through these sources, additional assistance is provided, or projects are co-financed. JRS also implemented a territorial network to make its projects more implementable and more easily sustainable. This has made it possible to have centres in 9 cities across the country, activating both in-state centres for asylum seekers and refugees, detention centres, and 3 JRS integration centres. Parishes are a great resource for providing volun-

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teers. Many awareness campaigns have been developed with the help of the parishes. In addition, parishes have been involved in collecting local donations, especially in emergencies. To ensure more stability to the projects, therefore, in 2020, an attempt was made to expand the volunteer base also in light of the new needs that emerged due to the pandemic. Within the local communities, it was possible to find and involve volunteers, identifying people willing to be actively involved. Partnerships were established with schools, various other institutions or local authorities. Our practices in the implementation of the activities have generally proven sustainable, in the sense that our actions have led to the support of sustainable measures for the integration of refugees, the provision of some form of protection, or the return to dignity or voluntary repatriation. All these supportive actions offered another course in the lives of foreign citizens, both those who remained and those who returned.

In addition, many of JRS Romania's practices have been replicated by JRS in other countries and through other projects, in other locations and with other target groups within the broader category of foreign citizens. Our practical measures in the implementation of activities have generally proven sustainable, in the sense that our actions have resulted in sustainably supporting the integration of refugees, the provision of some form of protection, or the return to dignity or repatriation. All these supportive actions offered another path in the lives of foreign citizens, both those who remained and those who returned.

Furthermore, the collaboration with governmental and civil actors is a fundamental issue in the implementation of the activities, many of the actions being interconnected. JRS assistance is complementary to that provided by the state or other organisations. In this sense, weekly or monthly coordination meetings are held with all these partners. The meetings have a very pragmatic character: solutions to problems are discussed and identified in practice. This mandatory collaborative bond been developed, expanded and improved over the years.

8. CULTURAL EXCHANGES IN BARCELONA



Services: <https://www.bayt-al-thaqafa.org/es>

Verb: to promote

Country: Spain

Initiative: promotion of initiatives aimed at facilitating the meeting of Muslim and local communities in Barcelona

Beneficiaries: migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: promoting the meeting of different cultures in the same urban environment

Duration of Project: 1974 - ongoing

Source of funds: Catalan public administration; religious orders; private donors

Website: <https://www.bayt-al-thaqafa.org/es>

Catholic organisations involved and contacts: *Bayt al-Thaqafa; Calle Princesa, 14, primer, 08003 Barcelona; Daniel Ibarz (daniel.ibarz@bayt-al-thaqafa.org)*

INTRODUCTION

Bayt Al-Thaqafa is a non-profit, autonomous foundation in Barcelona. The objective of the foundation is to facilitate the social, cultural, civic and political integration of migrants. In order to reach such a goal, the foundation provides orientation, support and advice programs for people on issues

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that affect their lives due to their status as foreigners, so that they can be full citizens in Catalan society. Another purpose is to promote exchange and dialogue with Arab culture and Muslim communities to better integrate the communities into a cohesive society.

In Catalonia in 2020, there were over 350,000 infections from Covid-19, with almost 9,000 victims.

RELEVANCE

The foundation was created in 1974 by Teresa Losada, a Franciscan and a doctor in Semitic Philology. The name Bayt-al-Thaqafa means "*House of Culture*". The project began in the centre of Barcelona and a little later in Sant Vicenç dels Horts to accompany the first communities of people from Morocco who came to the territory looking for a better future. In 1976 she created the first mosque in Barcelona inside a church, Santa Maria del Mar, something very iconic and extraordinary as it happened in the midst of Franco's dictatorship. It was the first NGO in Spain with the mission to host migrants, especially those coming from Morocco, which at that time was the main source of migration flows. Currently, in addition to the Maghreb community, there are people of very diverse origins who mostly share the culture of the Arab world and the Muslim religion, although not only.

According to the information available on the organisation's website, the values which inspire Bayt al-Thaqafa in carrying out its programs are:

- Dignity, understood as respect for every person and respect for human rights.
- Equality, understood as a commitment to build a society in which everyone has a place, avoiding clashes and any type of exclusion and / or discrimination.
- Welcome, understood as warmth and the ability to see people in their entirety (and not just their needs) and support towards full citizenship.
- Proximity, that is, consideration of each person as an active protagonist of their own life, which enables them to carry out the positive transformation of their personal process.
- Interculturality: the encounter with the other, the cultural, religious, linguistic diversity of ways of understanding life makes us socially richer, more dialogue and more powerful.

The way of working of the Bayt al-Thaqafa Foundation therefore revolves around 3 fundamental words, namely welcome, accompaniment and community. Welcome is the welcome that recognizes the person who arrives as an equal who comes to make a contribution to society. Accompaniment means being committed to sharing daily life with dignity as a social and political community that walks together and supports each other. Being a diverse community with a common framework of equal rights and opportunities involves anticipating future and growing needs from an intuition based on years of experience. Needs of migrants, related to the areas of mental health, housing, employability, digital training, aging, legal regulation, etc. are addressed. Ensuring the addressing of true needs implies landing on the territory and identifying and evaluating opportunities for implementation or generation of alliances and collaborations in the whole territory of Catalonia.

One of the central values upheld by Bayt al-Thafaqa is the promotion and the preservation, according to what emerged during the interview with Daniel Ibarz, of the power and richness that cultural diversity offers. Parallel to the basic vision that inspires Bayt al-Thaqafa's mission, there are two practical and concrete objectives that the foundation pursues through its activities. On the one hand, it aims to create an inclusive society for migrants, working across all the various layers of Catalan society to transform it and make it more inclusive and welcoming. On the other hand, the second objective pursued is to create meeting points between the Muslim community residing in Barcelona and the rest of society to create a healthy and constructive relationship between the various souls of the city. The activities and projects promoted by Bayt al-Thaqafa, therefore, pursue these dual objectives at the same time, albeit in different ways. These are all activities that go both ways.

IMPACT

Some of the main services offered by Bayt al-Thaqafa operate in the field of accompaniment, cancellation of previous criminal charges, providing lawyers for asylum seekers and against the implementation of discriminatory policies. Among other activities, there is a constant commitment to helping migrants find work, develop skills, to learn Catalan and Spanish, and other training courses. Over the last few years there has been an effort to expand the number of accommodations available, the total number of which now

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amounts to 40. In addition, a strong impact of Bayt al-Thaqafa's activities is produced by advocacy projects. Through them, the foundation pushes the local administration to implement new services, such as psychological ones, or attention to cross-cultural issues. In addition, a significant portion in Bayt al-Thaqafa's projects is devoted to attention to minors and children. Exceeding the age of 18 is a fundamental step as they lose part of the protections recognized by the law as long as they were minors. This requires even greater attention as almost all of them reach the age of 18 without having acquired the necessary autonomy and independence.

INNOVATIVENESS

Advocacy activities are an integral part of the innovative aspect of Bayt al-Thaqafa. This specific activity in favour of migrants and refugees, in fact, is often neglected and set aside in the Catalan context, in favour of greater attention to basic assistance and a focus on material goods. Focusing on promoting the rights of these people, as underlined during the interview, is not only necessary but also a novelty in the Catalan hospitality scene. One of the most innovative and particular activities developed over the years by Bayt al-Thaqafa was the proposal, aimed at Arab and Catalan restaurants, to create a menu with mixed foods, belonging to both cultures. Subsequently, an evening was organised inviting people belonging to both communities so that they could meet and share a very important part of their traditions, namely food. In this way, everyone had the opportunity not only to demonstrate their own culture but also to bring out the points in common between these two different worlds. The added value that emerged, according to what was said during the interview, was the awareness of how many things exist in common between the two cultures, which need to be valued so as to understand the importance of the communion of values.

SUSTAINABILITY

The budget with which to finance the activities of Bayt al-Thaqafa originates from 3 sources. First, there is the funding from the Catalan local administration, second, the resources provided by two religious orders that support the association in carrying out its activities. Lastly, there are private dona-

tions that help ensure the sustainability of these projects. At the moment, as emerged during the interview, the resources available are growing, which leads to an increase in available and disbursed loans. This allows the foundation to be able to gradually hire more staff in order to ensure greater effectiveness of the activities, as well as their continuity. Having developed over time a positive and constructive collaboration with the local administration also ensures that the projects have an easier time carrying out assistance and integration programs. A friendly working collaboration with the authorities also makes it easier to deal with Spanish immigration legislation, which is often complex and difficult to deal with in all its bureaucratic and legal steps. The Covid-19 pandemic did not substantially have a strong impact on the approach or conduct of the foundation's activities. The staff was forced to modify and adapt part of the programs following the new critical issues posed by the health emergency, adapting part of the programs and making them migrate to the digital sphere. However, the fact, as found in numerous cases, that the people involved in these activities often do not have technological tools or an internet connection, has forced Bayt al-Thaqaba to continue with face-to-face activities in most of the cases. Furthermore, during 2020, also to cope with this new situation that required a rethinking of spaces, the foundation proceeded to increase the number of apartments and accommodations available. Although the resources are sufficient to guarantee the functioning of the foundation, and the institutional relations have always been cordial and friendly, other difficulties for Bayt al-Thaqafa arise from the political turbulence of recent years in Catalonia. The existing constitutional crisis with the central government of Madrid, in fact, makes work with the institutional leaders more complex. The lack of dialogue between the Catalan Community and the central government often places the burden of decisions and management of the activities that were previously agreed upon at the institutional level onto the shoulders of the foundation. This element of political instability also risks the stability of funding, which is growing but which in the future risks being overwhelmed by the worsening of the political-constitutional situation. In general, the existence of an unfavourable political environment and an increasingly radicalised and impoverished society further raises tensions in this sector.

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9. JOB TO LIFE



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/cepac.pt/photos/a.536005583214147/2085294141618609/?type=3&theate>

Verb: to promote

Country: Portugal

Initiative: to foster job insertion

Beneficiaries: migrants and refugees

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: training, workshop, contacts with local companies

Duration of project: 2018 - on going

Source of funds: public funds

Website: <https://www.cepac.pt/inicio.php>

Catholic Church organisations involved and contacts: CEPAC, Mariana Hancock, Communication Officer, Email: comunicacao@cepac.pt

INTRODUCTION

The Padre Alves Correia Centre (CEPAC) is a non-profit institution, created in 1992 by the initiative and under the responsibility of the Portuguese Province of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, with the mission to support immigrants in a vulnerable situation in the construction of a dignified life project.

CEPAC provide a wide range of services in favour of these people:

- **Social assistance**
- **Health support**
- **Support in access to housing**
- **Food response - The Social Grocery**
- **Job insertion and training**

Employment support could be regarded as the key axis of CEPAC's action: of the 619 people followed, 295 people (corresponding to 47.6%) were followed in the scope of professional insertion and training initiatives: 142 in professional insertion, 93 in training and 60 in both kind of activities.

The "**Job to Life**" project focuses on clarifying the professional interests of the participants, through the balance of skills and guidance in identifying areas of professional interest. Within this project, CEPAC works on the soft skills of the beneficiaries, through training in different themes such as personal and social skills, adapting to change, motivation and self-esteem, conflict management, exercising citizenship. The project is complemented by this theoretical preparation. The main actions of the Project are the following:

- to support the active search for employment and the development of an entrepreneurial attitude;
- to capture and disseminate job offers and support placement in the labour market;
- to lead to actions that promote employability skills and the obtaining of jobs;
- to support the online applications of job applicants;
- to develop other activities to support the professional insertion of unemployed immigrant people

The outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020 triggered the activation of the CEPAC Contingency Plan. It implied the temporary suspension of attendance and in-person activities training, while maintaining follow-up and support at a distance and at home. The work developed by the team was remarkable, both in adapting and reinventing models and forms of monitoring the trainees, always seeking to maintain close contact and providing training moments, albeit at a distance, or in the effort to maintain regular contacts with companies and potential employers.

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Also, the responses of the different working areas were adapted to the guidelines defined for the pandemic situation, turning to a mixed regime of face-to-face and distance assistance, depending on the type of intervention and the situation of each person. Support social services, psychosocial support and legal support started to work via telephone or on a computer platforms, seeking to respond to the challenges brought by social isolation, unemployment and worsening socio-economic situation. The staff of CEPAC went to people's homes to support their dignity in the form of food, clothing, medication and above all, bringing hope and confidence. The food aid started to be ensured through the daily distribution of food baskets at home, allowing the staff to maintain close relationships with the people and families and also to identify possible at-risk situations. This transformation to an itinerant model had as its main objective to protect vulnerable groups, to avoid exposing people to avoidable risks, and to maintain the connection that had been compromised by the imposed physical and social isolation. The distribution of food baskets at home reached 386 families throughout the year. A total of 2 256 monthly hampers were distributed.

To better deal with the challenges connected to the pandemic and the unprecedented health emergency, CEPAC implemented a new Project called "**SPECIAL AGENTS Mission Code: COVID-19**" to empower its support in the field of health care. It was specially directed to children of families monitored by CEPAC and includes a diagnostic component of the children's health situation, clarifications on access to health and referral to speciality consultations. The initiative also involved an awareness component, which includes the production and distribution of a manual with information about the COVID-19 disease and the care to be taken, in addition to kits consisting of masks, hygiene and cleaning products, as well as other informational materials.

In 2020, there was a 20% increase in the number of direct beneficiaries compared to the previous year, with 619 people being monitored. Of these, 586 remained active at the end of the year, representing an increase of 14%.

2020 IN NUMBERS

- Social support: 1695
- Psychosocial support: 68
- Food support: 2256
- Legal support: 586
- Professional insertion and training: 3608
- **Total: 9809**

RELEVANCE

The *JOB TO LIFE* Project includes at the same time both active job searching and training. The user is the centre of the action and also an active subject in the construction of their professional guidance plan. Indeed, the staff ensures an individual a personalised accompaniment according to the needs of each person, to foster their development and strengthen their responsibility and independence in the construction and management of their life project. *JOB TO LIFE* is intended to develop an individual life project with each person accompanied by CEPAC through training covering social and technical skills, such as skills useful to search for employment, preparation for job interviews, sessions on techniques for the development of Curriculum Vitae, soft skills, basic information on IT tools, Portuguese and English. CEPAC also fosters training in the work context, thanks to several partnerships with local companies. The approach to the business fabric and consequent capture of job offers for the accompanied migrants is also a priority, in addition to other necessary actions aimed at professional integration. CEPAC strives to establish contacts with employers to enable employment opportunities for the beneficiaries. In doing so, there is always a special focus on information and awareness actions aimed at third-country nationals.

This Good Practice is aimed mainly at irregular immigrants, with a focus on their empowerment, autonomy, dignity and integration. During an interview conducted online, Mariana Hancock from the Communication Office of CEPAC stressed their priority: *"Our mission is to support the poorest of the poor. This is our criterion: we chose to support especially those who don't have any kind of support. We focus mainly on those who don't have any other means or access to other public services nor another kind of support by other institutions. We make this choice because many organisations focus mostly on people who have already a regular situation since sometimes it is a requirement to obtain public funds. So, in CEPAC, we have the particularity to support mostly irregular migrants or people who are in the process to become regular. Sometimes in Portugal, these proceedings take up to two or three years, so it is very hard. We focus on people that no one else focuses on, such as undocumented migrants, irregular migrants; they are our priority."*

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INNOVATIVENESS

CEPAC makes use of innovative and alternative tools to foster the development of the migrants' skills and their employability. One interesting example that could be mentioned would be the theatre sessions that involved 13 trainees. During these sessions, several exercises were proposed to promote group spirit and teamwork. The workshop ended with the dramatisation, in small groups, of an employment situation that mirrored the group's experiences: the promise of a salary and a work contract that never materialised. The theatre presents itself as an artistic tool for social transformation that permits the migrants to work on personal and social problems, through the exploration of the actors' experiences, memories and desires.

Other experiences within JOB TO LIFE are also remarkable. Among them are the training session about conflict resolution or the sessions on the theme "motivation, self-esteem and expectations".

All these tools, even if they are not strictly related to the job insertion of migrants, in a broad perspective, facilitate their personal growth to provide them with the necessary means to deal with the world of work.

IMPACT

The impact of this Project is deep as it entails the whole life of the person involved and goes beyond the job integration of the migrant. During the above-mentioned interview, Mariana Hancock stated: *"We try to work with the persons and on the projects that they have. It is not a matter of assisting them in one specific area. We try to help them become independent, autonomous and truly integrated. Our approach is to work with the person, even spiritually when they need. We work with people in proximity. When these people come to us in need of a job, we check every aspect of the person's life. So, to have our assistance in finding a job we include this person also in our social support to be sure that the person is truly organised, that they have a project of life, and they stay well as a whole. So, it's not simply a matter of providing a service, but also a personal development and human dignity."*

The population supported consisted mainly of immigrants in an irregular document situation (30.3%) and immigrants with a temporary stay visa for

treatment by doctors (14.6%) or as accompanying patients (9.3%) under the agreements of cooperation in the field of health between Portugal and the Official Language African Countries Portuguese (PALOP). Of the remaining beneficiaries, 25.4% had a residence permit and 20.4% were in the process of regularisation.

In 2020 a total of 3608 professional guidance encounters, training and employment support assistances were carried out, with 22.3% corresponding to support assistance in job search, 7.3% to follow-up visits, 5.1% to follow-up after job placement and 4.5% soft skills sessions.

SUSTAINABILITY

CEPAC, as a member of the Spiritan family, usually participates in the meeting of CAME - Coordination of Spiritan Missionary Animation – where together participants build and plan activities for the next year. These are important moments that reinforces the union as a family, with a common vision and shared objective.

Over the years CEPAC has extended its activities to an increasing number of migrants, thanks to the establishment of different networks and partnerships. Indeed, working in partnership has allowed CEPAC to strengthen its various areas of action and contribute to shared goals around the effective integration, inclusion and improvement of the general living conditions of migrants. Among them, CEPAC maintains its collaboration with the Food Bank Against Hunger (Lisbon), with which it annually establishes a commitment agreement that guarantees the procurement and distribution of foodstuffs.

To adopt a Quality Management System under European standards, CEPAC has implemented the so-called "THOR Program", a new technical and management tool, whose functionalities allow an improvement in the general organisation, data collection, and financial and accounting management. This specific solution is intended to increase organisational efficiency and productivity through a computerised system, which records and monitors the service provided, as well as human resources activities, included volunteers, suppliers and partners.

TO PROMOTE

As for financial sustainability, CEPAC can rely on several supporters, both public and private. The first donor is the Lisbon City Council, given that CEPAC is an entity partner within the implementation of the Municipal Plan for the Integration of Migrants in Lisbon. Also, CEPAC benefits greatly from European funding from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (FAMI).

10. STOP HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE NETHERLANDS



Source: <https://www.renate-europe.net/blogour-work/>

Verb: to promote

Country: Netherlands

Initiative: to fight against human trafficking and exploitation

Beneficiaries: victims of human trafficking

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: human trafficking and exploitation addressed

Duration of project: 2016 – to present.

Source of funds: religious orders and international networks

Website: <http://zusterwerk.nl/>; <https://www.renate-europe.net/>

Catholic Church organisations involved and contacts: *Zusterwerk; Renate Network; Pastor de Kroonstraat 5211 Hertogenbosch; Ivonne van de Kar; e-mail: ivandekar@gmail.com*

INTRODUCTION

Zusterwerk is a competence centre that works to deepen knowledge of the phenomena of human trafficking in relation to religion, migration, justice, hospitality and prostitution. This knowledge is essential to then be able to disclose the dangers that are inherent in these criminal trafficking, increas-

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ing awareness of these problems within Dutch society. These issues, in fact, require targeted information and tailored political advice. The sisters' work adds a religious point of view to the debate on human trafficking, provides information, offers support and directs victims of trafficking and exploitation to the right professionals. Since September 2016, Zusterwerk has been active as a continuation of part of the work of the Foundation for Religious Against Trafficking in Women. Trafficking in human beings has seen many developments over the past 25 years, as highlighted several times during the interview with the manager, Ivonne van de Kar. In the past, trafficking in women consisted largely of foreign women exploited through criminal prostitution networks. In the current state of the Dutch context, on the other hand, human trafficking involves women, men and children who are exploited in very different working conditions, such as in restaurants, in the world of construction or agriculture. Forms of forced marriage, forced begging, organ transplantation, or uterus rental also fall within the criminal categories that are part of the human trafficking phenomenon. The work carried out by the Zusterwerk association, therefore, focuses on the aspects of migration related to trafficking in human beings. It is important that people know how to migrate safely in a global context in which multiple crises lead millions of people to move in search of a better future. Furthermore, it is important that the countries of destination welcome migrants in a dignified way, offering them opportunities, as stressed several times during the interview.

RELEVANCE

The main focus of the activities carried out by Ivonne, and her circle of collaborators is to raise awareness and prevent the phenomenon of human trafficking and exploitation. This is mainly done through activities in schools and advocacy towards public institutions. An essential element concerning the Zusterwerk foundation is its membership in a vast European network that spans 31 European countries, namely the RENATE (Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation) network. This network makes it possible to create an important aggregation centre that provides the tools to make projects against human trafficking more effective and operational. The RENATE network pursues the same objectives as Zusterwerk by amplifying its message and scope. These include, as reported on the websites of the organisations:

- *Working tirelessly to rehabilitate victims, free the world of sexual and labour exploitation, slavery and forced organ harvesting.*
- *Addressing the root causes of systemic injustice that creates and sustains this vile trade in human lives.*
- *Using its network to strengthen communication and co-operation between countries of origin, transit and destination.*
- *Providing opportunities for the full reintegration of victims which can include protection in a safe home, acquisition of proper documents and training for meaningful work so that victims can regain and be enabled to live life to the full.*
- *Educating society, particularly youth, to view all forms of human trafficking and exploitation as totally unacceptable.*
- *Challenging judicial and civil authorities to adopt and enforce legislation that protects victims, provides them with adequate compensation, punishes clients and buyers and seizes the assets of perpetrators.*
- *Collaborating with the media in efforts to bring a strong voice to the attention of the world denouncing all aspects of human trafficking and exploitation.*

IMPACT

The activities carried out by Zusterwerk, therefore, consist mainly in addressing this phenomenon by going to schools and to groups of women, and promoting awareness of this extremely vast phenomenon in the country. According to the data provided during the interview, the human trafficking phenomenon also involved significant numbers in 2020. In fact, during the year, 1013 new victims were registered throughout the country, slightly down compared to 1372 in 2019. However, the Covid-19 pandemic is one of the main causes of this decrease; the identification, identification and reception of victims were severely hampered by the measures imposed by the government to address the health emergency. Therefore, such restrictive measures meant that the authorities had less control over the approach to trafficking in human beings and people stayed longer in the refugee category refuge for victims of trafficking in human beings (COSM). Of the total victims, 41% had to deal with exploitation in sexual services. The share of victims of exploitation in regulated work and services is 41%. Polish nationality is the most common nationality among victims (190), followed by Nigerian (185) and Dutch (155).

INNOVATIVENESS

The most innovative aspect of the activities carried out in the framework of the Zusterwerk association concerns above all the promotion of a new and different approach to religion. In fact, in the Dutch cultural background, there is a tendency to keep one's religious sphere very hidden and separate, considered part of everyone's individual privacy. Therefore, in the Netherlands religion is a private thing, not to be shown in public even with regard to activities related to hospitality. Social workers, for example, should never ask for information about religion, and there is a tendency to offer help to these people while trying never to flaunt or highlight the religious aspect of such initiatives or those who promote them. However, as pointed out during the interview, for many people of different cultures it is extremely difficult and complex to separate religion from the rest of life. In this context, therefore, the religious sphere need not be set aside and can be used as a strong aid tool for the victims of human trafficking. This is an aspect that Zusterwerk always tries to take into consideration when providing clear and concrete support to people. Alongside these novel elements in the approach proposed for migrants, there are, however, some weaknesses that make the work of combatting human trafficking more difficult. First of all, the difficulties of the Catholic religion in Holland are highlighted, including the minority status to which the Catholic Church is confined. For example, in the town of Hertogenbosch, there is only one parish now, while in other much smaller rural-urban centres in small villages the parishes are grouped, and this process of reduction is going through the whole country. This has an impact above all on elderly people, who lose their sense of community and also makes the work of associations like Zusterwerk more complicated, as it relies heavily on the strong ties existing within the Catholic community.

SUSTAINABILITY

Not receiving funds directly from the Catholic Church, the sustainability of Zusterwerk's projects is mainly guaranteed by its membership in the RENATE network. In fact, inclusion in a network of this magnitude allows the foundation, on the one hand, to be able to raise funds essential for its livelihood and the continuation of its activities. On the other hand, it provides an important opportunity to spread one's message and promote one's activities by creating a transnational network that is precious for the fight against human trafficking, and international awareness on these issues.

The activities conducted by Zusterwerk are fundamentally based on the work of Ivonne van de Kar and three other people who support the foundation's projects. The funds originally came from the Congregation of the Sisters, a religious order that first took charge of these activities before the foundation was born to carry them out in a more organised way. Although direct financial support from the Church is lacking, in recent years there has been an increasingly important involvement by young religious sisters, including Franciscans and Dominicans, in contributing to the foundation's activities. In addition, there is also the invaluable support of many Dutch missionaries from Southeast Asia and South America. Many of them are now too old to travel but still contribute to Zusterwerk's activities. At the moment, there are as many as 25 new migrant missionaries working in the parishes, a new wave and development for the future. The Covid-19 pandemic that broke out in 2020 obviously forced the Foundation's activities to be changed. In fact, during the most difficult months of the health emergency, Zusterwerk had to shut down any service offered face-to-face; all activities were moved to the internet. The pandemic represented a major obstacle in the first few weeks, mainly due to the confusing situation that reigned in the Netherlands in those days. Over time, however, according to what Ivonne van de Kar said, the digital solution has proved to be an excellent tool for running the Foundation's projects. Conducting the same activities, but in digital format, in fact, allows you to reach a much wider audience, spreading the message in a widespread manner and being much more present in the national debate.

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1. GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER



Source: <https://www.kerknet.be/attent/artikel/mgr-bonny-samenleven-verscheidenheid-biedt-vele-troeven>

Verb: to promote

Country: Belgium

Initiative: to foster the integration of migrants into the host society through the presentation of their personal experience

Beneficiaries: local community

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: presentations held by migrants

Duration of project: 2019 to present

Source of funds: private donors and public fund

Website: <https://www.kerknet.be/organisatie/attent>

Catholic Church organisations involved and contacts: *Diocese of Antwerp, Rita Boeren, a staff member of Attent, Email: attent@bisdomantwerpen.be*

INTRODUCTION

Attent, which in English means *thoughtful*, was established in 2014 as the network for social engagement of the Diocese of Antwerp in Belgium. From the outset, *Attent* has been heterogeneously composed as it has always involved several diverse actors. On one hand, it engages individuals who are volunteers on-site, key personalities active in the charity sector and even experts with an academic background. On the other hand, *Attent* also involves groups such as movements or working groups of the Diocese.

In 2019, to better accomplish its mission of solidarity, *Attent* realised an internal division into three working groups.

The **Migration, Diversity, Hospitality** working group is aimed at developing actions to share a spirit of welcoming among the local community. It wants to shed light on the lack of sensitivity towards people with a migratory background and send positive and hopeful signals. Its main goal is to bring together people to move towards a new model of society inspired by the values of hospitality and spirituality.

Through *Migration, Diversity, Hospitality*, *Attent* wants to turn the widespread hostile lexicon into a more positive climate towards those people who fled their homeland to arrive in Europe. Focusing on the importance of the respect of diversity and the necessity of encounter, *Attent* wants to offer additional resources for the Diocese, as well as organisations, pastoral units or individual believers.

The commitment of Migration and Diversity Working Group is found in two different levels.

The first dimension involves concrete initiatives in the field of migration among parishes, groups and pastoral units, becoming a model of intervention for local faith communities. In doing so, it aims to inspire individuals and organisations by developing an action-oriented spirituality of hospitality. Among them, *Migration, Diversity, Hospitality* prepares training packages for pastoral units to discuss with the participants the most challenging issues.

As for the second dimension of the work, *Migration, Diversity, Hospitality* is committed to advocacy to give direction to the social debate. With this purpose, *Attent* formulates touchstones to examine current issues regarding migration and diversity and advises church policy on concrete issues

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related to migration and diversity. Moreover, it regularly meets with church authorities to discuss these topics to find possible solutions. This work also presupposes setting up a dialogue with various policymakers and with other organisations. Thus, it establishes contacts and supports networks to strengthen the involvement of all actors.

In 2020 the Coronavirus pandemic severely affected many aid initiatives due to the forced closure of several activities and the restrictions on movement and on social contacts. Notwithstanding, awareness about care for the most vulnerable in society has increased as every day more and solutions are being sought, offered and rolled out. As for the *Attent's* work, due to the above-mentioned restrictions, group activities had to stop for a while, but on the other side, a very high number of telephone calls or single visits were made by the staff to ensure that the solidarity mission would continue in these challenging times. Moreover, *Attent* put in place extra initiatives to inform people about the COVID-19 virus, the associated dangers and the importance of prevention. To this end, it provided extra communication, such as pamphlets in multiple languages to effectively reach the migrant population.

In particular, a special workshop was organised to keep active the mission of the organisation even in times of confinement. It was titled "**Get to know each other**" and it allowed people with a migration background to speak about their experiences, their wishes, their dreams and the challenges of their life in Belgium. The presentations of these migrants were also aimed at triggering a conversation with them and thus deepening the awareness of the challenges related to migration processes within the community. Because of the restriction related to the pandemic, this initiative was not possible physically but used a series of digital presentations and online communication platforms.

As the title suggests, this programme represented an occasion to get to know each other, know different realities and interact with people coming from different backgrounds. In this way, the workshop transformed the period spent in lockdown into a time of reflection and personal growth. Exchanging personal experiences, the time at home became the occasion to develop a deeper sense of empathy and solidarity. Despite it being an initiative designed for pandemic times, *Getting to know each other* seems set to have a long and durable impact. Indeed, individuals, especially migrants, will benefit greatly from this experience that has opened a trend of mutual understanding and acceptance between locals and foreigners.

RELEVANCE

Rita Boeren, a staff member of *Attent*, during an interview conducted via email, expressed very well the core value of this Good Practice: *"As working group 'Migration, Diversity, Hospitality' we strive to increase the Christian spirituality of hospitality [...] We want to promote a more inclusive, positive language, resulting from positive local inclusive activities and experiences. We do not want to overlap the already existing initiatives, but to support the topic at the ground level, the grassroots level, which we express with the words 'spirituality of hospitality'. We want to start a broader dynamic in the diocese"*.

Our cities are evolving towards super-diversity. This not only means that there are more and more ethnic/culturally diverse groups, but also that the diversity within each group is increasing. This requires stronger and continuously open, sensitive conversation, in which genuine interest is shown for each other, based on an appreciative approach.

One of the main goals of *Attent* is to inspire parishes and pastoral units, as well as local parishioners, deliberately using as a benchmark the Pope's annual message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees. It formulates touchstones to orient the spirituality of hospitality towards a communion that may gather together all the diversities of our society. The main purpose is to raise awareness of opportunities to be welcoming and well disposed toward others and then, stimulate concrete actions in favour of migrants.

In addition to the development of concrete practices of solidarity towards migrants, *Attent* intends to form a network to share each other's experiences, connect, inspire and strengthen the potential of everyone who is committed to a more merciful and fairer world. The final goal of the network is to encourage the Christian community to actively participate in the necessary transformation of society.

On the occasion of the interview, Rita Boeren also spoke about how their respects the other organisations active in the same sector. These latter sometimes are focused on very specific issues neglecting the importance of a whole commitment to change the spirit of the society: *"We see that other organisations have become very specialised. This is of course necessary given the enormous complexity of specific fields, for example, the asylum procedures and the law on foreigners of our country. But sometimes they do not have enough employees to simultaneously deal with complex situations and to work on fostering a more open attitude in society. Our added value is*

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that we work in this area. By tackling this issue together, we hope to make a difference in the long term. We hope at least for clearer positive actions in some pastoral units".

INNOVATIVENESS

Attent has a special concern for the surrounding reality, and it moves through it being always watchful. Its approach emerges from their website, which is concrete and careful of the need of migrants: *"We feel called upon to "go outside", to rediscover: Who are the groups living in the area today? Where are they? How can we connect in equality and solidarity? Where can we meet? What are the social problems in the neighbourhood that we can work on together - on the way to a new "we"? Where can we stand up together for the rights of the weakest?"* [source: <https://www.kerknet.be/attent/artikel-informatie/waar-gaan-we-van-uit-als-we-het-begrip-gastvrijheid-gebruiken?microsite=1375>].

In the *Attent's* vision, the care of people with the least opportunities determines the credibility of our faith, as well as the credibility of each one as a Christian. To this end, the persons involved in *Migration, Diversity, Hospitality* are alert to detect the most impelling challenges which demand particular attention to ensure maximum solidarity.

IMPACT

Attent has reached a very important achievement: the breaking of the barriers between migrants and the local community. The workshop carried out during the pandemic has made it clear: *"Getting to know each other shows that the boundaries between 'them' and 'we' are there, but they can be broken through encounter. Some migrants have been living in our country for more than 30 years and, for instance, we do not realise that they also speak Dutch very well! They also reports that they have too few conversations with Flemish people. Meeting each other is therefore a basic work that indeed still has to be done. The digital meeting was a successful foretaste."* said Rita Boeren during the interview.

Getting to know each other for some participants represented the first occasion for a conversation with a migrant in their life. Of course, this is a great life learning for European natives, who otherwise would never be able to understand the troubles that a migrant normally has to face. As a consequence, the whole community benefits from this in terms of hospitality and integration.

SUSTAINABILITY

'Migration, Diversity, Hospitality' involves 4 professionals and 5 volunteers, but, as Rita Boeren pointed out in the interview, the number of people involved is expected to grow as new local working groups are being built. Furthermore, it should be underlined that the diocese works in pastoral units and in each unit there is a person responsible for service and solidarity. *Attent 'Migration, Diversity, Hospitality'* intends to approach them offering support to start-up local initiatives.

Attent is also open to developing a partnership with other realities operating in the charity sector. Indeed, in Antwerp charitable activities have been traditionally carried out foremost by the charitable organisation ORBIT, of which two members are part of the *'Migration, Diversity, Hospitality'* working group. Therefore, there is interpenetration and collaboration with this association.

Regarding the organisational aspects, *Attent* is managed through well-balanced decisions. The chairmen of the group systematically every year gathers the members of the organisation to present the past initiatives and also to reflect on the future of the mission. In *Attent* people take advantage of this occasion to update the operations, to make some adjustments and to give them a new dynamic.

The organisation is very proactive, and this is demonstrated also from other perspectives. This Good Practice is continuously growing, and it has proven to have features that can be replicated even beyond the borders of Antwerp. While the vicariate of Antwerp has a stronger migration tradition, the neighbouring vicariate of Kempen, which belongs to the Diocese of Antwerp as well, has a more rural character, with smaller towns. Here cultural diversity has begun to become a matter of concern just in recent times. Thus, *Attent* has decided to extend its work to this territory and has made agreements with the Vicariate to strengthen the commitment to-

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wards the diversity issues. With this purpose, the vicariate of Kempen will recruit an employee which will be assigned to the forthcoming department "*Diversity and Internationalisation*". This person will also join the Antwerp working group *Migration, Diversity, Hospitality*.

Finally, as for *Get to know each other*, Rita Boeren in the interview expressed the willingness to repeat the initiative in several places in the territory of the Diocese.

2. SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN



Source: <https://jrseurope.org/en/country/greece/>

Verb: to integrate

Country: Greece

Initiative: educational centres

Beneficiaries: migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: to provide educational services to children and adults

Duration of Project: 2018 - ongoing

Source of funds: private donors; JRS Europe

Website: <https://jrs.net/en/country/greece/>

Catholic organisations involved and contacts: *JRS Greece; Charissis 6, 10439 Athens; Carmen Elisa Bando (carmen.bando@jrs.net)*

INTRODUCTION

In Greece, 2020 was a crucial year due to events that took place in relation to the refugee and migrants' issue. Tensions on the borders with Turkey and the impact of COVID-19 were the main turning points. The coronavirus plunged the country into a public health crisis that put displaced communities at disproportionate risk. When the pandemic first reached Greece in March, the reception centres on the islands held more than 37,000 people in facilities built for about 6,000. By mid-August, authorities had proceeded to transfer several hundred unaccompanied children to other countries and moved hundreds of asylum seekers to other facilities on the mainland.

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Greece has a high symbolic value in the context of the migratory processes that crossed Europe between 2015 and 2016. For many refugees and asylum seekers, in fact, Greece was the gateway to the rest of Europe. More than one million refugees arrived in Greece between 2015 and 2016. To deal with these migratory processes, over the years a lively political debate has arisen about the regulation of these flows and the possibility that these people could also reach the rest of Europe. Since that time, a number of restrictions and rules have been put in place which have prevented refugees from travelling from Greece to other European nations, or which have made travel to Greece impossible. Although the country is not a destination for the majority of these people, many refugees remain in Greece. According to data also provided by the organisation's website, there are currently more than 60,000 refugees living in Greece, including around 14,000 living in camps on the Greek islands. The size of these numbers, combined with the country's complex economic situation in recent years, has produced strong tensions that have endangered social cohesion. Indeed, Greece has struggled to respond to the needs of refugees during its own economic crisis. The country has failed to provide adequate services to refugees, asylum applications are backed up and refugee camps on the Greek islands lack basic necessities. Despite JRS Greece's massive efforts to alleviate the plight of these people, the pandemic has further complicated an already fragile picture. In fact, during 2020, around 140,000 cases of contagion with Covid-19 were recorded in Greece, for a total of almost 5,000 victims.

RELEVANCE

The services offered by JRS Greece range across different areas and sectors. A leading role is played by projects for education and training, of which 2 main ones are mentioned. The first of these projects is the Pedro Arrupe Centre, dedicated to the social and educational support of migrant and refugee children, and their families. Education is deemed by JRS Greece as a crucial tool to promote agency and the full development and freedom of displaced people. As such, it represents a life-saving intervention for children, adolescents and adults who are forcibly displaced from their homes, providing them stability. The skills and knowledge made available by education help the refugees to integrate into new communities. Pedro Arrupe Centre (PAC) project answers these needs with the mission of facilitating the integration of migrant, refugee, and disadvantaged Greek children into the Greek education system through an after-school mentoring program

and interactive cultural activities. In doing so, it fosters the social integration of students, including refugees, migrants and Greek children. The number of students who registered for the academic year 2020-2021 is less than the usual number that Pedro Arrupe Centre can register because of the COVID-19 restrictions.

The Centre focuses on the mission to help welcome refugee and migrant children into Greek society and schools through supplemental education. This centre also provides food baskets once a month to the most vulnerable families. Specifically, the main beneficiaries of this program are the children of migrants and refugees. There are also some sporadic cases of assistance given to Greek families in difficulty, even if these are currently in small numbers. The second education and training project, on the other hand, is called MAGISTORIES. It falls into the area of non-formal education and basically consists of providing lessons to adults and adolescents, and some activities to children. Among the various services offered in the framework of the education programs, there are language and computer courses. Before the pandemic there were also courses to teach how to write CVs and cultural workshops, but after the health emergency, these projects were suspended. The main languages taught are Greek, English, French and German. Teenagers are offered courses in Greek and English, while children are offered activities that are not specifically organised as classes. An essential point about these projects, underlined during the interview, is that almost none of the children and their families usually go to school. This aspect is very important, on the one hand, to understand the centrality of these services offered by JRS Greece to fill these gaps. On the other hand, it has been stressed several times that JRS Greece's educational programs do not stand in opposition to or as an alternative to the Greek public school. Therefore, JRS Greece does not aim to replace the national school system, on the contrary, it supplements its outreach towards the migrant and refugee community. However, as these families are far from school services, the organisation aims to remedy a deleterious lack for the future of the children.

In addition to educational services, which are the core of JRS Greece's activities, the organisation also develops projects in three other specific sectors such as emergency support, integration and advocacy.

IMPACT

As regards the impact produced by the Pedro Arrupe Centre project, it is necessary to take into account the data provided on the two school years included in 2020. Therefore, as regards the 2019-2020 school year, the educational courses were attended by 92 boys (63 in primary school, 24 in junior high school, 5 in high school) and 90 girls (46 in primary school, 33 in junior high school, 11 in high school), whose main countries of origin were: Afghanistan, Albania, Morocco, Nigeria, Ghana, Somalia, Egypt, Greece, Estonia, Turkey, Syria, Pakistan, New Guinea, Bangladesh, Georgia, and Senegal.

As regards the 2020-2021 school year, the educational courses were attended by 62 boys (30 in primary school, 24 in junior high school, 4 in high school) and 58 girls (28 in primary school, 21 in junior high school, 13 in high school), whose main countries of origin are: Afghanistan, Albania, Morocco, Nigeria, Ghana, Somalia, Egypt, Greece, Estonia, Turkey, Syria, Pakistan, New Guinea, Bangladesh, Georgia, Senegal, and Poland.

INNOVATIVENESS

The Greek branch of JRS is still young, having only taken root in the country since 2015. In addition, the educational services offered, as in the case of the Pedro Arrupe Centre, are only 3 years old, having started in 2018. In light of these elements, as underlined during the interview, the entirety of the project itself represents an element of novelty in the Greek panorama of hospitality and integration. The fact that the projects and activities of JRS Greece are so recent is leading the organisation to explore as many avenues as possible. As already observed in other European contexts, sometimes an element of innovation is represented by the fact of filling the gaps left by other initiatives. According to what was reported during the interview, responding to older needs by giving answers that were used previously, can itself be considered a significant element of innovation. What JRS Greece, through education and training projects, offers, is the care that is given to people, trying to assist them also on the spiritual and material front as well as on the educational one. Although these projects are focused on education, JRS Greece also works with other organisations to expand the range of services to be offered to these people and is also dedicated to advocacy.

Therefore, applying a holistic and non-sectorial model, which is therefore not limited to helping people one need at a time separately from the others, it is possible to discover many different needs. What distinguishes JRS Greece, therefore, is the fact that over the years it has developed a series of projects and activities starting from this process of discovery of needs. The Pedro Arrupe Centre, in fact, was born from the encounter with the first waves of migrants and refugees, from the understanding that although 90% of them want to leave Greece, many are forced to remain there for an indefinite period. Providing educational services, therefore, becomes an essential part of integrating these people into Greek society. Therefore, JRS Greece does not remain tied to the simple material dimension of aid. One strong point is its ability to go further towards meeting a variety of needs caused by the emergencies that have afflicted Greece in recent years. Ignoring this part of assistance in a scenario of strong pressure on NGOs, in favour of more visible and immediate help, is a strong temptation, especially when resources are extremely limited. Taking a step forward from these considerations is the strength of JRS Greece.

SUSTAINABILITY

The funds used to finance the activities of JRS Greece do not come even in a small part from the Greek government. In recent years, especially after the change of leadership at the helm of the executive, relations between the organisation and the country's institutional top management have cooled and been reduced. This means that the money JRS receives to finance its projects comes mostly from JRS Europe and partly from private donors. These donors are often approached first by JRS Europe, which then directs funds to JRS Greece. The pandemic inevitably had a strong impact on the activities carried out by JRS Greece even if, as underlined in the interview, after a moment of initial difficulty, they were able to reach some stability. In particular, during the first lockdown, they tried to move forward through online lessons broadcast on Facebook. This experience, supported for the first time by the government, proved to be a failure for everyone, due to the low following among migrants and refugees. During the second lockdown, however, they decided to do the lessons on WhatsApp, an almost unique choice compared to what has been tried by the other NGOs in Greece. It was a success as the migrants and refugees reacted with enthusiasm and participation allowing them to maintain a good following and a strong presence in the lessons. The main change caused by the pandemic has

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been the loss of contact with people, which is very difficult for both sides. Some lessons went to Zoom, some donors helped them with routers and internet connections to give to students to follow the lessons. However, the very fact that Greece is not a destination country, that 90% of migrants and refugees want to leave, makes it very difficult to work with them and represents the main difficulty.

They want to leave in any way they can. Before the health emergency, it was much easier to work with them as there were more people working on the projects. Now the situation is more complex although there is the hope of a restart capable of guaranteeing the sustainability of these educational projects.

3. DESTITUTION GRANTS



Source: <https://www.rst.org.uk/what-we-do>

Verb: to integrate

Country: Scotland

Initiative: to aid refugees and asylum seekers; destitution grants

Beneficiaries: refugees and asylum-seekers

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: Refugee Survival Trust addresses the problem of destitution which is rising in Scotland and the UK due to the conditions of the asylum system

Duration of Project: from 1996 to present

Source of funds: private donors

Website: <https://www.rst.org.uk/>

Catholic organisations involved and contacts: *Archdiocese of Edinburgh; Refugee Survival Trust; Robertson House 152, Bath Street, Glasgow; Agatha Kai Kai (M.A.Kaikai@ed.ac.uk)*

INTRODUCTION

The Archdiocese of Edinburgh is part of the Refugee Survival Trust, which was established in 1996 by a group of people to address the worrying conditions of refugees in Scotland due to the whole architecture of the asylum system. The Archdiocese promotes the active participation of each of its parishes in this network, thus involving the entire local Catholic community in a wide-spread manner. The vision implemented by this project is to welcome and promote the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in the country, providing them with the means and opportunities to realise their full potential. Through this project, therefore, the Archdiocese of Edinburgh is able to directly address some of the main problems facing refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland. The first aim of the project is to provide migrants with practical support when it is most needed, to build connections between local communities involved in integration and refugees and advocacy campaigns to promote political change. The Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 hit Scotland hard, causing around 4,500 victims out of over 120,000 infections. The evolution of the health emergency also forced the Refugee Survival Trust to reshape part of its daily activities, and consequently the Archdiocese has also been forced to adapt. On the one hand, complications derived from the need to suspend activities and offices, in the light of the provisions of the authorities. On the other hand, this made meeting the people to be assisted much more complicated, as they were suddenly in a much more acute state of need and at the same time unable to receive all the help they needed.

RELEVANCE

The activities carried out by the Archdiocese of Edinburgh within the Refugee Survival Trust have as their primary objective to alleviate the harsh living conditions to which refugees and asylum seekers are subjected once they arrive in Scotland. In particular, as emerged during the interview with Agatha Kai Kai (Trustee of the Refugee Survival Trust for the Archdiocese), many of them are in a state of destitution due to the bureaucratic complexities of the national reception system. This causes hundreds of asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland to face extreme poverty and homelessness as they struggle to support themselves and their families. These people have left their country of origin due to wars, violence and persecutions, arriving in Scotland without any social protection network of friends or rel-

atives, finding themselves living in conditions of extreme poverty waiting for the national authorities to recognize their status as worthy of protection.

Some elements provided to highlight the difficult living conditions of these people (also available on the organisation's website):

- The first obstacle for asylum seekers is the lack of authorization to work. They receive a minimum amount of money equal to £ 37.75 per week to cover all their essential needs such as food, clothing, transport, articles on the dressing table and school uniforms. Complicating the scenario even further is the possibility that these payments may be delayed by red tape or interrupted if an asylum application is rejected.
- The bureaucratic process requires that initial individual asylum applications, as well as new applications, cannot be made in Scotland, despite the presence of these people in the country, but must be made in person in England. However, this situation makes it very difficult for asylum seekers to carry out this procedure, as many of them living in Scotland cannot afford the journey to England.
- Asylum seekers can get completely lost in the labyrinth of the system if their asylum applications are denied and they have filed all the appeals they can make without success. Those who have exhausted every possibility of appeal before the competent institutions often end up homeless on the streets, without access to public funds.
- Even if refugee status is granted, the risk of destitution remains, as there is only a 28-day period before all asylum support, including housing, ceases.

IMPACT

To respond to the needs of the people who need to be assisted, the activities of the Archdiocese within the Refugee Survival Trust consist mainly in providing small grants for daily basic needs; befriending programs and initiatives to encourage integration; ambassador for refugees and migrants; assistance in educational and cultural activities; as well as helping the homeless.

The strength of the various activities is represented by the destitution grants, through which Refugee Survival Trust can assist around 1200 people each year. Although the organisation's network is, at present, confined to the Scottish territory only, nevertheless the activities carried out have a profound impact on the local social fabric. This is because they allow refugees and

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asylum seekers to be helped in the period of national social assistance vacuum, and in doing so promotes their integration into the local territory. These people are not always located in large cities but in smaller centres where integration is more complex and tiring.

As underlined by the head of such activities, Agatha Kai Kai, during the interview, the organisation's website also provides detailed reports on past activities and success stories of refugees and asylum seekers who, following the activities carried out, have managed to successfully integrate into the Scottish social and professional fabric.

INNOVATIVENESS

As previously pointed out, the heart of the activities carried out by the Refugee Survival Trust consists of the destitution grants, which also represent the main strength and innovation of the organisation. The destitutions grants are aimed at providing small one-off payments to refugees and people seeking asylum in Scotland facing extreme poverty and homelessness. The people involved in these programs, therefore, can use these funds for basic daily needs for at least six months (or even more), i.e. the amount of time that elapses before the intervention of the national authorities in recognition of the status of individuals. But in the initial phase, refugees and asylum seekers supported by the Refugee Survival Trust do not receive any form of financial support from the government, nor do they have other sources of livelihood. From this derives the concrete and real risk of destitution. These grants of last resort are available to asylum seekers and refugees for up to six months after obtaining refugee status. They allow people to have a choice between having a place to stay or sleeping outdoors; they provide them with the opportunity to make proper nutrition and ask for help. In sum, they offer a brief respite from upsetting difficulties and emotional distress. Indigence grant rates are normally £60 per week per person. Such a sum allows for an increase of what is foreseen by the national authorities, which foresee a sum of about 37 pounds per week (Home Office support) which makes it extremely difficult for refugees and asylum seekers to survive in dignity. Travel grants are also available for those who cannot afford the travel required to apply for asylum or present further evidence.

SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability of these programs is currently guaranteed by donations from private donors, a network of volunteers of around 80 people and a tight network that allows the Refugee Survival Trust to collaborate with other important British associations and organisations in the sector. As an example, partnerships have been developed over the years with the Scottish Refugee Council, British Red Cross, University of Strathclyde Law Clinic, Glasgow Night Shelter, and Castlemilk Community Church. The development of this network has also made it possible over time to diversify the activities carried out, not only limiting itself to the Destitution Grants but also by conducting advocacy activities in collaboration with other organisations to promote different legislation on the reception of refugees, and also, assisting them on the legal front concerning bureaucratic practices. Alongside the main strengths, however, there are some difficulties and problems for the future. In the first place, as underlined during the interview, there is often difficulty in relating with local authorities, especially in a framework of national legislation deemed highly restrictive on migration policies. Secondly, there is often difficulty in finding adequate funds and resources to carry out these activities. What is considered extremely relevant in terms of future sustainability, however, is the involvement of local parishes, although not in an official form. Many individual citizens attending the parishes willingly spend themselves in collaborating with the programs of the Refugee Survival Trust, benefiting from it as well as the develop relationships within the framework of local communities. Although these activities under consideration are closely linked to the Scottish context, however, some of the issues addressed have features in common with what has been found in other contexts as well. The lengths of the assistance and recognition programs, in fact, often pose common challenges in the various national contexts, aggravating the already harsh living conditions to which refugees and asylum seekers are subjected. According to Agatha Kai Kai, the main objectives of these programs are the development of the person, self-reliance and independence in social and professional relationships. These are considered the main conditions to respect human dignity even in degrading contexts such as those from which these people have fled. Through these programs, refugees and asylum seekers have managed to integrate into Scottish society, building good social relationships and also finding work. In addition, the use of migrants who have long been residing in the country as interns and workers at the organisation's offices allows for an even more attentive and aware service to the needs of the people assisted. These mechanisms now make it possible to provide services to around 1200 refugees

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and asylum seekers every year, with an assessment process that allows the Refugee Survival trust to monitor the effective integration of these people even after leaving the assistance program. These characteristics are also considered replicable in other contexts since they aim to fill some endemic gaps in the assistance services of the various countries and are aimed at satisfying the basic needs of refugees and asylum seekers.

4. NETWORK FOR REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS IN LYON



Source: <https://lyon.catholique.fr/agir-servir/accueil-des-migrants/2018/04/05/quest-ce-que-laclaam/>

Verb: to integrate

Country: France

Initiative: to provide support to a network of associations engaged in assisting refugees in Lyon

Beneficiaries: refugees and asylum-seekers

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: legal counselling; mental health support and networking

Duration of Project: from 2015 - ongoing

Source of funds: private and public donors

Website: <https://lyon.catholique.fr/diocese/service-diocesain/aclaam/>

Catholic organisations involved and contacts: *Association Catholique pour l'Accueil et l'Accompagnement des Migrants; Maison Diocésaine 6, Av. Adolphe Max 69321 Lyon; Clémentine Gagnant; (c.gagnant@lyon.catholique.fr)*

INTRODUCTION

ACLAAM, the Catholic Association for the Reception and Support of Migrants, was born in 2015, in Lyon. The association contributes to better integration of people who have been forced to flee from their homeland and most of the time live in exile in our societies. It carries out its activities by supporting local actors, associations, parishes or congregations, who welcome and support

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these people within the perimeter of the diocese of Lyon. ACLAAM was born in 2015 from the convergence of commitments of families, parishes and religious congregations of the diocese of Lyon for the reception of exiles. This happened through actions carried out with the diocese following the dismantling of the camps and the expulsion of the occupied under the aegis of the twinning of Lyon Mosul for refugees from Iraq and Syria. The most difficult aspect was that of networking these local and parish associations. In 2020, the pandemic caused over 2.5 million infections in France, for a total of about 65,000 victims.

RELEVANCE

The association was created in 2015 in Lyon, in response to the serious humanitarian crisis that hit Europe in that period. In particular, a huge mass of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers poured into the city of Lyon, most of whom came from the Balkan route. The consequences of this intense migration process were hundreds of people from the Balkans who found themselves living on the streets, entire families left to themselves in a dramatic situation. An event of this magnitude, with its dramatic consequences, required an active presence on the part of the Church and Catholic organisations. Furthermore, the Diocese of Lyon has very close twinning relations with the Christian community of Mosul, in Iraq, much of which in those years fell into the hands of Daesh and terrorists. A part of that Christian community managed to reach Lyon and the parishes of the city were encouraged to welcome these people from the Iraqi Christian community. To respond to these profound humanitarian crises, therefore, the *Association Catholique pour l'accueil et l'accompagnement des Migrants* was formed, created through a foundation to provide advice and welcome to migrants. Initially, in fact, Iraqi families were welcomed by a single-family or a priest in an independent and autonomous way, but the gravity of the situation required a more coordinated and organised effort. The structure of the association is young and very small; there are only a couple of people employed and about 12 volunteers on a fixed basis. ACLAAM, with the help of the Saint-Irénée Foundation, wants, therefore, to promote a society where these people can find their place and in which Christians engage with others to welcome them and improve their living conditions. ACLAAM supports all refugees located in the diocese of Lyon regardless of their nationality or religion by supporting integration through four ways, namely information, mutualisation of services, a connection of actors within the

network with external partners, and finally, representation of the network towards institutions. This is mainly done by working on topics such as accommodation facilities, finance, associative life, legal support, psychological health, knowledge of French, and awareness of migration issues.

IMPACT

The main activity in which the association is involved consists of supporting a network of 50 associations, in the Lyon area, at the service of migrants. According to the data provided during the interview, the association involves about 870 volunteers in the reception, 240 families assisted in 2020, for a total of about 750 people, of which 250 are children. In 2020, 144 families with minor children, 30 families without dependent children and 67 single people were welcomed, including 2 unaccompanied minors. ACLAAM itself has no rooms or facilities, but they try to help the migrants with legal advice as the French system is so complicated and lawyers are hard to find. Recently the association conducted a study to calculate the impact of their network in economic terms in recent years, in order to calculate the overall economic outlay and how much has been invested in the city and region of Lyon. The total amount is approximately 2 million euros spent on accommodation, services, first aid, gas for volunteers, medical expenses and reimbursement of staff expenses. Overall, about 1/3 of the people assisted are refugees, another 1/3 of asylum seekers, and finally, 1/3 made up of people without any documents, or without qualifications suitable for the legal recognition of their status. This last category can at most request a residence permit. In addition, roughly 1/3 of the refugees come from Eastern Europe, 1/3 from the Middle East and 1/3 from the African continent.

INNOVATIVENESS

The innovative elements represented by the activity carried out by AACLAM consist in providing services that are often not considered for refugees. This involves on the one hand conducting projects centred around classic activities, and on the other hand, other more creative projects. A substantial part of the services that ACLAAM exclusively provides to refugees is made up of legal advice, even for undocumented people who have been in

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France for years. Due to the pandemic, they are developing these refugee counselling programs not on an in-person level, because they do not have the ability to carry out these activities in person yet, but via Zoom. For example, they instruct them on how the recognition process takes place, how to behave at the interview, and what to expect. Another large part of the association's activities is made up of the housing issue, a very serious problem in the city of Lyon due to lack of space and apartments. Prices, in fact, have now reached a very difficult level even for the inhabitants of the city themselves, and while the costs rise, there is also discrimination against undocumented migrants. ACLAAM therefore often intervenes to negotiate special contracts with homeowners. Refugee mental health care is another crucial area that ACLAAM addresses step by step, providing a service that was not previously provided for these people. The idea of caring for the person as a whole and not only in their primary needs, in fact, was often excluded. Refugees are often people traumatised by past events, far from their land and haunted by their memories. For this reason, ACLAAM has recently started a partnership with an important French doctor, specialised in the treatment of trauma, who has agreed to collaborate voluntarily to help refugees improve their health. This involved experimenting with an innovative hypnotic therapy to help treat trauma and PTSD. This special treatment began in 2018 and is working very well, so much so that the Lyon trauma centre has inquired about the results. The success of the treatment, in fact, has aroused the interest of the hospital, which is interested in replicating the program and also welcoming refugees in this way. In January, therefore, the next free hospital session is scheduled without any conditions. However, there are also some problems related to the complicated relations in terms of communication with the Prefecture du Stade of Lyon. Relations with the new municipal administration, on the other hand, seem at the moment more cordial and marked by reciprocal communication.

SUSTAINABILITY

As for the funds available to the association, ACLAAM, being legally an association of private law and Catholic for identity and values, has no restrictions on the people it chooses to help. Hence, they are recognized by the state and therefore receive funds from state and private donors. The Saint-Irénée Foundation is the main funder of the association's activities. In 2020, the Foundation participated in the ACLAAM budget with approximately € 85,000, according to data available on the organisation's website. The

Prefecture du Stade contributed around 8,000 euros; some beneficiaries participated with 6,000 euros while the remaining 2,000 euros came from private donors. In the area of fundraising, it is particularly difficult to find the resources to assist the 30% of undocumented people. The Covid-19 pandemic has inevitably impacted the projects carried out by ACLAAM. The first problem was logistical; in fact, most of the volunteers are of advanced age. This has made it difficult for these people, many of whom are retired, to leave their homes and travel to the premises to support refugees. Moreover, this situation has tried them a lot and made it difficult to organise a large part of the association's activities without many volunteers. The second impact, on the other hand, was above all at an economic level. The funds available were cut even before the pandemic. Previously, there was the possibility of raising funds also through public events, but these are no longer allowed. Many of the services offered have been free, but perhaps in the future, the association will be forced to change this..

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5. CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMUNITY



Source: <https://www.gcloe.at/Joomla/index.php/thema/wir>

Verb: to integrate

Country: Austria

Initiative: develop a community capable of assisting migrants during the whole process of integration

Beneficiaries: migrants

Thematic area(s)of good practice example: community development and promotion of migrants in the Austrian society

Duration of Project: 2016 - ongoing

Source of funds: CLC; individual donations

Website: <https://www.gcloe.at/Joomla/index.php/thema/wir>

Catholic organisations involved and contacts: *GCL, CLC-MARG "Mitmenschen Am Rand der Gesellschaft"; Dr.-Ignaz-Seipel-Platz 11010 Vienna; Ulrich Treipl (gcl.marg@gmx.at)*

INTRODUCTION

The Gemeinschaft Christlichen Lebens (GCL in German, CLC in English) is made up of various souls that come together to form a single community dedicated to supporting and helping migrants present in Austria. Within it, therefore, it contains an Ignatian community, an apostolic community and a world community, thanks to the vast international network with which it is in contact. The "Christian Life Community" is a spiritual community of lay people whose source is Ignatian spirituality. Members live alone or with

their families and meet regularly in groups for exchanges and insights. The GCL today has a widespread diffusion that leads it to be present in about 70 countries for a total of about 25,000 members (excluding school and youth groups). The structure of the GCL sees that the members of the single groups meet regularly, thus exchanging experiences and reflections. They support each other in their personal journeys and their mission. Each group is made up of a minimum of 6 to a maximum of 10 people, is led by a coordinator and is spiritually cared for by an accompanying person. These groups are then involved in assisting in the conduct of program activities. In fact, they are an integral and essential part of the path of faith curated and promoted by the GCL. The "Christian Life Community" is a member of the forum for renewal movements of the Archdiocese of Vienna.

The health emergency in Austria, still in a critical phase, produced over 360,000 cases in 2020, with over 6000 deaths.

RELEVANCE

The structure of which GCL is composed unfolds between Austria and South Tyrol (Italy). It currently consists of 33 groups, of which:

9 groups are in Innsbruck, 1 group in Villach, 2 in Linz and St. Pölten, 1 group in Vorarlberg, 8 in Vienna. In addition, there are also 1 group in Vipiteno and 2 in Graz, 1 group in Mondsee and 1 in Bolzano. Finally, 2 groups in Wörgl, 1 in Osttirol, 1 in Spittal and 1 in Salzburg.

The main services to which the working groups of GCL are dedicated concern various areas of assistance and integration for migrants. Among these, it is possible to mention, according to what emerged during the interview, language teaching and training, visits to detention centres, accompaniment during the procedural and bureaucratic procedures. Alongside more material and administrative services, however, GCL also looks after the spiritual needs of migrants and assists them in this way. For example, promoting the possibility of becoming a godfather or godmother, sponsorship, coexistence within families, sharing free time or eating common meals. At the same time, the members of GCL are also involved in promoting the cause of migrants and the defence of their rights, for example through educational offers or by organising public events on the subject; organising collections of signatures for petitions, or by sending letters to politicians

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and authorities. Cooperation with civil society and NGOs represents for GCL an essential feature for the conduct of its activities, in order to respond to as many needs of migrants as possible.

IMPACT

Although no statistical data is kept on the number of people assisted and their characteristics, the main impact of these projects, highlighted during the interview, is first and foremost the ability to ensure continuity. In fact, these activities have continued uninterrupted for 5 years. Another highlighted impact factor is the ability to develop a sense of community. This allows migrants themselves to appreciate their value to Austrian society. Likewise, it allows the local population to discover new brothers and sisters, new companions in their daily life. These practices allow at the beginning a chance to develop curiosity towards the other, to then discover the same needs, difficulties or life problems, then, with hope, to solve these problems or overcome difficulties. Most of the migrants assisted have had the opportunity to recover their dignity through these projects, some through work, others by obtaining documents or, arriving as illiterate, soon becoming able to read and write. These results were achieved thanks to a team of 7 volunteers who work alongside the community workgroups and migrants. The results are then evaluated by means of an assessment process which consists of an annual reflection on, and evaluation of the objectives and the work implemented. The mandate is then adjusted every 3 years based on decisions made by the national CLC-executive counsel.

As evidence of the impact it had on migrants and Austrian society, after 5 years of activity, GLC was definitely recognized as an apostolic community within the Austrian CLC. This means that around 220 CLC members are aware of the activities carried out. Furthermore, although not uncommon in projects usually carried out with migrants, no incidents of burnout or hostility have been reported in the 5 years of activity.

INNOVATIVENESS

The innovative element proposed by GCL consists in addressing the issue of welcoming and integrating migrants as a single process that cannot be

divided into several phases. Unlike what is implemented in other projects, i.e. a fragmentation according to factional logics of reception paths, GCL aims to offer the first welcome and then to accompany migrants along the entire path of insertion into Austrian society. This involves coming into contact with migrants as soon as they arrive in the country by first offering basic necessities, then staying close to them rather than letting them get lost in other assistance programs that do not have prior knowledge of the person. In this way, a virtuous process is promoted aimed at mixing migrants and the local community, blurring the distinction between “us” and “them” by accompanying, serving and supporting integration. According to what was underlined during the interview, this holistic and continuous approach had the advantage of changing the mentality of migrants, who now no longer see the GCL community as composed of foreign helpers, but help as a form of reciprocity that enhances both sides. However, difficulties persist, posed in the first place by the country's extremely tight migration policy, although these activities are helping to produce changes in public opinion.

SUSTAINABILITY

The working groups that underpin GLC's activities are primarily supported by the Austrian branch of the Christian Life Community (CLC), as well as a lot of individual financial commitment. The complexity of the objectives that GLC aims at clearly makes it more difficult to guarantee stability and continuity to the various projects. In order to keep awareness of the reality of refugees alive, many resources and a flexible commitment capable of adapting to the difficulties of these challenges are needed. We also need the ability to deal with the hostility of a part of public opinion. However, the robustness offered by CLC's vast global network allows for sufficient resources to pursue these goals. Furthermore, in addition to the global network, over time a vast network within Austria has also been structured, which actively involves at the moment three regions which are actively involved. This support network is bonded to the international structure of the organisation through the European CLC. There are also partnerships with other Austrian and European NGOs, such as the German Migration Network and the European Migration Network. Furthermore, the positive impact that GLC activities have had on the local community and that of migrants, has also promoted the possibility of replicating these practices in other contexts, such as the idea of Migration Workshops or permanent working groups, activities already put into practice in France (*Atelier Étranger*), Spain, and Germany.

6. MIGRATIONSBERATUNG FÜR ERWACHSENE ZUWANDERER - MBE MIGRATION ADVICE FOR ADULT IMMIGRANTS



Source: <https://www.bmi.bund.de/DE/themen/heimat-integration/integration/migrationsberatung/migrationsberatung-node.html>

Verb: to integrate

Country: Germany

Initiative: to provide practical counselling and assistance in the carrying out of day-to-day activities

Beneficiaries: migrants and refugees

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: counselling services and assistance

Duration of Project: 2019 - ongoing

Source of funds: public institutions; Berlin municipality; Caritas Germany

Website: <https://www.caritas-berlin.de/>; <https://www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/Integration/ZugewanderteTeilnehmende/BeratungErwachsene/beratung-erwachsene-node.html;jsessionid=A427971F318D84C-0109C32A1903CD86g.internet542> ; <https://www.mbeon.de/en/home/>

Catholic organisations involved and contacts: Caritas Berlin; Residenzstrasse 90, 13409 Berlin; Franziska Grubert (F.Grubert@caritas-berlin.de)

The Migrationsberatung Für Erwachsene Zuwanderer (MBE) project has the main purpose of welcoming and helping migrants who have only recently arrived in Germany in carrying out practical activities. For many, in fact, the arrival in a foreign country of which neither language nor culture is known represents a first shock that makes it difficult even to carry out trivial and simple activities. Therefore, the service offered by the Migration Advice Service for Adult Immigrants (MBE) is a consultancy activity provided to migrants and refugees to offer advice and support in everyday life. Throughout the country, 1,473 MBE centres also operate anonymously online. This adult immigrant counselling service operates independently of state authorities, and counselling sessions are free and confidential. An essential part of these activities is carried out by Caritas Berlin, which is part of a vast and structured network that conducts the activities of the project.

RELEVANCE

The services offered by Caritas Berlin in the framework of the MBE project consist of consultancy activities for people new to Germany, i.e. who have been in the country for less than 3 years, who face many practical and material problems in carrying out everyday activities. The activities are supported financially by the federal government as well as by the municipality of Berlin and involve the work of at least 3 collaborators in this project. Another member of the staff of Caritas Berlin looks after younger migrants and refugees, that is, under the age of 27. For these people, there is no time criterion to apply. Unlike the MBE project which deals with newcomers, this other parallel activity offers support to the youngest regardless of how long they have spent in Germany. Caritas Berlin has offices in every district of the city of Berlin, through this widespread diffusion it is able to offer a rapid and effective response to the various needs that arise in such a large and populous city. Concerning concretely the consultancy service offered by Caritas Berlin, it mainly focuses on the theme of social security and the welfare system in Germany (with questions regarding, for example, how to pay the rent, how to get money from the social system, as well as how family members can come to Germany). In addition to this, the services offered also include language courses and legal services, how to apply for residence permits and what are the bureaucratic procedures for migrants and refugees. On occasions when Caritas Berlin is unable to offer effective responses, they make use of the help of a legal team specialised in these issues. The advisors involved understand the language of these people and can speak fluently with them. This means

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that they are familiar with the problems and challenges which settling into life in Germany may entail. Migrants can talk to them in person, and then work together on a plan to help them feel at home in everyday life in Germany. Skills and knowledge of every single person assisted form the focus of the advisory session, which will focus on finding out which support programmes fits best for the person and they can learn German. The advisors also check whether they are eligible to attend state-subsidised integration courses or can benefit from other local integration schemes. Migration counselling for adult immigrants is free of charge at all times, so they can find an opportunity of integration without economic difficulties.

IMPACT

The data available to Caritas Berlin, provided during the interview, regarding the assistance provided under the MBE program includes a total of 388 people assisted in the course of 2020. OF these, 173 men and 215 women. Most of them come from Syria and Afghanistan, Russia, African countries and the European Union, and a few other countries, such as countries in South America, Asia and the countries of the former Soviet Union. Most assisted migrants and refugees are between 27 and 64 years of age.

INNOVATIVENESS

The activation of this program is the result of an innovative and efficient collaboration between the federal government and various NGOs, including Caritas Berlin itself. According to the immigration legislation in Germany, in fact, the government must provide advice to people who have just arrived in the country. Through the consultancy services of the MBE program, therefore, what is a specific task of the government is delegated, on the basis of a specific institutional choice, to charitable organisations. This allows Caritas Berlin to intervene at an essential juncture in the process of welcoming and integrating migrants, or as the first interlocutor, able to interact immediately with them to help and support them from the start. This allows them to receive everything they need to have a good life there, and not have to intervene at a later stage when the person is living in a situation of high distress. The time factor, therefore, represents the real added value of this program.

The timing of the interaction with the migrant can, in the best of cases, avoid problems for the people present. Without any consultation, it is indeed difficult to understand the social system in Germany, especially in practical matters. A further point of innovation of practice consists in opening up to society and the city. In fact, the specific activities carried out by Caritas Berlin also include the task of dialoguing with politicians and participating in community events. Through this widespread presence in Berlin society, Caritas seeks to be present and to connect with others, while at the same time favouring the cultural openness of society. This is a project-specific task.

The main difficulties are related to the nature and structure of the social and administrative system of Berlin. It is very complicated to make requests for money, apartments, or connections to foreign offices. The administration and the whole apparatus of the welfare state is chaotic enough to make its management complex. The employment centre is an example of things that do not work well.

SUSTAINABILITY

The resources and funds needed to ensure the sustainability of the MBE project come mainly from the federal government, which contributes together with the municipality of Berlin. The ministries divide the money between projects for the various NGOs and decide which city receives how much money. A small part of the financial support comes from Caritas Germany. The main problems in terms of the future sustainability of the project concern the uncertainty about the funds. In essence, a request is sent to the authorities every two years to obtain the resources. However, after the two-year period, there is no certainty about the renewal of this money, thus generating uncertainty that complicates the ordinary and administrative management of the activities of Caritas Berlin in the framework of this project.

The existence of numerous Partnerships with other realities in the field of assistance to migrants is an essential part of guaranteeing the sustainability of the MBE project. This network includes associations and public bodies such as:

- the Association for the Welfare of Workers (*Arbeiterwohlfahrt*),
- the German Caritas Association,

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- the Diakonisches Werk der Evangelischen Kirchen in Deutschland (the social welfare organisation of German Protestant churches),
- the German Association for Equal Participation (*Deutscher Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband*),
- the German Red Cross (*Deutsches Rotes Kreuz*),
- the Central Agency for the Welfare of Jews in Germany (*Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle der Juden in Deutschland*),
- the Federation of the Expelled (*Bund der Vertriebenen*).

In addition to these institutional partners that form the network in support of the MBE project, Caritas Berlin has also developed collaborative relationships involving a wider network. Among these partners are evangelical and protestant church organisations, migrant organisations for people from Vietnam and 2 other NGOs run by people from Russia.

The Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on the management of MBE's operations. In an initial phase, the counselling services functioned as usual and opened during consultation hours for people, using some health precautions. Later, they had to close, following the prescriptions of the authorities, when the numbers of infections increased. In order to react to the difficult situation created by the pandemic, Caritas took action by offering a seminar on online consultation that could allow Caritas Berlin to continue its programs. Therefore, Caritas launched a special program for this. Thus it was possible as early as May 2020 to start providing online consultation, after having closed for only a few weeks. In the following months, as the health emergency faded, they started making appointments in their offices again. Fewer people went to their counselling services, but at least there was the possibility of face-to-face physical encounters after street encounters in the open air during the toughest months of the pandemic. Currently, MBE counselling services are offered both face-to-face and over the phone, to reach as many migrants and refugees as possible. Online services are a good boon for those who need them. Over the past few months, they have not usually met so many people, but they have never stopped and this has been very important to ensure the sustainability of the program which, although slowed down and hampered by the pandemic, has not suffered profound damage to its structure, which would jeopardise its durability over time.

7. SUPPORT AGAINST LABOUR EXPLOITATION



Source: <https://www.caritas.no/migrasjon-og-integrering/>

Verb: to protect

Country: Norway

Initiative: counselling for refugees and legal support against labour exploitation; labour assistance for the social system for labour migrants

Beneficiaries: refugees; asylum-seekers; labour migrants

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: assistance to refugees and migrants and support to tackle labour exploitation

Duration of Project: 2015 - ongoing

Source of funds: government and public authorities

Website: <https://www.caritas.no/>

Catholic organisations involved and contacts: Caritas Norway; Storgata 38, 0182 Oslo; Kristin Velure Strom (Kristin.strom@caritas.no)

INTRODUCTION

The activities carried out by Caritas in Norway are mainly aimed at working with the minority population and is recognized as a national resource centre for integration in the state budget. This implies that the organisation runs resource and information centres for immigrants in the most important cit-

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ies of the country, such as Oslo, Bergen, Drammen, and Trondheim. These centres offer information and guidance, legal advice, help with job searches as well as a number of courses in Norwegian, data and other skills development. In addition to that, Caritas Norway offers preparatory courses for participation in Norwegian society and working life at asylum reception centres in Eastern and Western Norway, as well as in Central Norway.

RELEVANCE

The character of migrations processes in Norway is peculiar and different from many European countries. First of all, this is due to the geographic position of the country, which makes it far from the most used migration routes. Second, the well-developed welfare system of the country, combined with the economic prosperity and the job availability, makes it attractive for most of the refugees and asylum seekers, as well as for labour migrants. As a consequence, Norway attracts not only migrants and refugees from troubled and poor countries, but also European immigration composed of people coming from other EU and non-EU countries. This makes the activities carried out by Caritas Norway particularly relevant, due to their focus and attention on the plague of labour exploitation, which is wide spread in the country and not as much observed in other European contexts. This implies the necessity for the local Caritas to develop practices, activities and projects especially focussed on this issue.

IMPACT

In 2020, 302 660 people saw increased food security, 205 people got jobs, there were 6 465 participants of 42 Norwegian courses and a total of 11 665 visits to the resource centre in Oslo.

There are three main target groups in the activities carried out by Caritas Norway: asylum seekers and refugees; labour migrants and Au Pair centre for au pairs and host families.

Asylum seekers and refugees

In order to help and assist asylum seekers and refugees, Caritas Norway set up several digital activities aimed at overcoming the difficulties posed by the pandemics. During these years, several asylum reception centres were created, some for children, as well as information meetings for adults to promote early integration. Digital experiences are purposely focused on sharing meetings for those who recently come to Norway. As regards child care, it is inspired by the principles of developing social functions, focussed on adaptive information on the integration process of minors in a new and completely different environment. A crucial part of the assistance projects to refugees and asylum-seekers involves also providing information to irregular migrants too, especially those who have been rejected by the administrative process and face the risk to having to return to their original countries.

Au Pair Centres

The Caritas Au Pair Centres are national advice centres for au pairs and host families to provide assistance on everything related to the au pair program and life in Norway. Help can cover any kind of problem, be it a small practical problem or legal issue. This also involves conflict resolution and problem-solving through dialogue between the parties. Caritas Norway also carries out a contact service with the right agencies, be it the tax authorities, NAV, health services and others. This type of service is provided on behalf of the UDI, although Caritas Norway is not part of the immigration administration. Caritas in Norway is organised in Oslo and six local Caritas organisations. In Oslo there are only 3 Catholic churches. These are not directly connected to the services offered by Caritas in Norway, but they regularly collaborate in the activities. Relations tend to be closer outside Oslo. Most of the people who assisted in this project come from the Philippines and Latin America. In the centre of Oslo, monthly information meetings are organised for au pairs and host families. In these meetings, the details of the au pair program and the Au Pair Centre are explained. In addition, a range of weekly au pair social activities are offered in Oslo, and monthly in other cities: Bergen, Stavanger, Trondheim and Drammen. These meetings represent a meeting point for au pairs and have the precise function of creating a social network. This can be especially useful and relevant for au pairs who are new to Norway. Au pairs can take advantage of all the services available at the centre, such as health advice, legal advice, internet and the like.

Labour migrants

The problem of labour migrants is a particularly serious and felt problem in Norway. Due to its geographical location, its vast welfare and social security system and the job opportunities that the country offers, many labour migrants arrive in Norway every year. The service is mainly aimed at those who have no offers from the government, those who do not have language courses or the right to support for integration. Information and consultancy services are run by volunteers every day from 10:00 to 15:00, with volunteers who speak different languages. Many of the assisted labour migrants come from Somalia. The courses that are offered focus on how to look for a job, how to write a CV, and are the result of an initiative of the Norwegian government. To assist labour migrants against labour exploitation, Caritas Norway employs a team of legal experts who work there so that they can initiate an individual follow-up in order to avoid labour exploitation. The goal of the organisation for these people is to get a job where their rights are respected. According to what was reported in the interview, 80% of the people assisted come from the EU (Poland, Spain), the remainder from the Maghreb, South America and Africa (many having passed through Spain, through stories of double migration). Labour exploitation and labour trafficking are very common in Norway. Migrants are not paid or given a contract, while less serious violations of their rights are also common.

INNOVATIVENESS

The main innovation point, which is also considered a strength of Caritas Norway, underlined by Kristin Velure Storm during the interview, is that they managed not to be stopped by the pandemics. They had the ability to develop digital tools and instruments in order to continue with their activities assisting these people. Digital counselling has been a very important part of this transformation, which was triggered by the pandemics, but there was massive confusion at the start. In order to overcome these difficulties, they had the idea to develop many partnerships with media and organisations in order to promote their projects and their assistance forms. This sort of cooperation to reach the migrants was essential in order not to abandon these people. Besides that, there are some difficulties lingering in the realisation of these projects, for example, as underlined during the interview, Caritas Norway would appreciate a more direct involvement from the government in assisting these projects.

SUSTAINABILITY

The activities and practices carried out by Caritas Norway are mainly financed by government organisations, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Education. Although some of the funds allocated to them are short-term, and therefore uncertain, most of the resources available to Caritas Norway are stable and long-term. This makes it possible to guarantee stability to projects and to ensure the future sustainability of these practices.

The pandemic inevitably led to the closure of most of the services, which however quickly adapted and consolidated to the new situation, converting into digital consulting services. At the beginning of the health emergency, Caritas Norway had to deal mainly with Polish labour migrants who were abandoned and had no information on government regulations. They helped them apply for unemployment benefits, but they didn't know how to help these people more thoroughly. The main challenge posed by the pandemic, therefore, was that of having to face new needs and unknown emergencies. Most of these labour migrants were worried about where to go; most of them had families at home but were unable to go home after the blockade. If they returned to Poland, they could not apply for unemployment. Very little information was provided by the government in other languages. Subsequently, the government reacted and changed its attitude after the intervention of Caritas. To address the problems posed by the health emergency, therefore, Caritas Norway, along the lines of what has been observed in other European contexts, has promoted a radical shift of its practices towards the digital sphere. This helped new people to reach them. Before the pandemic it was impossible for many to go to their offices because they were working during those office hours. With digital platforms, some have had the opportunity to access, but those who were not able to use the digital platforms were further inconvenienced. However, the ability to react in the face of the difficulties of the health emergency, combined with the solidity of the resources guaranteed to Caritas Norway, make it possible to guarantee the sustainability of the projects for the near future.

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8. LIGAR PROJECT



Source: <https://www.caritalisboa.pt/equipamentos/area-metropolitana-de-lisboa/lisboa/claim-cascais/claim-cascais-1/>

Verb: to integrate

Country: Portugal

Initiative: training and direct support

Beneficiaries: migrants

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: training for state and civil society representatives, support for migrants in need of regularisation of their status

Source of funds: public funds, Caritas

Website: <https://www.caritalisboa.pt/o-que-fazemos/claim-cascais/>

Catholic Church organisations involved and contacts: *Diocesan Caritas of Lisbon, Joana Laranjeira Henriques Coordinator of the activities in the CLAIM of Cascais, Email: projetos.claii.cascais@caritalisboa.pt*

INTRODUCTION

Since 2008 the Diocesan Caritas of Lisbon has intervened with immigrant communities in the neighbouring town of Cascais, through the so-called CLAIM, Local Support Centre for Migrant Integration.

The Local Centres of Migrants' Integration Support are decentralised offices or spaces connected under the umbrella of the National Centres

of Migrants' Integration Support (CNAIM), a public institution run by the Portuguese High Commission for Migrations created by the government in 2004 to respond to the difficulties felt by the migrants in their process of integration in Portugal.

The CLAIM aims to support the multifaceted process of welcoming and integrating migrants and their families. To this end, offers Caritas Lisbon its support on two different levels: the first one is toward others entities committed to charitable activities in favour of migrants, while the second level regards a direct intervention towards migrants in need.

- **Support for Partners:** It provides training, workshops or consulting to other local organisations, public institutions as well as private companies who want to strengthen their skills on the migration issue. With these actors, Caritas also sets up several partnerships to offer qualified services for the migrant population.
- **Support for migrants:** it provides legal and administrative support for migrants in the area of immigration law, as well as support in the integration process

In 2020 the pandemic severely affected the activities of Caritas Lisbon in the CLAI, especially because its work was interrelated with several other partners that were facing challenges to reorganise their actions. Therefore, given that most of the partner organisations were forced to close, Caritas also closed its office in Cascais. Notwithstanding, even if they were not present physically, they tried to do their best to be near to the migrants in need. Thus, they made some changes and adjustments: the counselling service was made available by phone or other technologies and the scheduled working hours was significantly expanded to be able to attend more persons. Instead of working 25 hours per week, they worked about 60 hours to show people their availability especially in this time of crisis.

Caritas Lisbon expressed its commitment toward the migrant population amid the pandemic also with proactive telephone calls. The staff of the CLAIM started to make several calls to its users, instead of waiting they call them. Joana Laranjeira Henriques, the Coordinator of the activities in the CLAIM of Cascais, during an interview conducted online, said: *"Some migrants were slow to understand or to accept that we were in a very dangerous situation during the pandemic, likely because some of them can't speak Portuguese or don't have a television or a computer. Some even continued to work despite the*

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restrictions. So we made the call to inform them. I think that with these calls we made people feel more confident." The staff continuously made effort to ensure these people had adequate information about the virus, how to prevent the transmission, what to do in case of infection and all the restrictions in force during the health emergency. Moreover, because the Portuguese government granted exceptionally the extension of several deadlines regarding the visa documents or similar documents, the staff made additional calls to inform its user of this new provision, reassuring them about their situation in Portugal. The CLAI of Cascais, despite its main task being about legal assistance on migration issues and documentation, started to receive telephone calls during the pandemic from people in need of other kinds of support, like social support, food, clothes, medicines, money and other basic needs.

Finally, since the CLAIM of Cascais is a member of the wider national public network which gathers together all the CLAIM offices, Caritas Lisbon received a lot of information materials or flyers in several languages about the COVID-19. Thus, it made use of this material spreading it among partner organisations and also among migrants.

If 2020 was certainly the hardest year for Caritas Lisbon and the CLAIM of Cascais, at the same time it represented also a moment of innovation. Indeed, a new project was launched aimed at, in a broader sense, promoting the implementation of action of integration of refugees and migrants in Lisbon. It is called "**Ligar – connected people and service**", which in Portuguese means "gather together". Its main objective is to contribute to the reception and integration of third-country nationals, through awareness and training of the institutions of the Patriarchate of Lisbon.

It started its activity in the second half of 2020, with the preparation of interviews aimed at strategic partners and at the full range of institutions within the Patriarchate of Lisbon that provide social reception. First, it launched a study that deepened knowledge about access to services. It also identified the main obstacles to integration, and also the needs and effectiveness of the social responses available in this area. The information collected lists of needs, on the one hand, stimulated reflection and learning, illuminating regions of the Patriarchate of Lisbon, in which this system of support for integration proved to be less strong, and on the other hand, served as a basis for the construction of a training program and network, aimed at technicians and volunteers in the different public and private services.

The work has been based on the experience of the CLAIM Cascais in assisting migrants and of the Diocesan Caritas of Lisbon in the mobilisation of part-

ners, in their collaborative work and their active participation in local, regional and national networks. In the words of the director of the Portuguese Catholic Work for Migration (OCPM), Eugénia Quaresma, "this approach, integrating work in partnership, is necessary for the realisation of effective responses". Also, Joana Laranjeira Henriques in the abovementioned interview, stated: "*We have these two areas: one is directed to migrants, while one is directed to institutions. We have these two areas because one of the missions of Caritas is to make a stronger Church. We have a lot of volunteers in the parishes who are not social workers, so they need to have training and not only goodwill. This program is about the development of their skills to take effective advantage of their resources in our mission.*"

RELEVANCE

The main goal of Caritas Lisbon, within CLAIM in Cascais, is to provide competent support and guidance to facilitate and resolve the different challenges that immigration poses. With this purpose, in addition to responding to different difficulties experienced by immigrants in their integration process in Portugal, CLAIM also promotes training on this demanding topic aimed at empowering the skills of the operators in this sector.

It carries out intervention aimed at promoting, on one hand, the autonomy, the rights and the duties of migrants and refugees and, on the other hand, the participation and cooperation of several actors.

Regarding the personal dimension of the mission, the service is confidential, personalized and particularly humane, paying particular attention to the importance of clarifying questions and doubts that may arise in the individual concerned. During the interview Joana Laranjeira Henriques talked about the proximity that characterizes the work: "*We are like a facilitator of the rights of these people. CLAIM of Cascais is a safe place where people can arrive and not be afraid, they trust us. In front of vulnerabilities, we spent a lot of time explaining to people the things we are doing, the kind of advice we give, why we do this and we try to arrive at the solution that is accepted and clear. It is a kind of empowerment counselling. We also give some tutorial sessions about bureaucracy, which is a big problem in Portugal.*"

Regarding the second dimension related to the participation of multiple organisations, cooperation is truly relevant because is through these part-

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nerships that Caritas creates privileged channels that enable better and faster responses to the concrete needs of the most vulnerable.

INNOVATIVENESS

This Good Practice is innovative because it can follow all "criteria verbs" to welcome, to protect, to promote, to integrate, availing itself of many partnerships. As said above, partnerships are the channel that allows offering several different services. They are the tools with which Caritas Lisbon can cope with the different needs of its users, ensuring them the opportunity to have help in different fields such, for instance, in finding an accommodation, a job, receiving medical care, psychological support, and so on.

Moreover, this Good Practice seems to be a good expression of the principle of subsidiarity, which is a guiding criterion for fraternal cooperation between actors operating at different levels. It could be useful to understand more deeply that subsidiarity refers to the first First Encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, *God is love -Deus Caritas est*: "*The State which would provide everything, absorbing everything into itself, would ultimately become a mere bureaucracy incapable of guaranteeing the very thing which the suffering person—every person—needs: namely, loving personal concern. We do not need a State which regulates and controls everything, but a State which, by the principle of subsidiarity, generously acknowledges and supports initiatives arising from the different social forces and combines spontaneity with closeness to those in need. The Church is one of those living forces: she is alive with the love enkindled by the Spirit of Christ.*" The CLAIM in Cascais seems to be built precisely by virtue of the principle of subsidiarity: the Portuguese State has indeed taken care of the necessities of migrants by entrusting them to the Diocesan Caritas, which better can accomplish the mission of solidarity with proximity and closeness.

IMPACT

Since the support for the regularisation of the administrative position of migrants remains the most asked for help, a very substantial number of people have seen their residence status regularised. Obtaining this document represents also the achievement of rights, social inclusion and the possibility of a more dignified life.

Moreover, through the monitoring, guidance and essential information of the CLAIM experts, it was possible for several organisations to work together and collaborate for a more efficient service in favour of the neediest migrants.

- **754 migrants served.**
- **59 nationalities met.**
- **53 partners.**
- Support for the regularisation of the administrative position in Portugal in 2020 corresponded to 70% of the services provided.
- Support for immigrants in different areas of social integration CLAIM in 2020 corresponded to 27% of the services provided.

SUSTAINABILITY

The financial sustainability of the Good Practice is afforded thanks to public funds, both national and international. The State with the Municipality of Lisbon provides resources for the CLAIM in Cascais, while the *Legar* Project is economically supported by AMIF, the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Funds. Since these above mentioned are just temporary funds, when they terminate, Caritas will intervene with economic aid to ensure the continuity of the charitable activities.

Caritas also ensures the stability of the structure having hired all the staff involved: they are all regularly employed, even if sometimes there is a shortage of personnel due to the difficulty in recruiting the labour market legal specialists.

This Good Practice has also efficient management since it employs an external consultant to track and assess the activities. Joana Laranjeira Henriques in the interview said about this: *"in addition to our traditional periodical meetings, now we develop a real process of assessment. It was a big step that we made. Maybe now we are acting less reactively but for sure more structured. In terms of sustainably I think we can feel comfortable"*.

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9. MIGRATION LABORATORY



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/associazionesangiuseppeonlus/photos/a.564395214052798/1046776689147979/?type=3&theater>

Verb: to integrate

Country: Italy

Initiative: to promote the integration of the migrant population among the local community

Beneficiaries: operators, social workers, local community

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: training, workshop, meetings

Duration of project: 2019 to present

Source of funds: national and international public funds

Website: <http://www.essegiogionlus.org/>

Catholic Church organisations involved and contacts: *Diocese Cerignola – Ascoli Satriano, San Giuseppe Association of Cerignola Email: ass.sangiuseppe.cerignola@gmail.com*

INTRODUCTION

The Migration Laboratory Project was born in 2020 from the synergy of two different Catholic realities: on one hand, the *Migrantes* Office of the Diocese Cerignola – Ascoli Satriano, in South Italy, which is the entity of the Catholic Church committed to serving migrants in the local church, and on the other hand the San Giuseppe Association of Cerignola. Founded in 1998 by the

will of the local bishop, over the years the Association has always dealt with immigrants, especially unaccompanied minors or seasonal workers, becoming the operational arm of the diocesan *Migrantes* Office. As a member of the San Giuseppe Association said during an interview conducted online *"The association in its historical identity aims to promote sensitivity and solidarity towards the most vulnerable people to provide effective and appropriate material and spiritual assistance that reveals the welcoming and caring face of the Church"*.

Launched in September soon after the 106th Word Day of Migrants and Refugee, the Laboratory is defined as a path of study aimed at deepening understanding of the topic of migration and strengthening the knowledge and the understanding of the challenges related to this issue. It is a space for study, training and information with the final aim to hasten evaluation of innovative ideas and new scenarios which can lead to an improvement of the practices of integration and reception of the migrant population.

The Migrant Laboratory Project is a place open to everyone interested in migration issues, especially operators who would like to improve their knowledge and skills or develop initiatives in favour of migrants with solid preparation. It is also open to the community, offering a series of actions aimed at promoting the culture of hospitality and integration. It should be underlined that it is not an information or a charitable desk, but a real laboratory where exploration and creation are facilitated. It is especially designed for planning of programs, not their realisation.

The core of the Project is strictly coherent with the directives expressed in the Message of Pope Francis for the 106th Word Day of Migrants and Refugees: *"You have to know to understand. Knowledge is a necessary step towards understanding others. Jesus himself tells us this in the account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus: "While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him" (Luke 24:15-16). When we talk about migrants and displaced persons, all too often we stop at statistics. But it is not about statistics, it is about real people! If we encounter them, we will get to know more about them. And knowing their stories, we will be able to understand them. We will be able to understand, for example, that the precariousness that we have come to experience as a result of this pandemic is a constant in the lives of displaced people."* The pastoral challenge triggered by the pope was addressed by Archbishop Mons. Renna, who used the same expressions of the Message to present the Project and applied it as the statute and guiding criteria of the mission of the Laboratory.

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Furthermore, within the Migration Laboratory, activities will be carried out as part of the European projects that the San Giuseppe Association is currently developing and, in this framework, tools will be created and implemented. The sub-projects that will concern the laboratory are the following:

- *Migrants for Migrants*, aimed at promoting the inclusion of migrants by facilitating their accountability and creating sustainable contacts. The project will use the so-called "buddy system", in which two individuals, "companions", work together so that they can monitor and help each other, a fundamental help for those who have to try to settle in an unknown country.
- *EASE*, aimed at outlining strategies to promote women's economic inclusion, with particular attention to refugee women. *MUFOCOM*, aimed at constructing innovative training modules tailored to the needs of migrants, should contribute to the improvement of their language, scientific and digital, intercultural and environmental, social and civic, socio-professional skills to improve their personal development, their active participation in society and their employability in the European labour market.
- *RISING*, aimed at integrating the motivational benefits of mentoring into the training and educational curriculum offered to migrants. It will seek to provide a set of tools, complementary to projects already being carried out, to help mentors fulfil their roles and to provide additional support for mentoring providers.

The past year was especially marked by the plague of the Coronavirus that forced the whole world to stop. While everything was closed due to restrictions imposed by the government, in Cerignola the *San Giuseppe* Association, in partnership with the Diocese, worked hard to bring the Laboratory to life, maintaining the perspective towards the future. Amid this extraordinary tragedy, the birth of a new project surely represents a victory. The Migration Laboratory is the proof of the strength of the true Christian commitment that does not stop in front of the difficulties but carries on its objective with constancy and dedication.

Since there had been no events in-person for a long time, the occasion of the presentation of the Migration Laboratory in 2020 had a strong emotional impact and it expressed the will to start all over again.

In the few months of activity in 2020, the Laboratory organised several activities aimed at fostering education on the migration phenomenon. To sensitise

the citizens to this demanding topic a cine forum took place every Friday. A presentation of a book on the story of the days of the refugees was held in the premises of the diocesan seminary, compatibly with the anti-covid regulations in force from time to time. In addition to these initiatives, within the laboratory, a training course on the prevention of child abuse was delivered aimed especially at industry professionals.

RELEVANCE

Consistent with the above-mentioned Message of Pope Francis, this Project particularly focuses on the necessity of knowledge and understanding, to fostering in the territory the development of concrete actions combined with deep discretion. The initiative originated by the consideration that often people stand still or act inadequately in front of the vulnerabilities and the needs of others simply because they do not know or understand them. Thus, the Laboratory aims to provide the resources first to discern and then to act responsibly, according to the famous principles of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church "see, judge, act". Following this method, the Laboratory is committed to primarily seeing the social situations concerning migrants, judging them and then acting to promote justice and improve their condition.

Through the Laboratory are proposed means to build projects aimed at serving migrants, starting from the work of study, research and discussion.

As a whole, the Project promotes the recognition of the complexity of diversity and provide a significant way forward in addressing this fundamental issue.

INNOVATIVENESS

During the online interview, the member of the *San Giuseppe Association* stated: *"Our strength is the twenty-year experience that the Association has in the field of hospitality, inclusion, training and job placement. This allows us to have a 360-degree view. The activities in a transversal way touch all four verbs of Pope Francis: to welcome, to protect, to integrate, to promote. These are the guidelines with which we operate at the European and local*

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levels, as well as the principles with which we face the challenges of this time. thus, our work can be enclosed in only one verb which is humanised, because man is at the centre of every action." The comprehensive competence of the San Giuseppe Association is transmitted to the Laboratory that exploits this multifaceted experience and transforms it into resources available to anyone.

The Migration Laboratory addresses the challenge of pastoral care of migrants using this knowledge combined with the human sciences and then turns it to a wisdom reading of the issues. It provides a range of insights and offers resources to better understand and appreciate the demanding situations of persons forced to flee from wars, persecutions or poverty to foster a spirit of welcoming among the local community and, in the meanwhile, to offer inspiration to insiders who already work with these people. Through the instruments of the research and the dissemination of knowledge and information, it rouses valuable ways of thinking helpful to build new good practices. This project deftly balances thoughtful reflection with concrete application and, by the method of "see, judge, act", invites and empowers operators to participate in a social change.

IMPACT

The Migration Laboratory has a significant impact both on the insiders who work in the field of migration, and on the receiving society.

As for the subjects who are already committed in favour of migrants, the Laboratory represents the place to create opportunities and improve existing good practices. It may generate a wider involvement and cooperation among experts and operators able to lead to a more stimulating environment. Therefore, it is useful in the process of planning and building actions in response to the migration challenge. In this way, it provides a framework for concrete initiatives aimed at helping and supporting migrants.

The Migration Laboratory gives also a positive contribution to the receiving society. Indeed, as highlighted in the introduction, knowledge allows understanding. Meeting this need and the related problems gives people the measure of the challenge and raise awareness on the urgency of integration and, at the same time, decreases barriers such as prejudices and stereotypes.

SUSTAINABILITY

According to the commentary sent by email by the staff of the *San Giuseppe* Association, one of the main concerning issues regards the mobility of the subjects involved while collaboration should ensure a minimum of continuity and stability. Despite this challenging aspect, which regards mainly individuals, the Association can rely on the continuous collaboration with the *Migrantes* Office and other charitable associations. This means that it always has a network with which to implement and carry out project activities. Moreover, the parishes in practice will collaborate in the effective development of the training course as well as the diocesan Offices for Family Pastoral Care, the diocesan Office for School Pastoral Care and the Office dedicated to the missionary. In this way, it is possible to find contacts of professionals and also migrants who reside in the diocese who would put their own experience at service of the Laboratory.

The Migration Laboratory of Cerignola stands out, among other aspects, for a marked European dimension. Indeed, to fund its projects, the *San Giuseppe* Association has participated in several calls of the European Union, above all Erasmus Plus Programme. Also, the European Commission has provided financial support to implement valuable initiatives. Should the European funds run out, the Laboratory will still be able to count on the financial aid of the Diocese. Strictly related to the run of European projects is the partnership with other countries, namely Ireland, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Poland, Finland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Slovakia, Austria, Bulgaria, Romania, Spain, Portugal, and Greece. With these partners, the San Giuseppe Association and, consequently with the Migration Laboratory are currently working to carry out compared analysis of the services offered in each country to develop models of action based on the data and experiences gathered. This way of working with international partners allows the exchange of good practices useful to implement sustainable and proficient projects aimed at supporting the integration of migrants.

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10. ROLE-PLAYING GAME IN INTERCULTURALITY



Source: <https://missionetmigrations.catholique.fr/animer/fete-peuples-epiphanie/297469-fete-peuples-toulouse-2018/>

Verb: to integrate

Country: France

Initiative: to foster the integration of the migrant population in the local community

Beneficiaries: local community, migrant community

Thematic area(s) of good practice example: role-playing training, day meeting

Duration of project: 2019 – to present

Source of funds: Catholic Church in France

Website: <https://toulouse.catholique.fr/La-pastorale-des-migrants-64>

Catholic Church organisations involved and contacts: *Diocese of Toulouse, Gilles Enot from the Office for the Pastoral Care of Migrants, Email: pastoraledesmigrants@diocese-toulouse.org.*

The Office for the Pastoral Care of Migrants is the organism of the Diocese of Toulouse in France aimed mainly at promoting the socio-cultural integration of the communities of foreigners in the diocesan territory and, at the same time, at guiding them spiritually through ethnic chaplaincies.

The Office operates in a wider environment since there are stable relations

with other neighbouring Dioceses, as well as with other entities embraced by the Ecclesiastical Province of Toulouse as well as organisations belonging to other religions. Within this network, the organisations share practices and mutual support in those activities in favour of migrants.

Besides this support offered in partnership with other organisations, the Office for the Pastoral Care of Migrants does not provide direct assistance to migrants in need of help. Nonetheless, it remains faithful to its mission undertaking several actions to foster, in a broader sense, the integration of the foreigners in the local Church and the Catholic communities of the host territory.

Since August 2019, the service of the Office has therefore focused all its actions on raising awareness in local communities on the necessity to build relationships of dialogue with people coming from other continents. With the purpose of not leaving aside these persons, **training on interculturality** have been set up. These initiatives have been developed *with* migrants and *for* migrants representing an opportunity for them to be ambassadors of their cause in front of the local population. This training, consisting of six sessions of three hours each, have been conceived as a role-playing game to be more attractive and stimulating, so that it eventually managed to engage about **fifteen migrants**, young adults, women and men, belonging to different religions and coming from diverse countries, all from sub-Saharan Africa.

Moreover, days of meetings and communion have been organised in the Diocese. On these occasions a delegation of migrants presented themselves to a group of about sixty parishioners; during the day, after the celebration of the Mass, a shared meal and also moments of entertainment were enjoyed by all participants. In this way, parishioners experienced a concrete meeting with the brothers and sisters coming from elsewhere. Throughout the organisation of these events the Diocese aimed at implementing concrete solidarity actions in favour of migrants, as well as generating and strengthening the sense of welcoming both in parishioners as actors of hospitality and both in migrants as recipients. Such initiatives were also a good example of Christian life and a moment of high spirituality, being an invitation to pray with and also for migrants and refugees and to celebrate the Eucharist together. These initiatives witness very well what the Catholic Church in the Instruction of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants *Erga migrantes Caritas Christi (The love of Christ towards migrants)* calls unity in plurality: *"In this context each host Church is called upon to integrate the concrete reality of the persons and groups that compose it, bringing the values of each one into communion, as all*

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are called upon to build a Church that is concretely Catholic. In this way, there is brought about a unity in plurality in the local Church, a unity that is not uniformity but harmony, in which every legitimate diversity plays its part in the common and unifying effort. Pastoral work among migrants thus becomes a service of the Church for the faithful whose language or culture is different from those of the host country, while at the same time it ensures that the foreign communities make their contribution to the construction of a Church that must be a sign and instrument of unity in the prospect of a renewed humanity".

The pandemic has undoubtedly affected all the activities of the Office for the Pastoral Care of Migrants of the Diocese of Toulouse. It represented a source of obstruction which required intensified caution. Due to the restrictions imposed by the government to stem the spread of the virus, many scheduled work meetings had to be cancelled. Despite the adversity and challenges of the pandemic, after a short time, with the end of the first wave in 2020 and the arrival of milder temperatures, the Office was able to largely restore its services. In particular, it managed to organize the sessions of the intercultural training using spaces outdoors, such as the campus of the University.

RELEVANCE

The main goal of this Good Practice is to promote openness and interaction among the local community and the various ethnic groups present on the territory of the Diocese. In particular, Gilles Enot from the Office for the Pastoral Care of Migrant, during an interview conducted via email, explained that the primary mission of the Office is to go and lend a hand to that parish that is more hesitant regarding the relationship with migrants. He said: *"It appears, it seems to us, that a relationship is equally possible when you break with the stereotypes in which the native is the benevolent host and the migrant is the foreigner in need of reception and protection. What happens if there is a different kind of relationship? Our stereotypes and cultural prejudices (on both sides!) amplify and exacerbate relationships. In doing so, it has been demonstrated to each side that, in a peaceful context, deeper and non-intrusive relationships can lead both of them towards a cultural interest for exchange and sharing".*

The organisation of training on interculturality, in addition to moments of sharing between migrants and locals, has a great relevance since only

through the close knowledge of one's neighbour is it possible to vanquish the feeling of fear towards the stranger and, in the meantime, avoid the raising of social tensions and promote social cohesion. Furthermore, the Practice has a deeper target being aimed also at warding off the loss of the values of humanity and fraternity, which is increasingly afflicting our society.

This Good Practice, while it promotes cultural dialogue between a person coming from a different country and cultural background, promotes at the same time interreligious and ecumenical dialogue. It proposes interculturality not as a problem to deal with, but as an added value for today's society since it can produce wider perspective, openness and interior richness. Accepting and fully living in the context of interculturality are the prerequisites to foster the effective integration of these people who had to flee their home to restart a new, more serene life in Europe.

INNOVATIVENESS

This Good Practice maintains the typical characteristics of parish service. It takes advantage of very simple things as strategical tools to contribute to building a more fraternal society and a more just world. The employment of role-playing games is an interesting and innovative way to design the training on interculturality. This training technique requires some participants to actively play representing some roles in interaction with each other while other participants act as observers of the contents and processes that the representation manifests. This allows a subsequent analysis of the experiences of the interpersonal dynamics and more generally of the communication processes carried out in the represented context. Role-playing is a valuable training tool structured in such a way as to be emotionally engaging. Indeed, it is simply an exchange so that participants have to put themselves in the shoes of others, in the specific case of the migrants. In this way, the training in interculturality provides important stimuli to engage the conscience of the locals to change their attitude to a more inclusive approach.

Also, the daily meeting is a clever tool to foster the integration of migrants in the social fabric of the host country: participants here can discover first-hand their flavour and their culture or simply have a friendly conversation with them.

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IMPACT

This Good Practice has given to migrants the opportunity to be known by the local community and, as a consequence, to be accepted by them. Through attractive initiatives such as role-playing training or daily meetings, the local community has stopped being hermetic towards the newly arrived and has gradually assumed a less diffident position.

Gilles Enot during the interview stated that the best achievement has been the interest aroused both in migrants, both in the residents. He continued: *"Admittedly, migrants are not a huge number but we managed to constitute a nucleus of fifteen people whom we went to seek in the squats of Toulouse; they are women and men, young adults, of diverse geographical and religious origins. We are not sure it will be possible to achieve concrete results for people on the move in the short term since there are still many harsh and hostile challenges for migrants. But we can only hope for a change of hearts. We hope that Catholics starting from this will choose that."*

SUSTAINABILITY

This Good Practice is relatively new and has yet to grow and further develop.

The Office for Pastoral care of migrants of the Diocese of Toulouse has a small team of four volunteers. Notably, the group is cross-culturally composed, as it involves persons coming from all over the world: a young French woman of African and Guadeloupe origin, a young man from Rwanda, and a man from Zambia. This certainly is an added value in the management of the activities, since they can represent a point of contact and also a bridge between the migrant population and the parishioners. Moreover, given their experience, they can better understand the most concerning challenges that an inclusion process may imply.

The Office is supported by a French permanent deacon from Congo-Kinshasa.

Accordingly to the words expressed by Gilles Enot in the interview, the training on interculturality was only a first test. Therefore, based on the previous experience, the Office is working to replay the initiatives in the next

years in different places of the Diocese: *«The project of the event is going to be built little by little; it will necessarily have to be validated by the Archdiocese since the event will occur under the name of the diocesan Church. To do this, an inter-parish working group is set up, the diocesan service is content with a role of moderator.»* Thus, to ensure the sustainability of these actions the collaboration of the ecclesiastical authority is strictly necessary.

Despite its small staff, the Office aims to develop its effort in favour of migrants on diverse levels. First, it feels the necessity to implement cooperation among the parishes of the Diocese to exchange good practices, from one parish to another and to foster the emulation of good practices by new parish actors. Moreover, the Office wants to gather the experiences of other local associations committed to serving migrants to get some inspiration and set up new valuable services in favour of these vulnerable people. In particular, is in the plans of the Office has plans to develop a facility which will allow people with a migration background to find practical information about essential services such, for instance, accommodation, food, help with papers, cultural activities, etc.

The Office aims to expand its commitment even throughout activities aimed at shedding light on the regulatory provisions in force, through some contributions from authorised persons coming from the public sphere (Prefecture, OFII, Refugee Forum, SIAO) and important charity associations.







MIGRANTS
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