

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
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A LOOK AT THE “REFUGEE CRISIS” ACROSS EUROPE: CHALLENGES, DEBATES AND PROJECTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The so defined “refugee crisis” is intrinsically linked with the youth field due to both the young age of many people fleeing their countries and the involvement of young people in refugee-related initiatives. Despite that, there is no precise up-to-date knowledge concerning the projects developed in the youth field in the last year to face the recent unprecedented inflow of refugees.

This paper intends to provide an overview on how young people in Europe position themselves in the debate around refugees; how the youth sector engages with refugees, namely what concrete practices have been put in place in the youth sector at European level and in different European countries; and how civil society engages in supporting refugees. The analysis is based on both the data analysis of 16 country-specific thematic questionnaires¹ submitted by EKCYP members, and on secondary data collected through desk research.

This analytical paper does not intend to be exhaustive and cannot be considered representative of the whole situation in Europe, but it tries to give some insights on the state of the debate on refugees from the point of view of young people and to contribute to identify patterns in the existing projects, as well as to serve as a platform for future discussions and initiatives. For instance, it is beyond the focus of this paper to analyse the conditions of young refugees and unaccompanied minors.

Projects mentioned here are organised around three focus areas:

a) Projects ran by refugees for refugees; b) Projects indirectly supporting refugees, which aim to raise awareness and encourage intercultural dialogue as well as mutual understanding between newcomers and host communities; c) Projects directly supporting refugees.

In order to set the context, the paper starts with a general overview on quantitative data about refugees heading to Europe and a look at the engagement of the European institutions (Council of Europe and European Union) to support young refugees.

¹ Available questionnaires concern Armenia, Austria, Belarus, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In 2015, the number of people who fled their homelands reached the highest peak since the Second World War. This phenomenon has been described as “refugee crisis”, even if it is clear that it is a “human rights crisis”².

The management of the last arrivals of refugees is a litmus test for the European Union’s asylum policy and for the countries of single transit and destination, be they member of the European Union or not. Despite the fact that 86% of the world’s displaced people are hosted by neighbouring and poor countries (UNHCR, 2014; Pisani 2016), the popular perception in European countries is that of an “invasion”. The way refugee inflows have been discussed in media and public opinion differs significantly from country to country and even within the same country. Policies and initiatives at different levels of governance span from thickening the defences of “Fortress Europe” to attempting to breach its walls and build bridges, especially after terrorist attacks or other specific events (for example, the “Cologne attacks” of 31 December 2015).

Although refugees and asylum seekers are a very diverse group in terms of country of origin, push and pull factors, geographic trajectories, religion, ethnicity, etc., they are strictly categorised and uniformly regulated by the law (Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, signed in Geneva in 1951; Dublin Regulation³; EU Readmission Agreements⁴) and by related policies. In order to avoid redundancies throughout the paper, I will here use the terms “refugee” and “asylum seeker” interchangeably (instead of “refugees and asylum seekers”), thus shifting them⁵ beyond narrow legal definitions. This paper encompasses the following situations: people who have been recognised with the legal status of “refugee” and have been granted protection on the basis of the national law related to international protection (authorisations to stay for humanitarian reasons) or another kind of international protection (subsidiary protection); “asylum seekers”, meaning those who seek international protection, but are yet to be recognised with the legal status of “refugee” by

² See, among others Muižnieks, Nils, 2016. Syrian refugees: a neglected human rights crisis in Europe. Available at: www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/syrian-refugees-a-neglected-human-rights-crisis-in-euro-2, accessed 1 June 2016.

³ Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person, available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?jsessionid=jHNITp3HLjqw8mqGbQSpZh1VWpjCyVQq14Hgcztw4pbfSQZffnm!557467765?uri=C ELEX:32013R0604> (accessed 31 July 2016).

⁴ Return & readmission. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/irregular-migration-return-policy/return-readmission/index_en.htm (accessed 31 July 2016).

⁵ Not to forget is the blurry boundary between the situation of “economic migrants” and “refugees/asylum seekers”, which should be verified case by case. For the situation of internally displaced people in Georgia see the webpage of the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia, at: <http://www.mra.gov.ge/eng>, accessed 25 June 2016.

the competent authority (have they already lodged an application or not); people who were rejected from having any form of protection, but are still in the arrival country.

From a youth perspective, the situation is far more complex than that, as the age of refugees determines a different protection regime for unaccompanied minors in many countries, hence making the assessment of minors' age and their coming of age very crucial moments for their life.

2. STATE OF AFFAIRS AND DATA OVERVIEW

In 2014 the number of asylum seekers in EU countries amounted to 627,000 and rose to 1.3 million in 2015. The number of first-time asylum applications within the EU-28 in 2015 was 1.26 million (from 563,000 in 2014, Eurostat 2016⁶); while the number of first-time asylum applicants from Syria alone rose to 363,000 thus amounting to 29 % of the total. Afghani citizens accounted for 14 % of the total and Iraqis for 10 %, while Kosovars and Albanians accounted for 5% and Pakistanis - 4 %. Since 2013, Syrians have indeed been the main group of asylum seekers in Europe. In 2015, young refugees constituted some 83% of all first-time asylum applications, almost 4 in every 5 asylum seekers in the EU-28 being under 35 years of age. More than 90,000 unaccompanied minors (i.e. under the age of 18 and traveling alone) requested asylum in one of the EU-28 countries (Eurostat, 2015). Refugees try to reach Europe via different routes⁷, depending on, e.g. the country of origin, the policy adopted by countries of transit and destination, the social and family network they already have in Europe.

According to UNHCR data, some 1,015,078 people crossed the Mediterranean Sea in 2015⁸. . In addition, International Organisation for Migration (IOM) estimates that over 34,000 entered Bulgaria and Greece from Turkey, by land route. During 2015, most refugees arrived to Europe from Greece and then tried the Balkan route (through FYROM, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Hungary) to reach Northern and Western EU Countries. The first mass exodus started at the Keleti station in Budapest in September 2015 and brought about 200,000 refugees to Austria in one month, most of whom continued their travel towards Germany and onwards.

According to UNCHR, on 1 January 2016 the ten top nationalities of Mediterranean Sea arrivals were Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Nigeria, Gambia, Somalia, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea. By 20th

⁶ Eurostat 2016. Statistics explained. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics, 25 June 2016.

⁷ Frontex webpage is available at <http://frontex.europa.eu/trends-and-routes/migratory-routes-map/>, accessed 1 June 2016.

⁸ UNHCR, 2016. Refugees/Migrants Emergency Response – Mediterranean. Available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>, accessed 7 September 2016.

May 2016, about 155,990 arrived to Greece by sea and 33,910 to Italy⁹ (compared to 153,842 that landed on the Italian coasts in 2015¹⁰).

This increased influx concerned both countries of transit and of destination. For example, in Finland, where the number of asylum seekers from the Middle East had until recently been relatively small compared to other countries, in 2015 the Finnish Immigration Service recorded 88,273 asylum application (53,873 in 2014)¹¹. In France 73,499 asylum applications (including accompanied minors¹²) were also lodged in 2015 (23.9% more than in 2014) mainly from Sudan, Kosovo and Syria. The French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA) recorded that only about 5,000 of them made their application in France in 2015, which is low if compared to other European countries (nearly 100,000 in Germany in 2015). In Germany, about 1.1 million refugees arrived in 2015, about 410,860 of whom young refugees aged up to 25 years. The recent EU-Turkey deal¹³ of 18 March 2016, which has been harshly criticised by NGOs and institutions in the field of refugees' human rights protection, is likely to change this scenario. This agreement provides, among others, that all new migrants irregularly crossing the Turkish-Greek border as from 20 March 2016 are to be returned to Turkey.

3. YOUTH POLICIES AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL

In Europe, several documents and initiatives about and with refugees can be traced both within the Council of Europe's and the European Union's framework.

As far as the Council of Europe is concerned, in the past various initiatives and documents have been delivered in cooperation with UNHCR. On 17 - 18 November 2011 the Consultative meeting "Challenges faced by young refugees and asylum seekers in accessing their social rights and their

⁹ UNCHR, 2016. Refugees/Migrants Emergency Response – Mediterranean. Available at: <http://data.unhcr.org/mediterranean/regional.php>, accessed 1 June 2016. Compare with Frontex's most recent data, until April 2016.

¹⁰ Italian Ministry of the Interior, 2015. Report on the reception of migrants and refugees in Italy. Available at: http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/rapporto_accoglienza_eng_isbn_appenndice_rev3b.pdf, accessed 23 June 2016.

For the most part they come from Eritrea (38,612) and Nigeria (21,886). Together, these two nationalities account for almost 40% of the total, amounting to over 50,000 people. Next are refugees from Somalia (12,176), Sudan (8,909), the Gambia (8,123) and Syria (7,444). A bit further down in this particular ranking, those from Mali (5,752), Senegal (5,751), Bangladesh (5,039) and Morocco (4,486).

¹¹ Finland EKCYP report

¹² A non-EU national or stateless person below the age of 18 who arrives on the territory of the EU States unaccompanied by an adult responsible for him/her, and for as long as s/he is not effectively taken into the care of such a person, including a minor who is le- unaccompanied a-er s/he has entered the territory of the EU States (Asylum acquis, e.g. Qualification Directive)

¹³ EU-Turkey Statement. Available at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18-eu-turkey-statement>, accessed 13 June 2016.

integration, while in transition to adulthood” was co-organised by both institutions at European Youth Centre Strasbourg, France¹⁴. In 2014, the Council of Europe in cooperation with UNHCR issued the study “Unaccompanied and separated asylum-seeking and refugee children turning eighteen: what to celebrate?”¹⁵, based on the findings of a field research on European State practice regarding transition to adulthood of unaccompanied and separated asylum-seeking and refugee children.

In January 2016, following the copious allegations of human rights violations against migrants and refugees in Europe, Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland appointed Tomáš Boček as Special Representative on Migration and Refugees of Council of Europe Secretary¹⁶. Among other tasks, his mandate is to gather information on the situation of the basic rights of migrants and refugees in Europe, and to develop proposals for action. On 30 May - 4 June 2016 he accomplished a fact-finding mission to Turkey, in order to assess the situation of refugees and migrants particularly of children and unaccompanied minors, and plan concrete initiatives¹⁷.

In most recent past, on 23-27 May 2016 the Council of Europe’s Youth Department and an international network Voices of Young Refugees in Europe (VYRE) organised a meeting at the European Youth Centre on unaccompanied minor refugees’ local participation and inclusion¹⁸, while on 10-16 July 2016, the Seminar “Social inclusion of refugee students and their role in intercultural dialogue” took place at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg¹⁹. The event, which was organised by the Council of Europe with the Global Platform for Syrian Students and in cooperation with Kiron - Open Higher Education and Voice of Young Refugees in Europe, gathered together both refugee students and representatives of youth and students organisations as well as foundations

¹⁴ Council of Europe and UNHCR, 2011. Report of the Consultative meeting Challenges faced by young refugees and asylum seekers in accessing their social rights and their integration, while in transition to adulthood. Available at: https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Documents/2011_Report_CM_Young_Refugees_Asylum_Seekers_en.pdf, accessed 31 July 2016.

¹⁵ Council of Europe and UNHCR, 2014. *Unaccompanied and Separated Asylum-Seeking and Refugee Children Turning Eighteen: What to Celebrate?* Available at: https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Documents/2014_UNHCR_and_Council_of_Europe_Report_Transition_Adulthood.pdf, accessed 31 July 2016.

¹⁶ Webpage of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees - Tomáš Boček. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/it/web/portal/special-representative-secretary-general-migration-refugees-tomas-bocek>, accessed 31 July 2016.

¹⁷ Secretary General’s Special Representative on migration and refugees visits Turkey. Available at: http://www.coe.int/it/web/portal/full-news/-/asset_publisher/rfs6RdVHzAWb/content/secretary-general-s-special-representative-on-migration-and-refugees-visits-turkey?_101_INSTANCE_rfs6RdVHzAWb_languageId=en_GB, accessed 31 July 2016.

¹⁸ Unaccompanied minor refugees: local participation and inclusion. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/unaccompanied-minor-refugees-local-participation-and-inclusion>, accessed 31 July, 2016.

¹⁹ Inclusion of Refugees. Available at: <http://www.coe.int/de/web/youth-peace-dialogue/inclusion-of-refugees>, accessed 31 July 2016.

working with refugee students, with the aim to in order to discuss and exchange knowledge about challenges, needs and possibilities for the inclusion of refugee students in Europe and support their role as agents in intercultural dialogue. In the field of youth, the Action Days against Hate Speech Targeting Refugees on the 20th of June sought to mobilise the national campaigns and European partners of the No Hate Speech Movement against hate speech against refugees and asylum seekers in the European societies.

In the European Union's framework, on 15 December 2015, EU national governments agreed on the EU Work Plan for Youth for 2016-2018²⁰, which lay down a stronger youth work and cross-sectoral cooperation in six main areas, including the issue of "responding to the opportunities and challenges raised by the increasing numbers of young migrants and refugees in the European Union". The others are: social inclusion; participation in democratic and civic life in Europe; transition from youth to adulthood, in particular integration into the labour market; support to health and well-being, including mental health; and addressing the challenges and opportunities of the digital era for youth policy, youth work and young people. Member States also agreed that a particular emphasis shall be given to "young people with a migrant background, including newly arrived immigrants and young refugees", as well as to young people at risk of marginalisation and young people neither in employment, nor education or training (NEET). Erasmus + Programme supports projects aimed at young migrants and refugees, which fosters inclusion for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and with fewer opportunities (including migrants or refugees): this is particularly true for the European Voluntary Service²¹, youth exchanges and opportunities for youth workers²². Besides, the 2015 Erasmus+ "Inclusion and Diversity Strategy" is designed to make the programme it most accessible to disadvantaged young people: the integration of migrants and refugees is a priority specifically set for 2016. The problem with the situation of refugees is that these inclusive policies coexist and have to cope with highly exclusive measures, such as the afore mentioned EU-Turkey deal.

Just to provide some examples of initiatives funded by the Council of Europe and by the European Union funding schemes, both the Council of Europe (European Youth Foundation) and the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union supported the Conference "Moving Stories:

²⁰ Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on a European Union Work Plan for Youth for 2016-2018. Available at: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42015Y1215\(01\)&from=EN](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42015Y1215(01)&from=EN), accessed 13 June 2016.

²¹ See, for example, Mina's story, at: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/gallery/video_en.htm, accessed 13 June 2016

²² Projects funded by Erasmus+ on the topic of youth migration can be found at: Erasmus+ Projects Results Platform, accessed 1 June 2016.

Narratives of Migration Crossing Europe”, which was organised near Torino, Italy²³ on 22-27 April 2016, by UNITED for International Action, a European Network against nationalism, racism, fascism and in support of migrants and refugees. 70 participants explored data on migration and asylum in Europe and examined how media narrative describes facts concerning migrants and refugees and developed ways of challenging current dominant narrative and allow positive counter-narrative.

Furthermore, participants exchanged best practices already implemented by organisations all over Europe.

On 15-20 June 2016, four National Youth Agencies²⁴ co-organised a training course, funded by the Erasmus+ Programme for youth workers to develop their capacity to raise awareness and address refugee-related issues in their work with young people.

Another partnership between 8 National Youth Agencies²⁵ was funded by the Erasmus+ Programme in order to implement the three year project “Becoming Part of Europe: How Youth Work can support young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers”. The aim of this long-term project is to support youth workers through the promotion of human rights, democratic values and preventing radicalisation.

4. THE ONGOING DEBATE

According to a Europe-wide survey carried out by the European Youth Forum in 2014 and published in 2015²⁶ young respondents consider refugees and asylum seekers to be among the groups at highest risk of discrimination in all areas of their life. There is no data available on young people’s attitude towards receiving refugees of the recent wave, apart from **Finland** and other few countries. The Finnish Youth Barometer 2014 shows that between 2005 and 2014 young people’s attitudes became more tolerant towards migrants in general. In 2014, four out of five agreed that Finland has a duty to help people who are fleeing wars or human suffering, although criticism was widespread with regards to taking in refugees. In 2014, only 28% of the respondents thought Finland should take in more refugees and one must take into consideration that these were the attitudes before the current refugee crisis.

²³ The full report of the conference is available at: <http://www.unitedagainstracism.org/blog/category/united-conference/torino-16/torino-conference-report/> (7 September 2016)

²⁴ JUGEND für Europa –Germany (leader), Bureau International Jeunesse - Belgium, Foundation for the Development of the Education System –Poland, and Agencija za mobilnost i programe Europske unije –Croatia

²⁵ Italian National Agency (leader), Bureau International Jeunesse – Belgium, JUGEND für Europa- Germany, France, Malta, The Netherland, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden.

²⁶ Bello, B.G., 2016. Multiple Discrimination and Young People in Europe. Available at: <http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2015/10/Multiple-discrimination-and-young-people-in-Europe.pdf>, accessed 1 June 2016.

The sources analysed to draft this paper and the number of refugee-dedicated projects young people are involved with show that many publically active young people position themselves in support of refugees and are actively engaged in pro-refugee initiatives, especially in NGOs, universities and social media. Their direction is still unclear, but some trends can be noted. Generally speaking, many young and adult people are committed to solidarity and engagement. Highlights include the HilfsKonvoi (Eng: Aid Convoy), which involved 140 cars being driven by activists in order to take as many asylum seekers as possible from Hungary to Austria²⁷; and the activity of rescuers on the island of Lesbos²⁸. Not to be forgotten is the youth-led crowd-funded movie “On the bride’s side”, rightly defined as “a documentary yet a political act” and worth mentioning even though it concerns the wave of refugees in 2014²⁹.

Universities are also debating the role they have had and should have in Europe’s on-going refugee crisis. Legal Clinics to support refugees are active in Law Faculties in many European countries and involve hundreds of law students across Europe (e.g. in Berlin, Gießen, Hamburg, Kiel, Köln, Rome).

In **Austria**, a big debate is up on how to deal with refugees and asylum seekers in the country, involving political parties, the civil society and residents. As the last presidential election showed, the country is split in two³⁰. Analysts say that young people, together with women, urban voters in Vienna and the well-educated, were crucial to Mr Van der Bellen’s victory. In 2015 the Youth Council (Bundes-Jugend Vertretung – BJV)³¹ published the position paper “Diversity and Solidarity”³², which includes a number of recommendations on the issue of refugees (p. 19). Furthermore, the BJV has established the online campaign “Mehr als nur Flüchtlinge” (Tr: More than just refugees)³³, which seeks to achieve three main goals: to shape a positive environment in the society, which includes young refugees’ voices; to improve young refugees’ life in all areas (education, cultural life, occupation) and to make their wishes visible; and to bring support to young refugees to the centre of youth initiatives. The BJV also coordinates a blog, where all member organisations can present their projects for and with refugees. Lastly, the exploratory study “Mehr

²⁷ Io sto con la sposa. Available at: <http://www.iostoconlasposa.com/en/>, accessed 20 June 2016.

²⁸ Proactive Open Arms. Available at: <https://www.proactivaopenarms.org/>, accessed 20 June 2016.

²⁹

³⁰ Greens’ candidate Alexander Van der Bellen beat far-right candidate Norbert Hofer by just 31,000 votes among the 4.64 million cast.

³¹ Bundes Jugend Vertretung. Available at: <https://www.bjv.at>, accessed 20 June 2016.

³² Position paper “Diversity and Solidarity”. Available at: https://www.bjv.at/cms/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/bjv_position_vielfalt_2015.pdf, accessed 20 June 2016.

³³ Mehr als nur Fluechtlinge. Available at: <https://www.bjv.at/mehralasnurfluechtig/>, accessed 20 June 2016.

als nur Fluechtlinge³⁴ was also carried out, which involved 66 young refugees³⁵, in order to collect information on their life conditions and their expectation for the future.

In **France**, public opinion on the refugee issue is very mixed. Youth organisations in France play a limited part in the question of the reception of refugees. The support mainly comes from NGOs that have long been involved in fields relating to asylum (Cimade, Secours Catholique, Red Cross, Refugee House, Medecins du Monde etc). Individual volunteers (also young people) are highly engaged around the Dunkerque and Calais (called “the Jungle”), where organisations as Medecins du Monde are also present. Associations of students have mobilised to support newcomers. For example, the Association de la Fondation Étudiante pour la Ville (AFEV) has set up the "Welcome network", which consists of more than a thousand young volunteers accompanying newly arrived children and their families in their integration and inclusion paths in France. Besides, students have organised calls for donations. Several universities -such as the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS), the Ecole Normale Supérieure, the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, the University of Strasbourg, University Paris-Ouest-Nanterre-La Défense, and others- have set up programs to facilitate the reception of refugees and give them the opportunity to continue their studies in France.

In Italy, many young people volunteer to support refugees, be it by collecting evidence of their living conditions through video-documentaries, getting engaged in NGOs providing legal aid, health, education or other kinds of support to refugees or launching campaigns to raise awareness on the condition of refugees. There is also a growing number of young lawyers within such NGOs as ASGI (Association for Legal Studies on Immigration) who provide pro bono activities for refugees, design advocacy strategies to foster change in the legislation and to adopt policy measures both at national and local level, as well as liaise with colleagues abroad (especially in Germany) in order to provide cross-border legal support to refugees who are returned under the Dublin Regulation.

The issue of refugees was discussed even by politicians in countries which have not been affected by their arrivals, like Slovakia, where the “refugee crisis” was mainly used for political gains in the pre-election campaign. This also probably contributed to the rise of support for the Slovak extreme right political party in recent parliamentary elections (March 2016), which gained highest sympathy from young people.

³⁴ BJV, 2016. Mehr als nur Fluechtlinge. Available at: <https://www.bjv.at/activities/publikation-mehr-als-nur-fluechtig/>, accessed 20 June 2016.

³⁵ <https://www.bjv.at/activities/publikation-mehr-als-nur-fluechtig/>, accessed 20 June 2016.

Among transit countries, in **the Czech Republic** the atmosphere of intolerance towards refugees is quite high. Although this country received only 884 asylum requests in 2015 (the rest are planning to transit to different countries), a recent opinion poll by the Focus Polling Agency found that 94% of Czechs demand that all refugees should be deported and the borders should be sealed. Despite these data, there are also small groups of pro-refugee activists and students supporting them. For example, in 2015/2016 young volunteers, university students and teachers from Hungary and the Czech Republic shared their experiences and debated the role universities have had and should have in Europe's on-going refugee situation. Dozens of Czech students have signed up to volunteer for the Humanitarian Aid Plan for Refugees³⁶, launched by the Palacký University of Olomuc (Czech Republic). The team of students selected for this project provide public authorities as well as NGOs (including Caritas) with different kinds of services, including social work, psychological counselling, interpreting, legal aid, and teaching the Czech language. Palacký University also offers a new activity for those interested in the life stories of foreigners already living in the Czech Republic who come from the countries refugees are fleeing from.

It seems that social media is a place where young people especially participate in this debate. On social media there are several groups where young people discuss the issue of whether EU Member States should welcome refugees- for example, the *Refugee Hospitality Club* (6781 members), the *Refugees Welcome Finland – Home Accommodation Community* (2930 members) and the *He ovat kävelleet tarpeeksi – They have walked enough* (3289 members) are popular on Facebook and are taking action to support refugees. The *Refugee Hospitality Club* is a forum for all kinds of questions related to the refugee crisis. There are several discussion categories, including projects and initiatives, collections, local groups, general discussions, and news about the situation in reception centres. This forum is mostly used to inform people about what is needed in reception centres and to organise projects and collections. Asylum seekers are also recently part-taking in the discussions of this group. The *He ovat kävelleet tarpeeksi – They have walked enough* is resisting Dublin returns policy and promoting a petition to demand that asylum applications should be processed in Finland. Social media also played an important role when a member of Parliament called multiculturalism “a nightmare” in his Facebook status. After this, 31-year-old journalist and blogger Koko Hubara wrote a blog post titled “*I am a dream*”. Following Hubara's post, 15,000 people gathered to demonstrate against racism on 28 June 2015 (“*We Have A Dream*”). Although these groups and protests are not only for young people, it seems that young people's contribution is significant.

³⁶ Palacký University Presents Humanitarian Aid Plan. Available at: <http://www.upol.cz/nc/en/news/clanek/palacky-university-presents-humanitarian-aid-plan-for-refugees/>, accessed 20 June 2016.

In this debate on refugees, the invisibility of refugees' voices strikes, as underlined by Mohamed Alsaun, a young refugee and activist based in Sweden, during his speech at the Symposium (Un)Equal Europe?³⁷ in June 2016.

5. MAPPING THE PROJECTS ACROSS EUROPE

A number of projects exist in both destination and transit countries, as mentioned by the EKCYP correspondents or seen on the web. In many cases, these projects do not set up a webpage to advertise their initiatives and call for action, but rather use such social networks as Facebook as a vehicle of information. A comprehensive list of all projects, with hyperlinks to their home pages, can be found in the references. An in-depth analysis reveals that the activities covered try to respond to both challenges raised and resources provided by young and adult refugees arriving to Europe. In the following sections the projects are summarised by theme.

5.1. PROJECTS BY REFUGEES FOR REFUGEES

The projects initiated or led by young refugees themselves can be counted on one hand. In **Germany**, “Arriving in Berlin. A map made by refugees” is a mapping project, supported by Haus Leo, Wohnen für Flüchtlinge (Berliner Stadtmission) and Haus der Kulturen der Welt and developed by refugees for refugees³⁸. It supports newcomers with free counselling services for refugees, free German classes, multilingual doctors, and the likes. Germany is not the only country with self-organised initiatives.

In Hungary, a few young refugees are involved in VYRE (Voices of Young Refugees in Europe), a network founded in Budapest in February 2008 in the effort to unify and strengthen the voices of individual young refugees and organisations in Europe. This network is a follow-up of the training seminar “Being a Young Refugee in Europe Today”, organised by the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe, in cooperation with UNHCR, in the framework of the European Campaign “All Different – All Equal”, in Strasbourg in December 2006³⁹.

³⁷ See at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSoJcZx2sxs> (at minute 45), accessed 22 August 2016.

³⁸ Ehrari, Hamidullah, Yari Mohammad, Ramazanali Farhad and Aldeb Alhadi, ongoing. Arriving in Berlin. *A map made by refugees*. <https://arriving-in-berlin.de/>, accessed 20 June 2016.

³⁹ European Youth Portal. Information and opportunities for young people across Europe. *How you can help the refugees*. Available at: https://europa.eu/youth/node/30518_en, accessed 1 June 2016; European Youth Portal. Information and opportunities for young people across Europe. *Amnesty youth & refugees world café*. Available at: https://europa.eu/youth/node/32991_en, accessed 20 June 2016.

In Sweden, the Young Republic was founded on 19 December 2014. This Syrian youth-initiated organisation describes itself as “a Syrian Diaspora youth organisation”, aiming at empowering young Syrians to part-take in the democratic structures and processes of their host communities as well as preparing them to build a new democratic republic in post-war Syria⁴⁰.

5.2. AWARENESS-RAISING PROJECTS

This group of projects includes activities aimed at raising awareness on the current situation of refugees in the world, at creating a critical mass in societies to support refugees, and mobilising public opinion. These projects also include initiatives to tackle anti-refugee and racist resentment in both transit and destination countries. The activities in this area span from docu-videos and cineforums, to living libraries and campaigns.

At the European level, the European Youth Forum (EYF) and ReRoute organised a digital storytelling workshop entitled “Tell me your story”⁴¹ on 19th to 21st April 2015, which brought together members of the EYF’s member organisations to share their stories. The outcomes of the workshop were 2-3 minute visual stories in order to raise awareness of the impact of youth work on young people and the society at large. They were at the European Youth Work Convention held in Brussels in April 2015⁴²

In **the Czech Republic**, which does not have significant numbers of newly arrived refugees, many projects support social tolerance towards refugees, while in France the Independent and Democratic High School Federation (Fédération indépendante lycéenne et démocratique_FIDL) and other non-governmental organisations held a benefit concert for refugees in Paris in September 2015 in order to raise awareness on refugees’ conditions.

The participants at the Symposium on Youth Participation in a Digitalised World, organised by the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe, held in Budapest on 14-16th September 2015, launched the Campaign “It could be me” as a response to the conditions of

⁴⁰ The Young Republic. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/the.young.republic.syria/?fref=ts> (7 September 2016).

⁴¹ European Youth Forum, 2015. Tell me your story: a Digital Storytelling Workshop. Available at: <http://www.youthforum.org/latest-news/tell-me-your-story-a-digital-storytelling-workshop/>, accessed 15 August 2016.

⁴² European Youth Work Convention, 2015. Available at: <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/convention>, accessed 15 August 2016.

Syrian refugees at the Keleti Station trying to reach Austria, Germany and North-European countries⁴³.

5.2.1. PROJECTS ENCOURAGING INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN NEWCOMERS AND HOST COMMUNITIES

In **Finland**, the advocacy network “Change-maker” of the Finn Church Aid consists of youth and young adults engaged in a national campaign, funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture which promotes active citizenship in Finland among young asylum seekers. According to this network, young refugees’ own voice has not been heard enough. Dominant discourses and narratives about refugees are much more widespread than refugees’ own counter-narratives, which the campaign seeks to encourage through videos filmed by young refugees themselves via smartphones. The aim of this campaign is to make their future plans and hopes visible. In fact, refugees’ agency and “capacity to aspire” (Appadurai 2004) is often marginalised by the rhetoric depicting newcomers as ‘lazy’ people who want to exploit the rich Western welfare state. The campaign wants to show that refugees want to start a new life in a peaceful place and they are wanting to work and activate in order to fulfil their aspirations.

In **Italy**, the Conference of Italian University Rectors and the Ministry of the Internal Affairs made 100 scholarships available to support master and Ph.D students granted international protection for the academic year 2016-2017.

Another interesting initiative is the “Cultural Area” of the Migrants Integration Portal, created through cooperation between the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Cultural Activities and Tourism, on the one hand and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies – General Directorate for Immigration and Integration policies on the other hand, directly involves young migrants and refugees in a virtual place focused on their cultural and artistic productions. The portal tries to explain the ways Italian society is changing also through newcomers’ artistic productions. It includes five sections: Visual Art and Cultural Heritage, Literature, Cinema, Theatre, Music. Within each section, it is possible to find a map of the existing experiences in Italy in the respective fields- from publishing houses to film festivals, to multi-ethnic orchestras to databases about each thematic section.

At the level of civic society, there are several youth grassroots initiatives at local level, both at the Northern (French, Swiss and Austrian borders) and Southern borders (Sicily, Puglia and Calabria), involving mostly young people.

⁴³ Campaign “It could be me”, 2015. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/It-could-be-me-1656217901305661/>, accessed 20 June 2016.

In **Malta**, awareness-raising initiatives involve both refugees and NGOs to share their views on refugees' conditions at youth clubs and try to foster refugees' participation in the cultural life of the clubs.

In 2015 the Youth Office in Sjenica, **Serbia**, involved local and refugee youth in performances through which they were informed about the cultural background of refugees from different countries in cooperation with the Centre for Assistance and Protection to Asylum Seekers. In Pozarevac, 40 young people attending different secondary schools participated in two trainings on non-violence, tolerance, diversity and human rights. The local Youth Office in Loznica also organised informal social events involving young refugees so that local young people may get acquainted with the culture and history of the countries they had fled.

5.3. PROJECTS DIRECTLY SUPPORTING REFUGEES

The second group of projects seeks to directly improve refugees' living conditions in transit and destination countries; to offer different kinds of services to refugees and their children; to promote their social integration in host countries. They mostly aim at providing accommodation for newcomers, information about their rights and access to documents, as well as improving refugees' job opportunities.

Many activities happen at the borders between different countries. To these projects belong the Border Crossing Sielfeld, which supports refugees at the Slovenian-Austrian border in Spielfeld/Sentilj⁴⁴; and several voluntary service activities both on the territory of **the Czech Republic** and in the Balkans, especially at the Croatian-Serbian border. The Austrian Cook4refugee⁴⁵ is an initiative of mostly young people who cook meals and deliver them regularly to Austrian asylum camps that are close to the Slovak border.

In **Austria**, the "Train of Hope"⁴⁶ is a politically independent organisation which provides support and helps newly arrived refugees. After being active in a first response centre at Vienna's main station, "Train of Hope" is now a member of several integration projects. The Verein Wiener Jugendzentren is an open youth work centre in Vienna engaged in providing and coordinating supportive actions and projects for and with young refugees, among whom also many unaccompanied minors. OJAD (Offene Jugendarbeit Dornbirn) and Open Youth Work in Dornbirn (Vorarlberg, the westernmost province of Austria, near Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Germany)⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Border Crossing Sielfeld. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/RefugeesSpielfeld/>, accessed 20 June 2016.

⁴⁵ Cook4refugee. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/cook4refugee/>, accessed 20 June 2016.

⁴⁶ Train of Hope. Available at: <http://www.trainofhope.at/>, accessed 20 June 2016.

⁴⁷ OJAD (Offene Jugendarbeit Dornbirn). Available at: <http://www.ojad.at/angebot/flucht/>, accessed 20 June 2016.

launched the project “Welcome.Zu.Flucht”, in order to involve newly arrived refugees in intercultural activities.

The 2014 **German** youth-initiated network Refugees Welcome– Home Accommodation Community⁴⁸ has developed in 10 destination and transit countries so far (Austria, Canada, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands) with the aim to help asylum seekers find accommodation in private homes (individuals’ or family ones) during the decision process of their asylum status. A similar project has also developed independently in **Finland**⁴⁹, where recent refugee inflows were marked by a significant increase of civic engagement. People living in Finland have mobilised both through social media and in real life to help asylum seekers, by organising collections, welcome dinners and different activities in reception centres. DIAK (Diaconia University of Applied Sciences) and Yhteismaa, a non-profit organisation, planned a dinner where students of DIAK⁵⁰, asylum seekers and other volunteers were cooking together and invited people of the neighbourhood to join. In Helsinki it is estimated that 25% of young people with an immigrant background do not have a job or a study place. The Youth Department of the City of Helsinki and the We Foundation have launched “Helsinki – A Better Place For Young Immigrants”, which has the purpose to strengthen the self-esteem and sense of identity of young people. This project is focused on social relationships (friendships and family ties), improving language skills, providing free housing, material help (food, clothing), legal support, language assistance, and educational activities for children and young refugees. Young people have their own planning team, which consists of 10 members between 16 and 20 years old and with different cultural backgrounds. Within this project, young people organised the demonstration *We Have A Dream* in 2016.

In **France**, the NGOs members of Federation Léo Lagrange have a commitment to host refugees and: to provide the state with accommodation capacities, logistical support and human resources; to organise activities with children and participate in family support in the first stage of social adaptation; and to raise awareness against racism and resentment towards refugees and asylum seekers.

Many NGOs have recently welcomed civic services by the Government for helping refugees: Adoma, OFII (French Office for Immigration and Integration), OFPRA, APHP (Assistance publique hôpitaux de Paris), Ordre de Malte, la Cimade, le Samu Social de Paris, l’Association

⁴⁸ Refugees Welcome– Home Accommodation Community. Available at: <http://www.refugees-welcome.net/>, accessed 20 June 2016.

⁴⁹ Refugee Welcome Finland. Available at: <http://refugees-welcome.fi/>, accessed 20 June 2016.

⁵⁰ DIAK Diaconia University of Applied Sciences. Available at: <http://www.diak.fi/en/Pages/default.aspx>, accessed 20 June 2016.

Bibliothèques Sans Frontières, France Horizon. Young volunteers can also offer cultural and sports activities, contributing to the physical and mental welfare of the refugees. Young people have already carried out many projects, among which, for example, the association SINGA has set up the CALM application, an online platform to connect hosts and refugees. The length of the stay may vary from several days to several months. The CALM application promises to also develop a hotline available 24/7. The participatory aspect of this platform is key; an internet platform⁵¹ was created by two young activists, listing some of the local initiatives for migrants, but also volunteer missions (the "Voluntary Reserve"), accommodation proposals. The platform also serves to raise awareness about refugees.

In **Germany**, most of the projects and initiatives for young refugees arise from the local population or from public authorities that are responsible for youth. The Federal programme "Welcome among friends" supports local communities in their efforts to integrate refugee children and youth⁵².

The Action programme "Refugees becoming friends" (Aktionsprogramm "Flüchtlinge werden Freunde") concerns youth work and youth policy in Bayern and targets both accompanied and unaccompanied minors.⁵³

Among other projects, the Junges Schauspiel Frankfurt Babel has tried to include young refugees through theatre performances⁵⁴ since July 2015. Furthermore, the project Jmd2start (Begleitung für junge Flüchtlinge im Migrationsdienst)⁵⁵ assists young refugees (12 to 27 years old) in the Youth Migration Services. The project, which is financed by the Federal Ministry of Youth, will last initially until the end of 2017.

More generally, in December 2015 the Federal Government announced it would create 10,000 new places in the federal voluntary service besides the already existing 35,000. These new 10,000 have to be created in the surroundings of refugees and are meant to support their integration. It has also become possible that asylum seekers start a federal voluntary service. Since December 2015, 900 people have already been contracted, of whom 1/6 refugees⁵⁶.

⁵¹ See at: <http://aiderlesrefugies.fr/>, accessed 30 May 2016.

⁵² More info: Bündnisse für junge Flüchtlinge. Willkommen bei Freunden. Available at: www.willkommen-bei-freunden.de, accessed 20 June 2016.

⁵³ Bayer Jugendring (BJR). Flüchtlinge werden Freunde Available at: <http://www.fluechtlinge-werden-freunde.de/ueber-diese-seite/>, accessed 20 June 2016.

⁵⁴ Junges Schauspiel Frankfurt Babel. Projekt mit Jugendlichen Geflüchteten und dem Jugendclub . Available at: <https://www.schauspielfrankfurt.de/spielplan/frankfurt-babel/923/>, accessed 20 June 2016.

⁵⁵ Jugendmigrationsdienst Kassel. Modellprojekt *jmd2start – Begleitung für junge Flüchtlinge im Jugendmigrationsdienst*. Available at: <http://www.jmd-portal.de/output.php?id=158894&tid=158894&jmdID=408>, accessed 30 June 2016.

⁵⁶ More information: Asylbewerber und Flüchtlinge im Bundesfreiwilligendienst (BFD). Bundesfreiwilligendienst mit Flüchtlingsbezug. Available at: <http://www.bundes-freiwilligendienst.de/fluechtlinge.html>, accessed 20 May 2016. For current information about young refugees in Germany please check "Fachkräfteportal" (in German): <https://www.jugendhilfeportal.de/fokus/junge-fluechtlinge/>, accessed 30 May 2016.

In **Malta**, the engagement of young people in refugee-related topics and especially with young refugees started a few years ago already⁵⁷. In most recent years, OFD (Organisation for Friendship in Diversity) and Integra have included a specific youth focus. SPARK15 is a project supported by OFD, involving young people aged 15 to 24. Integra Foundation runs a drop-in service that provides a safe space for asylum seekers and refugees, offering access to the internet and English lessons. Furthermore, in 2015, Integra Foundation and UNHCR published a report on Age, Gender & Diversity, called “My Diversity”. The methodology adopted for the research was Participatory Action Research and included a focus on young people⁵⁸. The research engaged young people and implemented a short pilot project focusing on football as a vehicle for non-formal education.

Although **Portugal** is not impacted by the recent refugees’ inflows, the youth-led association Associação MEDesTU, member of Service Civil International (SCI) and already part of the National Platform for Refugee Support⁵⁹, has been developing a camp for refugees to both support and welcome of refugees in the northern region of Portugal.

In **Serbia**, a few local initiatives are worth mentioning. For instance, the Local Youth Offices of Bujanovac and Presevo have been promoting activities on a daily basis, aiming to provide assistance to migrants in two main areas: communication and medical care. More than 100 young volunteers have already taken part in these initiatives. On 25 June 2015 a project on the border between FYROM and the Republic of Serbia was also started by YouthForRefugees, intending to offer refugees such services as information, food and clothes.

In **Slovakia**, refugee-focused initiatives and measures are mainly left upon NGOs, which provide them with so called “integration services”, such as language support, job seeking, assistance with housing and health care. None of these activities are specifically youth targeted.

It is worth mentioning the voluntary initiative called “Who Can Help?”, undertaken by the Christian organisation Ladislav Hanus Society, which called for people to voluntarily help refugees in different areas (language support, housing, job seeking, including them in local community life / buddy system etc.). About 2000 individuals and families volunteered. The main initiators are young people between 25 - 35 years old and many of the current volunteers are also young people.

⁵⁷ In 2012-2013, the NGO ‘SOS Malta’, in partnership with the National Agency of Malta, ran the project ‘Youth Upbeat’, which was co-financed through the European Refugee Fund. This aimed to foster cross-sectorial cooperation across the Maltese society, with regard to young people, refugees or persons with subsidiary protection, by providing opportunities for interaction and awareness-raising through the use of culture and performing arts. See more at: <http://www.sosmalta.org/youthupbeat>, accessed 20 June 2016.

⁵⁸ Integra Foundation and UNHCR, 2015. *My Diversity: Age, Gender and Diversity Perspectives in the Maltese Refugee Context*. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/mt/news-and-views/press-releases/823-my-diversity>, accessed 20 June 2016.

⁵⁹ National Platform for Refugee Support. Available at: <http://www.refugiados.pt/sobre/>, accessed 30 June 2016.

However, it is not easy to reach out to refugees, above all due to their isolation at the beginning of their life in the country.

Also, many young people across Europe are involved in so-called “techfugee” events: these are intended to bring together tech engineers, entrepreneurs, start-ups, and NGOs, to address the refugee situation and discuss how technology can contribute to ameliorate their conditions⁶⁰.

⁶⁰ Techfugees. Available at: <https://techfugees.com/about/>, accessed 20 June 2016.

CONCLUSION

The knowledge produced by this paper is limited due to a relatively small number of the completed EKCYP questionnaires and to the fact that many initiatives are not easily accessible either because they are not widely advertised or because their description is not available in English. Nonetheless, the analysis of the data shows some trends towards the engagement of young people and attitudes toward the refugees. Many National Agencies within the EU have also started to directly tackle the issue of young refugees in their training courses. Although it is difficult to grasp the precise state of the debate and involvement of young people in initiatives related to refugees, in many European countries part of the civil society has mobilised to support refugees in transit and destination countries. The review of the projects from different countries shows that, with some exceptions, refugees are rarely partners in the initiatives.

Data available gives evidence that only few of them have specifically youth-tailored measures for supporting refugees, while most of them target refugees in general. The insights from this paper point to the need to improve long-term policies and projects supporting refugees in almost all spheres of life, including to liaise with local people and develop social capital. The data available also shows that refugee voices are missing and they are often involved as ‘token characters’ without the possibility to truly participate in the debates. Lastly, there is the need to look at the richness and diversity (in terms of trajectories, identities, biographies and human capital) within the “refugee group”, which are often perceived from outside as monolithic.

It would be interesting to carry out a broader study to map policies and projects across Europe not only for good practice and expertise sharing, but also to draft evidence-based recommendations to European and national institutions about consistent and adequate measures to finally take refugees’ situations seriously in Europe.

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