

Welcome to the newsletter of the project of social inclusion through Self-education and learning for migrants “**Educate Yourself**” in the framework of the **Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships** programme.

Final multiplier event – May 28th 2021 – online event

How to improve the welcome and support of migrants in EU rural and urban areas?

This newsletter will focus on the round table that took place during the event. The panelists were:

Konstantinos KOUSAXIDIS, Area Project Coordinator, International Organisation for Migration, **Agnese PAPADIA**, European Commission - DG Home Team Leader of Unit Legal Pathway and Integration, **Snezhina GABOVA**, Sofia Development Association, Coordinator of the project UnionMigrantNet Together for Integration, **Petru DANDEA**, CNS Cartel Alfa, General Secretary, PrD. **Carmen PARRA**, Professor of the UNIVERSITY ABAT OLIBA CEU, Director of the “Cátedra de Economía Solidaria – UNESCO”.

Moderator: **Olga PAPADOPOULOU**, Lawyer specialised in refugee law.

The round table started with the intervention of Konstantinos KOUSAXIDIS, Area Project Coordinator, International Organisation for Migration (IOM). He introduced the project Helios.

With the HELIOS project, IOM aims at promoting the integration of beneficiaries of international protection currently residing in temporary accommodation into the Greek society, through:

- Integration Courses: Conduction of Integration Courses within Integration Learning Centres set-up across Greece. Each course cycle lasts for 6 months and consists of modules on Greek language learning, cultural orientation, job readiness and life skills.
- Accommodation support: Supporting beneficiaries towards independent accommodation in apartments rented on their name, including by providing contributions to rental and move-in costs and networking with apartment owners.
- Employability support: Provision of individual employability and job readiness support, including through job counseling, access to job-related certifications and networking with private employers.
- Integration monitoring: Regular assessment of the integration progress of the beneficiaries to ensure that they will be in a position to confidently navigate through Greek public service providers once they will exit from the HELIOS project and start living independently in Greece.
- Sensitization of the host community: Organization of workshops, activities and events and production of a nationwide media campaign to create exchange occasions between the hosting and the hosted communities, highlighting the value of the integration of migrants into the Greek society.

Objective:

The objectives of the project are:

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- Increasing beneficiaries' prospects towards self-reliance and supporting them in becoming active members of the Greek society, and;
- Establishing an integration mechanism for beneficiaries of international protection, resulting to a rotation mechanism for the current Greek temporary accommodation system.

Target group: The target group of the HELIOS project consists of beneficiaries of international protection recognized after 01/01/2018.

Partners: Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Danish Refugee Council Greece (DRC Greece), Greek Council for Refugees (GCR), Solidarity Now, INTERSOS, Municipality Development Agency Thessaloniki S.A (MDAT), Metadrasi, PLOIGOS, KEDHL

<https://greece.iom.int/en/hellenic-integration-support-beneficiaries-international-protection-helios>

Snezhina GABOVA, from Sofia Development Association, introduced 2 projects on which the Sofia Development Association worked:

First the project, UnionMigrantNet, was launched in 2015 and is a network of contact points for migrants, managed and supported by trade unions, where new arrivals and their families can obtain information and support on issues like employment, documentation, housing and integration.

The aims of the network are to:

- Strengthen trade union activities aimed at protecting the individual and collective rights of migrants;
- Increase the visibility and accessibility of services and facilities supporting the integration of migrants;
- Encourage trade union membership among the migrant population.

The services provided by UnionMigrantNet contact points are aimed at promoting the collective and individual interests and rights of mobile workers.

The network's contact points support each other by sharing information in the following areas:

1. Rights and working conditions of migrants in the destination country
2. Access to the labour market and referral to job-matching services
3. Family reunification and rights of migrants' family members
4. Recognition of diplomas and qualifications
5. Return processes, taking into account second/third generation of migrants
6. Pre-departure information
7. Taxation and social security, portability of rights/benefits/permits
8. Social and cultural information about the host country
9. Trade Union rights and membership
10. Facilitating personal contacts and contacts with other communities in the host country
11. Supporting victims of human trafficking and exploitation at work

<https://www.unionmigrantnet.eu/>

The project UnionMigrantNet is inspired by the work conducted in the project INTEGRA.

The goal of this project is to help cities (to where the most of refugees flow is directed) in the 5 partner countries: Italy, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Croatia and Czech Republic, develop integration policies for third country nationals (TCN).

Whilst the competence for integration policy lies primarily with the states, INTEGRA relies on city-to-city, local and cross-border networks to equip cities with the policies and capacities for TCN integration. The project is developing and testing own methodologies and tools that can be used by local level stakeholders to empower and involve TCN in decision-making.

Lead partner: Sofia Development Association – Sofia, Bulgaria
Riskmonitor Foundation - Sofia, Bulgaria
Integration Center Prague – Prague, Czech Republic
Research Center on Security and Crime – Italy
Center for Peace, Nonviolence and human rights – Osijek, Croatia
ETP-Slovakia – Kosice, Slovakia
<https://integra-eu.net/project.html>

Mr Petru Sorin Dandea, General Secretary at the Romanian National Trade Union Confederation CARTEL ALFA, who took the floor to address the situation regarding third country immigrants in Romania.

He first gave some numbers and statistics. In 2017, 62,926 immigrants and 3,924 refugees and asylum seekers were registered at the General Immigration Inspectorates. In 2020, the number of refugees overpass 6000, Syrians making up to 58% of refugees.

Regarding the national context, 23% of Romanians have a negative image of immigrants, a percentage close to the European average, in the context in which migration in Romania is a phenomenon just beginning.

To try and fight this negative opinion amongst Romanian, Cartel Alfa, one of the biggest trade unions in Romania is strongly involved in the fight for integrating the immigrants in society and labour market. They are cooperating with many Civil Society organizations for implementing projects aiming the integration of immigrants in Romania.

Some of the work they are doing consist of:

- offering information session, about the labour market and labour rights, to the refugees that are already involved in Romanian language courses.
- cooperating with many Civil Society Organizations for the implementation of projects aiming the integration of immigrants in the labour market. Many of these CSOs are offering vocational training programmes for refugees. Cartel ALFA is involved in building up partnerships with the companies that can offer the practical part of these learning programme.
- Multidimensional programme to create an attitude of acceptance, solidarity and tolerance in the protection of human rights and equal treatment of immigrants, especially asylum seekers and refugees, through cooperation both at the level of local communities and through information and awareness campaigns on immigration among children and young people in schools and universities in multi-migrant communities.
- Providing assistance to migrants to contact Romanian institutions and providing assistance to fill in the forms necessary to obtain help and support from these institutions.
- Cartel Alfa is also involved in a dialogue with the Romanian government to try develop a network of Romanian institutions in regards of immigration. Even though the issue is not big in Romania, there is a lack of resources for migrants to find the help and answers they might need (for example there are no office in the minister of Labour in Romania where a migrant can ask information about Romanian labour legislation). Cartel Alfa has good hope that this year, they will be able to implement an office at the Minister of Labour in charge of the integration of migrants in the labour market.

Ms Carmen Parra, professor of the UNIVERSITY ABAT OLIBA CEU, and director of the “Cátedra de Economía Solidaria – UNESCO” presented the situation of migrants in the urban and rural areas of Spain.

Immigrants are accused of being responsible for the economic and social problems of the communities where they settle, despite the fact that it is statistically proven that they contribute with their work to improve economies. For the most part, in rural areas, immigrants are mostly seasonal workers and women from South America. In urban areas, the migrant population is a bit more diverse, for the young people and children coming from South America it is easier to go to school because of their knowledge of the language. But for the others (coming from North Africa, Syria, Pakistan...) the fact that they can speak another language than Spanish helps them find jobs in restaurants or other touristic areas.

To fight against the issue of “emptied Spain” in rural areas, which is the fact that young people leave these areas to go to major cities to find better job opportunity, the solutions proposed by Ms Parra could be:

- to create better job opportunities for migrants through the valorization of their skills,
- to provide education and housing for the families in order to reduce seasonal presence,
- to train young people and migrants in the field of agriculture
- to provide better opportunities for entrepreneurship, help create new businesses in rural areas.

In urban areas, one of the keys to the integration of migrants in the labour market could be to take advantage of their knowledge of the language and provide training in jobs in the services and tourism field. Another key could be to create programmes in universities to allow migrants to pursue higher education training and therefore build a life in Spain. There are also “forgotten” skills in Spain that young people are not interested in. Training migrants to these skills (carpenter, electricians...) could help integrate them in the labour market.

Finally, Agnese Papadia from the DG Home of the European Commission gave us a European level perspective on the matter. She stated that the EU has been working at local level for integration for quite some time. In November last year, the EC launched a new action plan for integration at EU level for the period 2021-2027 which indicated the main principals of work on integration and a broad range of actions to support actor of local and regional authorities in integration. This is built on the dialogue with cities and regions over the years and also on the consultations held in preparation of this action plan because there was a need to understand the problems on the ground.

Even though the problems mentioned during the round table are different, they have similarities and Ms Papadia thinks an EU approach could be useful because it could allow to transfer knowledge from one local reality to the other. The activities planned in the next year will focus on fostering the exchanges of experiences between local and regional authorities in both urban and rural areas.

In March 2021, the EC launched a new partnership with the Committee of Region which is the institution that represent local and regional authorities at EU level, to provide more capacity building & support to local and regional authorities and also to promote a direct dialogue between local and EU level.

One of the priorities of the partnership will be to improve the data availability at local level because it is important to have good data to put in good policies. Another area of work will be to help local and regional authorities promote the encounters between migrants and non-migrants. These encounters are an important tool to prevent prejudice and promote inclusion. The partnership will promote and finance projects to help local authorities promote these encounters and also volunteering.

Funding will remain a very important part of EU support: there will be an increase in the funding for integration. Actually, a percentage of funding will be dedicated to local and regional initiatives promoting integration which is a result of the work done with local & regional authorities. This will be under the Asylum, Migration and Integration fund, the ESF+ fund, the European Regional Development fund will also support integration because it will be one of the specific objectives of this fund.

Ms Papadia thinks that in the next 7 years, there will be good opportunities for cities and regions to access EU funding to promote integration at local and regional level.

The last point Ms Papadia mentioned is the work done by the EC for the promotion of the dialogue between different level of governance. For integration, she believes it is crucial that local level, national level and EU level work together.

<https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/>

[https://ec.europa.eu/home-](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/pdf/action_plan_on_integration_and_inclusion_2021-2027.pdf)

[affairs/sites/default/files/pdf/action_plan_on_integration_and_inclusion_2021-2027.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/pdf/action_plan_on_integration_and_inclusion_2021-2027.pdf)

All the documents regarding the round table will be available in Power point format on our website

<http://www.cecasbl.org/news/educate-yourself-28-mai-2021/>

The event carried on with the summary of the project and its results, and also the presentation of the online platform.

The project's aims are to outline migrant's needs in the field of social inclusion; to create a set of tools, training, and guidance materials, to support migrants in process of social, cultural, linguistic and economic inclusion; and to create an innovative on-line platform, which consists of helpful and useful information and materials, which each migrant may use, in the process of incorporation to the local environment. The online platform is a web-based informational portal with uploaded materials for training courses, where all interested people can register and have access to the developed set of trainings and materials, to help migrants for the process of social inclusion, gaining new skills and knowledge.

You can find more information on the platform in our previous newsletter.

The Platform is available at www.platform.integritybg.com.