

CITY AUDIT INTEGRATION REPORT FOR OSIJEK, CROATIA

Integration of Third-Country Nationals
in Osijek, Croatia, 2018

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Executive Summary

Republic of Croatia is predominantly a country of emigration and transit. Depopulation caused by emigration indicates a very unfavourable demographic development in the Republic of Croatia and its population is homogeneous in terms of nationality. Consequently, there is a small number of foreigners (migrants and refugees) in the Republic of Croatia, whereas the integration policy is in an early stage of development and regulated largely by the authorities on the national level. Furthermore, it is important to emphasise that there is a problem regarding the implementation of the integration policy measures. According to the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) 44/100, in 2014, migrants in the Republic of Croatia were in many aspects disadvantaged in comparison to the majority of the population. Moreover, even in relation to the integration of national minorities, for which there is a comprehensive protection system, both on the national and on the local level, which complies with the European experiences and standards, as well as adequate legal regulations for the protection of minority rights, there are many issues in their implementation.

In order to achieve full integration and to truly make it function in practice, it is necessary to ensure the development of national integration policies accompanied by active participation of local communities. Furthermore, it is necessary to raise awareness of the role of local communities in the integration process, secure financial resources required for the integration of minorities (either from the local or state budget) and to strengthen the role of minority councils and representatives, not only by providing necessary financial resources, but also by informing and educating the communities on their significance in the integration process. Also, it is important to make it mandatory for local public services to employ national minorities. On one hand, that would mean that the requirement of proportional representation is fulfilled. On the other hand, it would also increase their employment in services that have direct contact with beneficiaries from particular minority groups. Therefore, it would ensure that the process of relocating refugees to different local communities is transparent and that the situation on the labour market, professional qualifications of refugees, housing options and language learning is taken into consideration. Finally, it is extremely important to work on the prevention of discrimination by local officers, which can be achieved by increasing relevant knowledge and skills, especially in local public services, as well as by encouraging the development of local integration pilot programmes.



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Introduction

The project INTEGRA was designed to improve the process of long-term integration of third country nationals (TCN) in 5 EU states (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Italy and Slovakia), through city-to-city knowledge and experience sharing. The project promotes deeper mutual understanding between migrant communities and the host society, against the rising political discourse of securitization, which paints migrants and refugees as a major security threat in Europe.

Enhancing the capacity of local governments in 5 EU states to develop and implement initiatives for increased participation of third country nationals (TCN) in social and cultural life through multi-stakeholder cooperation, improving city-to-city cooperation and advancing the dissemination and sharing of practices and policies between civil society and public institutions that are essential actors of third country nationals' integration and strengthening community cohesion and enhancing public perception of migration and diversity through the participation of third country nationals in relevant consultative bodies and representation frameworks at local level are the main objectives of INTEGRA.

The project partners aim to identify current and future challenges to integration and developing concrete actions to tackle local integration problems. Main outputs of the project INTEGRA include the establishment of local and cross-border networks, methodologies and tools that can be used by local level stakeholders to involve TCN in civic initiatives through City audits, including policy assessment and mapping exercises, to identify bottlenecks and opportunities for TCN integration (particular emphasis is given on urban security and cultural/social participation).

City integration agendas with future scenarios for each city will be developed, through citizens' integration labs. On the basis of the agendas, awareness and advocacy activities will be carried out in each country.

Over 80 representatives of local governments will take part in project activities; more than 160 migrants will be involved in community consultations and decision-making, and over 4.200 persons will be reached with project information materials and online resources. An advocacy and awareness raising conference in Brussels will gather national, regional and EU level experts and public officials on migration and integration.



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The project aims to reach following results:

- City protocols and guidance notes for stakeholders' involvement in TCN integration;
- Established local awareness-raising networks in the field of integration of TCN;
- Developed framework for an integration document/long-term integration strategy for Osijek Municipality;
- 4 toolkits on city audits;
- 5 integration agendas;
- Identified, disseminated and tested best practices at the local/regional/national to support integration of TCN;
- Established transnational networks of stakeholders and experts to raise awareness of diversity, migration and integration issues;
- Strengthened contacts and mutual understanding between mainstream society and TCN and migrants in the city;
- Enhanced stakeholder and citizen ownership of the solutions for TCN participation through their effective and systematic involvement in participatory, trans-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder consultation processes for co-design and co-implementation of inclusion initiatives;
- Better understanding of the contributions of legal migration and migrants to the receiving societies.



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Part I. City/Municipal Context

The city of Osijek is located in the north-eastern part of the Republic of Croatia and with an area of 169.74 km² represents the most populous part of the Osijek-Baranja county (35% of the county population). It has a favourable geopolitical position in relation to the main European corridors (Podunavian, Podravina and Posavina).

According to the number of inhabitants (Census in 2011), Osijek is the fourth largest city in Croatia and the largest city in eastern Croatia (with 107,784 inhabitants).¹ However, slow economic growth and changing political situation across the country have caused migration, particularly of young people from rural areas around the city to western European countries. In 2016, according to the data of the Central Bureau of Statistics, 36436 persons moved abroad; among them 46.7% of young people aged 20 to 39 years (in 2012-2016 the total number of county population decreased for 4.1%).²

Beside migration, there are two permanently worrying parameters - aging of population and level of education. The share of elderly in total population is higher than of young people that significantly reduce the overall human potential and represent an obstacle to the socio-economic development of UA Osijek. In 2011, the average population of 30-34 years with higher education in the EU-27 reached 34.6%, while in Croatia it was only 24.5%.

The city of Osijek has a strong educational industry, consisting of: 24 kindergartens, 23 elementary school and 19 secondary schools. University J.J. Strossmayer consists of 11 faculties, 1 academy of art and 5 departments. Considering demographic trends, the number of students is decreasing as well as the number of children in education system in general.³

The image of Osijek as strong industrial and agricultural centre was changed during '90 because of several factors: war in ex-Yugoslavia, political and economic transition and process of privatisation. Considering capacity for employment, total income and export orientation, the most important industries in the economic structure are the manufacturing, trade and construction sector while IT sector is growing with good perspective to become an important element in the economic development of the city.

Although, Osijek is a one of the most developed cities in Croatia (by index of development), its inhabitants face with many problems that seriously affect the quality of life: high unemployment rate, a small number of jobs, lack of adequate workforce. According to Croatian Employment Agency, Osijek-Baranja County has a high unemployment rate in Croatia (12,1%, second worse in Croatia) which shows the brother context of Osijek as a central City of the County. Particular concern is the fact that 37% of young people, aged 15 to 34 years old, are unemployed (42,9% persons older than 45).⁴ Although the main cause of this is the small number of companies that are growing and have capacity

1 http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2012/SI-1468.pdf

2 <http://dzs.hr>

3 <http://www.obz.hr/>; <http://www.osijek.hr/>

4 <http://www.hzz.hr/default.aspx?id=10052>



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for employment, a part of the problem lies in the inadequacy of the existing educational system and competences that young people have when enter into the labour market.

Since the parliamentary elections in 2015, Croatia has faced with the political crises visible by frequent shifts of political parties in the government, increased far right groups and polarization of the whole society. At local level, the citizens have shown low level of trust in the whole system, government, parliament, the political parties, judiciary and institutions. Moreover, the results of the recent researches conducted at national level show low democratic capacity that is recognized in low levels of community participation, increased discriminatory attitudes, particularly among youth and lack of knowledge and skills about human rights and democratic procedures and values.⁵

The whole political and economic situation in the city has caused an evident increase of the number of beneficiaries of social services, lack of housing units and adapted spaces for transformation and deinstitutionalisation of social welfare homes and other legal entities with the aim of raising the quality of life of the most vulnerable groups of society, lack of particular social services, insufficient networking of stakeholders in the social welfare system, inadequate support for disadvantaged people in finding and retaining employment as well as lack of professional staff for some services and specialized education of the existing professional staff.

There are institutions that provide adequate assistance to the needs of socially vulnerable groups of society, there is a high quality availability of primary health care services and there is a significant number of social and humanitarian organizations involved, and participate in the process of creating and directing social policy, especially the provision of social services.

As a city, situated on the cross-road, between Serbia, Hungary and Bosnia, Osijek always has been multicultural city, compassionate and managed to establish a comfortable coexistence with anyone who had come to this area, whether for a short or a longer period of time. Although, there are still living 22 minorities, it is a noticeable trend of denying multiculturalism (started in nineties) that might reflects on positive or negative attitude of citizens toward migrants and refugees. While constitutional protections against discrimination applied to all minorities, according to the Ombudsman Report 2017, there was discrimination against ethnic Serbs and Roma. However, by the research of Centre for Peace Studies, there is trend of increasing discriminatory attitudes toward migrants and refugees in Croatia. The situation is aggravated by economic and political situation in this area.

During the high influx of refugees in 2015, citizens organised through a few local NGOs (mostly from Osijek), in cooperation with governmental bodies and financial support of international donors, have shown the motivation and capacity to organise humanitarian aid and social support for migrants and refugees.

5 Relevant researches:

- Bagić D., Šalaj B., „Odgaja li škola dobre građane?“ 2011, <http://idiprints.knjiznica.idi.hr/162/1/2011%20Ili%C5%A1in.pdf>
- Ilišin V., Bouillet D., Gvozdanović A. i Potočnik D.,“Mladi u vremenu krize“ 2013, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/kroatien/12580.pdf>
- Gvozdanović A. i Bagić D.,“Od podanika do građanina – razvoj građanske kompetencije mladih“ 2001, <http://idiprints.knjiznica.idi.hr/507/>



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Currently, except unaccompanied minors, there are no migrants and refugees in the city of Osijek. They are accommodated at the Home for Children and Youth Care Osijek, and so far, 60 migrants have resided at the Home. However, important thing to note is that there were never more than 11 migrants in the home at the same time. The serious problem is placing unaccompanied children in homes for children with behavioural problems which represents a direct conflict with the principle of the child's best interest and that such living conditions and discouraging environment may have a negative effect on their personal development and human dignity, which would consequently make their integration into society impossible. Anyway, by migrant's experience, they feel safe in Osijek; there is no crime hotspots in the City of Osijek. The only problem or unpleasant situations these young men have been faced with is ethnic discrimination, since they are often compared to the members of the Roma national minority due to the colour of their skin. The migrants are involved in the urban life through active secondary school education, extracurricular activities, such as training football, and interactions with friends and volunteers organised by Volunteer Centre Osijek.

The local government is open for the dialogue and preparation of the local community for accepting newcomers as well as other relevant stakeholders. They are also aware of the need for a development of the high quality local integration policy that will support efficient inclusion and integration of migrants and refugees in the local community.

Considering citizens, they do not possess enough information and insight about the issues related to migrants and refugees, which may contribute to forming prejudices against these groups of people. Potentially, it could be one of the most serious difficulties in achieving their successful integration into the local community. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure a continuous flow of information about their problems, needs and activities in the local community, which are planned with the aim of improving the integration process



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Part II. Main Audit Findings

For the purposes of regulating the movement of migrants in the Republic of Croatia, the Government of the Republic of Croatia adopted ***The Migration Policy of the Republic of Croatia for the Period 2013-2015***⁶, on 22 February 2013. The purpose of the document was to ensure that the movement of migrants in the Republic of Croatia would be beneficial to the economic, social and cultural development of the country and society. Like other EU member countries, Croatia offers the possibility to foreigners, i.e. citizens of EU member countries and third country nationals, to be educated, work and reside permanently in its territory. In that regard, it is necessary to point out that the movement of migrants includes questions related to international protection seekers and persons who have been granted international protection (asylums and persons under subsidiary protection). This must be taken into consideration when regulating the status and type of residence of foreign citizens in the territory of the Republic of Croatia.

An integral part of the Croatian *Migration Policy* is the integration of foreigners into Croatian society as a dynamic, bilateral process of mutual adaptation of both foreigners and Croatian citizens to the consequences of post-migration processes in accordance with the *Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy of the Council of the European Union from 2004*. The objective of the integration policy is to ensure that the country grants certain rights to foreigners, primarily the right to work, have adequate accommodation and housing, receive education, learn Croatian language and study Croatian history and culture, as well as the right to internal security and interdepartmental cooperation. Furthermore, it is important to raise awareness of the problems of vulnerable groups of foreigners and to prevent discrimination. On the other hand, foreigners are obligated to participate in the economic, social and cultural development of their new environment, while the new environment is obligated to provide foreigners with possibilities and opportunities that will make them capable of achieving those objectives. Such mutuality is possible only if persons who have been granted international protection are included in society and have equal opportunities to live a dignified, independent and active life.

Due to the significance of integration for the successful functioning of the community, the Government of the Republic of Croatia, at the session held on 4 April 2013, adopted the ***Decision on the Appointment of the Chairperson and Members of the Permanent Commission for Implementation of Integration of Foreigners into Croatian Society*** (hereinafter: the Permanent Commission).⁷ ***The Working Group for the Operative Implementation of the Tasks of the Permanent Commission for Implementation of the Integration of Foreigners into Croatian Society***⁸ (hereinafter: the Working Group) was appointed on 15 April 2013 by the Head of the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia with the primary objective to draw up the ***Action Plan for the Removal of Barriers to the Realization of Individual Rights in***

6 https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2013_03_27_456.html

7 https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Izvje%C5%A1%C4%87e%20o%20radu%20Stalnog%20povjerenstva_Integracija_2017%2028.6.2018_.pdf

8 <https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/vijesti/radna-skupina-za-operativnu-provedbu-zadaca-stalnog-povjerenstva-za-provedbu-integracije-stranaca-u-hrvatsko-drustvo-20-srpnja-2018-godine/818>



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the Field of Integration of Foreigners for the Period from 2013 to 2015⁹. In view of the particular vulnerability and specific situation that asylum seekers and foreigners under subsidiary protection are faced with, the measures from this Action Plan were primarily aimed at regulating the status and integration of those categories of foreigners.

The working group is currently comprised of permanent representatives of competent ministries and central state offices, Croatian Employment Service, the Government's Office for Cooperation with NGOs, representatives of civil society organisations – Croatian Red Cross, Centre for Peace Studies and many other international and civil society organisations that work directly with those categories of foreigners, including: UNHCR, IOM, Jesuit Refugee Service – JRS and others as necessary.

Furthermore, in 2015, the obligations of the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia were defined in the ***Act on International and Temporary Protection***.¹⁰ This Act states that the Office is the competent body for coordination of the work of the Permanent Commission for Implementation of Integration of Foreigners into Croatian Society and that it shall coordinate the work of all ministries, NGOs and other bodies participating in the process of including asylees or foreigners under subsidiary protection into society. The same Act also defines the rights and obligations of asylees and foreigners under subsidiary protection. It is stated that these categories of persons have the right to:

1. residence in the Republic of Croatia, 2. family reunification, 3. accommodation, 4. work, 5. healthcare, 6. education, 7. freedom of religion, 8. free legal assistance, 9. social welfare, 10. assistance for integration into society, 11. property ownership in accordance with the 1951 Convention and 12. acquisition of Croatian citizenship in accordance with regulations governing the acquisition of citizenship.

Although integration of foreigners into a particular European society has usually been an issue dealt with EU member countries individually, the EU has adopted several integration-related Directives, which the Republic of Croatia has transposed into its own national legislation.

In September 2015, the Republic of Croatia was faced with a large number of refugees who were entering the European territory from Serbia through Croatia. According to the official data of the Ministry of the Interior, since the beginning of the refugee and humanitarian crisis up to 4 March 2016, 658,068 refugees entered Croatia, of whom 558,724 in 2015.

In 2016, the total number of international protection seekers in the Republic of Croatia amounted to 2,234, which represented an increase in comparison to the previous two years (2014 – 454, 2015 – 210). Most of them were from Afghanistan (692), Syria (344) and Iraq (341).

Moreover, in 2016, international protection was granted to 100 persons, which was also an increase in comparison to the previous two years (2014 – 25, 2015 – 43).

In the Republic of Croatia, up to October 2017, international protection was granted to 388 persons (of whom 286 were asylees and 102 persons under subsidiary protection).

9 <https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/ACTION%20PLAN%20FOR%20INTEGRATION%202017-2019.pdf>

10 <https://www.zakon.hr/z/798/Zakon-o-me%C4%91unarnodnoj-i-privremenoj-za%C5%A1titi>



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Granted International protection in Croatia until April 2017

Statistički pokazatelji osoba kojima je odobrena međunarodna zaštita u Republici Hrvatskoj zaključno do 31.03.2017.												
ZAŠTITA/ VRSTA	2006	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Ukupni zbroj
Azil	1	3	11	5	4	21	7	15	36	83	17	203
M	0	3	6	4	4	15	4	12	31	50	10	139
0-13			3			3	2		3	7		18
14-17			1	1	1	3				5	1	12
18-34		3	1	3	1	4		9	21	29	6	77
35-64			1		2	5	2	3	7	9	3	32
Ž	1	0	5	1	0	6	3	3	5	33	7	64
0-13			3			2	2		2	15	2	26
14-17						1				1	2	4
18-34	1			1		3		3	2	15	1	26
35-64			2				1		1	2	2	8
Supsidijarna zaštita	0	3	2	9	9	14	17	10	7	16	6	93
M	0	3	2	6	4	8	9	10	5	10	4	61
0-13				1	1	2	3			3	1	11
14-17				2	1	1	1	1		2	1	9
18-34		3	2	1	2	2	5	8	3	5	2	33
35-64				2		3		1	2			8
Ž	0	0	0	3	5	6	8	0	2	6	2	32
0-13				1	3	2	3		1	1	1	12
14-17							2					2
18-34				2	2	2	2			2	1	11
35-64						2	1		1	3		7

Statistics of Unaccompanied minors seeking asylum seekers in Croatia until April 2017

Statistički podaci o tražiteljima međunarodne zaštite maloljetnika bez pratnje prema dobi i spolu zaključno do 31.03.2017.										
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	UKUPNO
M	21	38	194	67	54	10	5	160	52	601
0-13 bez pratnje	3		3				2	13	5	26
14-15 bez pratnje	4	6	18	10	8		1	46	14	107
16-17 bez pratnje	14	32	173	57	46	10	2	101	33	468
Ž			3	1	1			1		6
0-13 bez pratnje								1		1
16-17 bez pratnje			3	1	1					5
UKUPNO	21	38	197	68	55	10	5	161	52	607

It is important to point out that the Republic of Croatia participates in the European programme for relocation and resettlement of third country nationals or persons without citizenship who meet the requirements for approval of international protection and that it will provide accommodation for these categories of people. Accordingly, an interdepartmental working group was founded and it drew up a draft of the *Operational Plan for Inclusion of the Republic of Croatia in the European Programme for Relocation and Resettlement of Third Country Nationals or Persons without Citizenship Who Meet the Requirements for Approval of International Protection*. Therefore, a significantly larger number of people is expected in the future periods than was the case in previous years.



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Up to October 2017, as part of the relocation and resettlement programme, 78 persons of a total of 1583 which the state undertook to relocate were relocated in the Republic of Croatia. Sixteen citizens of Eritrea and two citizens of Yemen were relocated from Italy, and 60 citizens of the Syrian Arab Republic were relocated from Greece.

Pursuant to the Act on International and Temporary Protection, **the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia**¹¹ coordinates the work of all ministries, NGOs and other bodies participating in the procedure of integrating asylees or foreigners under subsidiary protection into society within the framework of the Permanent Commission for Implementation of the Integration of Foreigners into Croatian Society and the related Working Group. On an annual basis, the Office notifies the Government of the Republic of Croatia regarding the implementation of the Action Plan and the work of the Permanent Commission.

In accordance with the legislative and regulatory integration framework, the Government of the Republic of Croatia has established **the Permanent Commission for Implementation of Integration of Foreigners into Croatian Society**, which is comprised of high-ranking representatives of state administration bodies from the department in charge of the following areas of integration: education, healthcare, social welfare, work and employment, accommodation and housing, internal affairs, foreign and European affairs, human rights and rights of national minorities, culture, regional development and EU funds and of the representative of the State Office for Croats Abroad.

In 2014, the Permanent Commission was expanded by appointing a representative of the Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing Care and of the Office for Cooperation with NGOs of the Government of the Republic of Croatia.

In accordance with the legislative and regulatory framework pertaining to the issues of the integration of foreigners into Croatian society, with particular emphasis on the integration of persons who have been granted international protection as vulnerable groups of foreigners, the Working Group, through activities of the OHRRNM as its coordinating body, has defined the strategic areas and measures under the new **Action Plan for Integration of Persons Who Have Been Granted International Protection for the Period from 2017 to 2019**, which was adopted in November 2017.

Permanent Commission monitors the implementation of the measures of the current Action Plan, indicates the challenges of integration and provides guidelines to enable persons who have been granted international protection to legally and equally participate in all spheres of social and economic life. The reason for creating the measures of this Action Plan was precisely the particular vulnerability of persons who have been granted international protection. The objective is to provide assistance and protection so they can more easily overcome their difficult situation during the refugee and humanitarian crisis that has affected them and EU member countries. Action Plan includes elaborate objectives and measures for achieving the objectives from the domain of social welfare and healthcare, accommodation and housing, language learning and education, employment, international protection and sensitisation of the public and professionals to persons who have been granted international protection.

11 <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/>



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Framework for the Integration of Persons Who Have Been Granted International Protection at the Local Level ¹² has been drawn up as part of the project “Support to the Implementation of Policies for Integration of Migrants”, which was funded by the European Union as part of the IPA 2012 instrument and co-funded by the Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, which is the project beneficiary. Framework for the Integration has been drawn up in a participative process carried out by the Working Group for the Development of the Integration Framework, which consisted of the representatives of competent ministries, central state offices, Croatian Employment Services, Office for Cooperation with NGOs of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, civil society and international organisations, representatives of local self-government units, state administration offices in the counties and county representatives. The Framework has been prepared to support local and regional self-government units in the Republic of Croatia in the development of local strategies and action plans for integration of persons who have been granted international protection.

The general objective of the Framework for the Integration is to establish integration measures for persons who have been granted international protection in local and regional self-government units. Strategic areas of the integration of persons who have been granted international protection on the local level are as follows: work and employment, promoting inclusion and social cohesion, accommodation and housing, social protection and social services, strengthening of local capacities and cooperation. However, local communities can also use their own strategies to predict the measures related to other strategic areas of integration. Framework for the Integration also indicates the strengths and weaknesses of persons who have been granted international protection on the local level, as well as their opportunities and threats from their surroundings.

Framework for the Integration on the local level encourages local and regional self-government units to use the experience gained by accommodating the refugees and displaced persons during the 1990s, as well as in the integration of other vulnerable groups, primarily the Roma community. Furthermore, the Framework also encourages cooperation with the civil sector and the establishment of strategic partnerships and systems for sustainable financing of the activities that are carried out by civil society organisations and related to the field of integration of persons who have been granted international protection. It is also encouraged to exchange experiences, learn from local units that are more experienced in the integration of migrants and persons who have been granted international protection and participate in various initiatives and networks on both the international and European level. Moreover, the Framework recognises the significance of volunteering and developing citizen-led mentorship programmes for the purposes of providing support to individuals or families in their integration.

Focus Groups

Two focus groups have been held as a part of the project *Integration of Third Country Nationals Through Urban Partnerships – INTEGRA*. It is one of the activities carried out within this project with the purpose of collecting information about the current stage of integration of third country nationals at the city/municipal level.

¹² <https://www.irh.hr/dokumenti/50-okvir-za-integraciju-osoba-kojima-je-odobrena-medunarodna-zastita>



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Participants of the focus groups were representatives of local and regional self-government and civil society organisations of the City of Osijek.

First focus group was targeting representatives of local authorities and institutions: City of Osijek – Department for health and social welfare, Osijek-Baranja County, Croatian Employment service, Croatian Employment Service/EURES, (“Klasje” Community Service Centre), Home for Children and Youth.

Participants: Representatives of local and regional self-government:

City of Osijek (Romano Kristić - Head of the Administrative Department for Social Welfare, Pensioners and Healthcare)

City of Osijek (Gordana Stojanović - Assistant Head of Department - for healthcare and disabled persons)

Osijek-Baranja County (Željka Panjković - Assistant Head of the Administrative Department for Healthcare and Social Welfare) and representatives of the following public institutions and bodies:

Jagoda Ringel (Croatian Employment Service),

Marija Koški (Croatian Employment Service),

Ivana Šarić (Croatian Employment Service/EURES),

Enisa Kifer (Croatian Employment Service/EURES),

Vesna Perkušić-Komlenac (“Klasje” Community Service Centre),

Mirta Stojković (Home for Children and Youth Care Osijek), Ivona Baus (Home for Children and Youth Care Osijek),

Angel Čabarkapa (Centre for Peace) i Zrinka Rimac (Centre for Peace)

Moderator: Natalija Havelka (Centre for Peace)

The focus group was divided into four areas covering the important characteristics of TCN-friendly cities about which the focus group participants led discussions and stated their opinions.



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1. City vision and services

Focus group participants unanimously evaluated the presence of TCNs in the local community as positive, although there are not that many TCNs residing in Osijek at the moment. They explained such evaluation by stating that diversity enriches us and that each culture has something good to offer. The participants also pointed out that it is extremely important to be prepared for their arrival, otherwise their integration will become extremely difficult.



Currently, there are 4 beneficiaries (unaccompanied minors) at the Home for Children and Youth Care Osijek, and so far, 60 migrants have resided at the Home. All current beneficiaries are male.

The participants commented on how difficult it is to implement measures for the purposes of integration of third country nationals (hereinafter: TCNs) when the number of beneficiaries who would come to the City of Osijek is unknown. Namely, the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, the body in charge of coordination of the work of all ministries, NGOs and other bodies participating in the procedure of refugee integration, sent a letter to the Centre for Peace in July this year, stating that the resettlement plan would be completed by the end of this year. Our local community has modified the Decision on the Rights and Aid from the Social Welfare System of the City of Osijek in the manner that the rights and aid from the social welfare system may be provided to foreigners and stateless persons with residence in Osijek. The primary requirement is to ensure adequate accommodation and offer support to migrants and refugees in finding employment and providing them with education (both children and adults). Accommodation for TCNs should be provided by renting state-owned apartments or by renting apartments from landlords in accordance with the Ordinance on Conditions and the Manner of Exercising the Right to Accommodation of Asylums, Foreigners under Subsidiary Protection and Foreigners under Temporary Protection and Participation of Asylums.

Foreigners Under Subsidiary Protection and Foreigners under Temporary Protection in Paying Such Costs. Moreover, children will be provided with pre-school and school education. Representatives of the Croatian Employment Service pointed out that migrants are disadvantaged persons and that they may use all measures of active policies, i.e. employees may use them for their employment. Many are uninformed about the rights to which they are entitled, one of which being the right to free legal assistance.

It was pointed out that, in accordance with the interpretation of the provisions of the Act on Mandatory Health Insurance and Health Care of Foreigners in the Republic of Croatia, issued by the



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Croatian Health Insurance Fund to make admissions of persons under international protection less difficult for health centres and other medical institutions, said persons are entitled to health care in the same extent as persons insured under mandatory health insurance. Unfortunately, healthcare is currently provided through private connections, friendships and doctors' goodwill. All participants agreed that language poses a great problem and that without learning/knowing the language, efficient integration is not possible.

Representatives of the City of Osijek pointed out that good connections and constant cooperation between civil society organisations, public authorities and institutions and local and regional self-government units on the local level had been established. However, it is necessary to continuously improve cooperation, ensure exchange of information and improve the coordination of the work conducted by different stakeholders.

2. Urban environment

At the moment, in the City of Osijek there are no more than 4 migrants (unaccompanied children), who are all males with the status of foreigners under subsidiary protection, which is why there are no safety, i.e. crime hotspots. As far as their caretakers know, the only problem or unpleasant situations these young men have been faced with is ethnic discrimination, since they are often compared to the members of the Roma national minority due to the colour of their skin.

3. Participation of citizens and social inclusion of TCNs and migrant communities

The participants do not know whether TCNs have been included in the public urban life.

They all agreed that citizens do not possess enough knowledge about the issues related to migrants and refugees, which may contribute to forming prejudices against these groups of people. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure a continuous flow of information about their problems, needs and activities in the local community, which are planned with the aim of improving the integration process.

4. Attitude towards third country nationals and migrants

Considering that negative attitude of citizens towards this group of people could potentially be one of the most serious difficulties in achieving successful integration into the local community, it is very important to pay special attention to informing citizens about these issues. The role of the media is especially important for achieving this objective and the media must be prompted to report positive stories on migrants and refugees.



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The second focus group gathered representatives from civil society organizations.

Attendees: Representatives of the civil society organisations of the City of Osijek

Volunteer Centre Osijek (Roberta Verner),

Association “Breza” (Ivana Šibalić),

City Red Cross Branch of Osijek (Ana Mutnjaković),

Center for Missing and Exploited Children (Tena Zalović),

Local Democracy Agency (Miljenko Turniški),

Association “JA KA” Osijek (Veselinka Kastratović),

Centre for Peace (Angel Čabarkapa, Sara Miličević, Zrinka Rimac)

Moderator: Natalija Havelka



The focus group was divided into same four areas as in first focus groups.

1. City vision and services

Representatives of the Associations unanimously agreed that migrants currently represent a neutral value for the community. Experience has shown that the citizens of the City of Osijek do not have a negative perception of migrants in their environment, but neither do they have a distinctly positive one. Representatives have pointed out that they would have more information when there are more TCNs in Osijek and their local community.

Representative of the migrant community mentioned that refugees that he had met to that point did not want to stay in Osijek, but rather move to the western countries, either to reunite with their families or due to a higher standard of living.



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Participants have strongly emphasised that the public, i.e. local communities and media must be prepared for the arrival of migrants and that a positive climate must be ensured because misinformation could produce unwelcome actions.

Historical data shows that throughout history, people in Osijek have been extremely compassionate and managed to establish a comfortable coexistence with anyone who had come to this area, whether for a short or a longer period of time.

Currently, there are 4 TCNs located in Osijek, at the Home for Children and Youth Care: 1 person from Iraq and 1 from Iran and 2 from Egypt. They are all males, unaccompanied children, accommodated at the Home for Children and Youth Care. One of them is of full age and is currently attending the Vocational School - course of study hairdresser. He has been under subsidiary protection from February 2017 and he may stay at the Home for Children and Youth Care until 21 years of age, even though he would be happy to become independent much sooner. Regarding other migrants, only 1 person is currently enrolled in the course on the Croatian language. All participants have agreed that placing unaccompanied children in homes for children with behavioural problems represents a direct conflict with the principle of the child's best interest and that such living conditions and discouraging environment may have a negative effect on their personal development and human dignity, which would consequently make their integration into society impossible.

Our local community **has modified the Decision on the Rights and Aid from the Social Welfare System of the City of Osijek in the manner that the rights and aid from the social welfare system may be provided to foreigners and stateless persons with residence in Osijek.** The City, however, has problems with available residential areas - there are no residential units, there is a shortage of state-owned apartments and the waiting lists are long. In the *Action Plan for Integration of Persons Who Have Been Granted International Protection for the Period from 2017 to 2019*, it is stated that TCNs have the right to free accommodation secured by the state for a two-year period. In the event that the state does not have a sufficient number of available residential units, TCNs will rent apartments from natural and legal persons.

There are very few organizations in Osijek who have worked with refugees and migrants or issues related to them:

Home for Children and Youth Care, since recently, is organizing accommodation, half-day stays, assistance in integration and learning Croatian and organising free time (activities with mentors that are organised based on the children's choice). Also, they cooperate with VCOS who organised volunteers and social support for unaccompanied minors.

Red Cross Osijek, has been coordinated and organised humanitarian and social support for migrants and refugees at 5 locations during migrant's crises (2015-2016). Their long-term orientation to work with socially vulnerable groups and human and material capacities defined them as one of the key organisation who is able to provide different kind of humanitarian aid and social support to migrants and refugees. As national organisation, Red Cross Croatia with their scope of work, is able to cover the whole territory of Croatia.



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Centre for Peace, since its establishment, has been working with refugees, returnees and displaced people (mostly Serbs, Croats and Bosnians), through protection their human rights and providing them with free legal assistance during and after the war in ex-Yugoslavia. During the nineties, they have been working in multi-ethnic communities affected by the war in eastern part of Croatia by applying a different approach of peaceful reconciliation and community building.

Besides, there are organisations motivated to work with migrants and refugees such as: **Youth Association “Breza”** is currently in the process of establishing a youth club in which young TCNs will also be involved. They are experienced in organising psychosocial support for vulnerable groups of youth (and particularly youth with behavioural disorders) and involvement of youth in community life; **Centre for Missing and Exploited Children**, who provide half-day stay for children; **Association for creative development SLAP**, focusing on social development by supporting of social entrepreneurship.

2. Urban environment

The representative of the migrant community pointed out that there is not a single place in Osijek where he had felt unsafe and the same may be said for migrants who are currently accommodated in the Centre. Therefore, based on their experiences, there are currently no crime hotspots in the City of Osijek.

3. Participation of citizens and social inclusion of third country nationals and migrant communities

The representative of the migrant community is involved in the urban life through active secondary school education, extracurricular activities, such as training football, and interactions with friends. Other migrants do not attend school and are not that actively involved in the life of the community.

Since most of them are underage, they do not initiate any events to establish a relationship with the City.

4. Attitude towards third country nationals and migrants

In the City of Osijek, there are currently no measures implemented to improve the integration. General attitude is estimated as being open and prevalently welcoming.

Feedback received from the volunteers shows that the experience of working with refugees has enriched their lives and has empowered them to fight prejudice in their own families, among friends and in their communities.

Recommendations:

Focus groups participants believe that it is important to continuously work on strengthening the values that encourage respect for diversity and make the community open to different cultures. It would be important to develop a communication strategy for combating the language of hate speech against migrants and refugees.



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They also propose an analysis of the capacities to make sure that the overlap of activities is avoided in the future. Such overlap occurs very often at the moment because in most cases the organisation of activities is not well-coordinated (they are organised without previous planning and many details are therefore neglected).

The participants also state that the largest effort should be invested into preparatory activities and that it is necessary to emphasise the importance of learning Croatian, as the knowledge of Croatian is the most important aspect for the integration of TCNs.

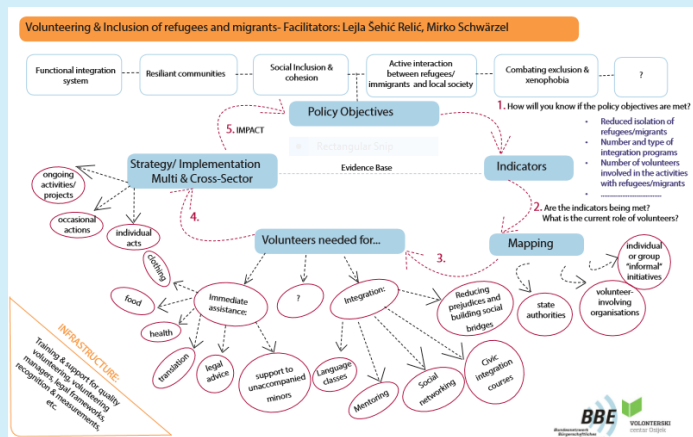
It would be important to involve youth in integration process so they can become good will ambassadors to others.

Also, TCNs would benefit from developing a system of peer support for children in migration, as well as from providing migrant families with a mentor who would help them in everyday situations.

Good practice - Volunteer centre Osijek

Volunteer Centre Osijek holds an expertise in organizing volunteer programs in times of “Refugee crisis” and later in carrying activities with asylum seeking families, children, elderly, disabled and unaccompanied minors in the reception centres. Volunteers are helping refugees and migrants in reception centres to have dignified stay trough variety of social activities targeting small children early education and socialization, primary school education support, social networking in the community, women empowerment, cultural and social orientation and exchange. Besides, since 2015 VCOS supported by CARE International have distributed significant humanitarian aid.

At the moment, VCOS is organizing group of volunteers in activities of social support to unaccompanied minors accommodated in Home for Children and Youth in Osijek and migrants and refugees in Asylum Seeker Centre in Kutina such as sports activities, workshops, cooking and various social interactions (in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders – Ministry of interior affair, Centre for social welfare Osijek, Home for Children and Youth and Red Cross). Volunteers have significant role in creating social network between young



refugees and local community that is essential part of successful integration. Considering the vulnerability of unaccompanied minors VCOS approach is based on systematic individual approach in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders in order to achieve holistic and good life quality integration.

Besides working with refugees, VCOS is engaged in networks of Croatian and European CSOs working with refugees especially in the field of good quality volunteer programs.



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City Tours and Checklists

Currently, in Osijek there are no TCN's who are our project's target group except for the unaccompanied minors (three of them), who are housed at the reformatory. Considering the before mentioned fact, it was very difficult for us to conduct this activity. However, according to the announcements of Government's Office for human rights and rights of minorities, in charge for coordination of all ministries, nongovernmental organizations and other entities participating in integration of refugees, the city of Osijek will, consistently to the Placement plan, be one of the destinations for people who have been approved international protection. Placement plan is extremely important strategic document that will define procedures and criteria according to which people who are granted international protection will be placed in different cities around Croatia.

With a view to disburdening the local authorities, it is important to develop distribution system of this obligation and all the other integration measures that come along with it such as housing, social welfare, health care, employment, etc.) In the same time, well thought system of dislocation of people granted international protection implies taking into account the needs of those people, their chances for integration but, also, benefit for the local communities.

The Government of the Republic of Croatia has adopted the measure of drafting the Placement plan, in accordance with the Action plan for Integration of persons approved international protection for the period from 2017 to 2019. As the holder of the measure and the coordinating body of the Government in the field of integration of foreigners, Government's Office for human rights and rights of minorities is responsible for the preparation of this document, which is to be adopted by the end of the current year. Given these circumstances, we plan to hold the City Walk activity periodically, because it can help us determine the level of progress and development of the city in the integration field.

The first City walk was held in the central area of Osijek, close to the train and bus station, sport's hall and the city street where Faculty of Law and Faculty of Economics are.

Main findings are:

The City has no strategy, just some ad-hoc activities/events for TCN.

Our local community has modified the Decision on the Rights and Aid from the Social Welfare System of the City of Osijek in a way that the rights and aid from the social welfare system may be provided to foreigners and stateless persons with residence in Osijek.

The City doesn't have specific section on its web site focused on TCN nor it provides services to the TCNs.

Good connections and constant cooperation between civil society organisations, public authorities and institutions and local and regional self-government units on the local level has been established.

The NGO sector supports and promotes membership of TCNs.

Complete and accessible information is provided to users, but only in local language.

There are no mechanisms to measure and track public perception of TCNs and migrants for the purposes of city policy development.



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Photo voice

The activity of photo voice was organized in August collecting stories of foreigners in Osijek and voices of receiving community, gathered 20 participants different age and nationalities.

Moreover, Photovoice team was composed of CSO representatives, and local school teachers. Considering that in Osijek there are no refugee and migrant families that are in focus of this project, Centre for Peace has decided to contact foreigners living in Osijek and who have willingly agreed to participate.



- Twana attends the second year of trade school where he is learning to be a hairdresser. In his free time, he goes to soccer practice in the FC Lio. He came to Osijek as a minor during the European Migrant Crisis in year 2015.

- Claude Marco Contini is from Italy but he lives in Osijek for more than 15 years. He has worked as a tenor singer in the Croatian National Theatre and he also graduated playing the French Horn.



- Jerome moved from Switzerland several years ago. He minds all the curious looks and unpleasant comments he gets because of his dark skin. He spent his free time in a skate park riding bmx with his friends.

- Vranić family moved from Switzerland to Kneževi Vinogradi in Baranja. Wife Gabriela is Peruvian, but she came to live in Switzerland when she was very young. There she met Vasili. When asked about living in Baranja, Gabrijela says, “It is nice here, we are in nature, and cities are still close by”.



- Laurensia is from Indonesia and she is happily married with Nikola from Osijek, where she has been living for the last 3 years. She launched a facebook group “Expats in Osijek”, which offer assistance in integration of foreigners in Osijek.



- Lauris moved to Osijek from Mexico. She is employed at the Franjo Kuhač Music School as a classical ballet teacher and she occasionally takes part in ballet performances in the Croatian National Theatre in Osijek.



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Majority of them have developed social life, numerous acquaintances and are very well integrated into our community, the city of Osijek.

The challenges they meet are connected with language in the city public space, for example: the parking meter has instructions only in Croatian, the name of the tram stations is only in Croatian, and so are the names of the institutions, etc.





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Part III. Conclusions and recommendations

- One of the preconditions of any local integration policy is better coordination across government levels. This is especially important in the case of Croatia, country with high level of centralized institutions and decision making. In the case of integration, the initiative for more local approach would, in our case, have to be initiated by local authorities. Otherwise, there is a concern that over-bureaucratization in addressing various housing, education, employment issues, etc., will disturb the integration process.
- The City of Osijek has shown strong will to provide leadership and the ability to coordinate different services and stakeholders. This motivation should be empowered with additional insights of best European examples and new knowledge. Despite the fact that local authorities are limited with capacities to solve problems and meet the needs while the asylum policy is in the control of national level, local authorities still can create their own local integration policy by improving formal and informal coordination on integration policy.

As the first step, it would be good to adopt cross-sectoral local integration strategy (housing, education, employment, health social support...) as a formal document that will be created in highly participative process involving different stakeholders. With clear strategy city authorities will take leadership in creating multicultural atmosphere, encourage civil society engagement to provide social support and create new networks, facilitate local stakeholders, insure preparation and education for schools and health service providers, adopt local institutions to better reflect diversity and create inclusive local policies for the future.

- The public response in the city has so far been mainly positive; nevertheless, there are some concerns of rising tensions among the local population toward refugees. Therefore, it is crucial that local authorities have a tolerant and welcoming narrative in the public, show appreciation for diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities and be transparent with the facts toward citizens. Besides preparing, the citizens for the newcomers, City of Osijek can take the responsibility for managing holistic reception through orientation courses and advisory services.
- It is necessary to provide adequate accommodation and to support migrants and refugees in finding a job, engaging in education (whether they are children or adults) and learning of Croatian language. In addition, it would be good for these people to have a contact person who will help them deal with everyday situations and overcome the problems they face when solving key existential issues.
- The needs of migrants and refugees should be regularly monitored in order to create activities and services according to what they state most important to them, not based on experience or assumptions of local stakeholders.
- For the unaccompanied minors that are placed in Osijek it took two years to be included in education process. Special attention should be given to inclusion in educational system for new



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coming children. Furthermore, in order to ensure the quality of work with children and young people from the migrant group, it is necessary to provide education for teachers in schools.

- Civil society organisation in Osijek represent very important resource with high-level competences and valuable experience in working with refugees and other excluded groups, providing psycho social support, running social and inclusive programs, multicultural education, conflict management, protection of human rights etc. Therefor it is important to set up coordination mechanism with CSOs. Further, it is important to ensure support to organisations who are motivated to work with migrants and refugees in order to build their capacities and develop innovative service for high quality and efficient integration and inclusion.
- Croatia has well established and wide network of local employment agencies, organized in framed bureaucratic way and not in the mandate and capacity to deal with skill recognition. Considering that it would be good to in cooperation with civil sector organized special support for refugees and migrants to translate their qualification and skills and help them access formal recognition procedures and further training in cooperation with employment agencies.
- The network of health services is well developed in the city. However, there are strong needs for education of health workers about migrants and refugee's rights in order to ensure their full health protection.
- The role of the media is especially important for achieving this objective and the media must be prompted to report positive stories on migrants and refugees.
- It is important to continually work on empowering values that support respect for diversity and community opening to different cultures.
- Becoming inclusive city with god local approach and to integration can be supported with better use of EU funding.
- Although there is continuous and good quality cooperation between CSOs, public bodies and institutions and local and regional self-government in the city on various issues and activities, it is necessary to permanently invest in cooperation, ensure flow and exchange of information and better co-ordination of the work of different stakeholders.

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