



# VAI

## VOLUNTEERING AMONG IMMIGRANTS

# Policy Recommendations

## Deliverable D3.5



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### Introduction

This document collects the policy recommendations addressed by all partner organizations involved in the VAI - Volunteering Among Immigrants project and derived from the different activities implemented in the four counties of reference – Greece, Italy, Austria and Germany – with the University of Calabria in the role of editor. The recommendations concern different areas – those of migration and asylum, social inclusion, non-profit sector, participation, cooperation and volunteering – and different levels – those of national and EU policies, local administration, civil society and volunteering organizations or collectives, and the individual level too.

The recommendations reflect the different institutional and political framework, the migration dynamics and the social participation of migrants, at both national and local level. VAI partner organizations formulated their recommendations on the basis of their background and experience, but chiefly their specific role and activities within the project. In the framework of the VAI project, they sourced information and analysis from the country studies, the capacity building activities and the pilot actions developed.

More specifically, the country studies (national action researches) examined the social, political and historical frameworks of migrations and volunteering, identified key issues regarding volunteerism and volunteer management in the four countries, and analysed the different motives and contexts in which volunteers help refugees and migrants with arrival, integration and engagement with the receiving society in each participant country. A comparative report drew the state of the art as deriving from the national reports and drafted a set of practical implications and recommendations resulting from the research.

In addition, the capacity building activities offered a unique opportunity to develop a set of tools addressed to both existing or prospective (migrant) volunteers as well as voluntary organisations and NGOs. These tools are: an Orientation Manual for Volunteers, a Guide for Immigrants Volunteers, a Guide for Training Immigrants-Volunteers, and a Toolkit for Training immigrants in Voluntary work. By presenting too and discussing them with target groups, and refining them by incorporating feedback, these tools were partly co-produced to help migrants construct themselves not only as beneficiaries but also as volunteers, to help NGOs and other organisations to involve immigrants in their volunteers' corps, and in general to enhance participation in voluntary groups.

Finally, based on the above, a good deal of the project's activities centered on establishing volunteering opportunities by encouraging good practice in the field of

volunteering for/with/by migrants and by supporting immigrants' voluntary participation. Each participant organisation worked towards building a network of relevant stakeholders, an action plan was developed for involving migrants on volunteering opportunities at the local level, both leading to a series of pilot actions. The pilot actions – consisting in public events, round tables and workshops, a radio show, a film project, training activities for volunteers and volunteer trainers, and the direct involvement of migrant volunteers – helped to identify evidence-based and/or innovative actions for involving immigrants as volunteers, for addressing migrants' needs or for promoting cooperation and inclusion within the local community.

The VAI closing conference organized by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the Municipality of Piraeus in Athens in December 2019 offered the space for direct confrontation and exchange among partners and local actors, especially about the pilot actions implemented in the four counties, but also to know more about the role of civil society, volunteering among refugees and migrants, and other AMIF projects in Greece.

The outputs and findings of the VAI project can have a beneficial impact on the whole society, the economy, local communities, civil society organisations and individual lives, especially for migrants and refugees. An articulated further dissemination plan will serve the exploitation of all results. The policy recommendations hereby presented, specifically, aim to support people in positions of influence to enact real change in policy and society by taking in consideration the richness and innovativeness of the activities, tools, outcomes and results of the VAI project. Policy makers, civil society and volunteering organizations, but also social collectives and individuals are all concerned by these recommendations.

This document is organized in four country-based sections (Greece, Italy, Austria, Germany), grouping the recommendations by partner organizations at the national level. The Conclusions summarize the main recommendations addressing specific issues and target groups and identify possible tools and strategies.

### A. Greece

A first set of policy recommendations at different levels and areas have derived from the VAI study in Greece. At a broad “high politics” level, national and EU policies need to be more realistic in facing the realities of contemporary mixed-migration, as well as inclusive with respect to international refugee law and human rights. At the same time, respective funding frameworks should also be both more realistic in terms of actual needs funding intends to respond to, and flexible enough to allow changes in the allocation of funds according to changing needs and shifting situations on the ground (e.g. when there is a time lag between funding application and provision of money), while at the same time open and transparent.

In the Greek context, the legal framework for the NGO and non-profit sector is practically non-existent and must be clarified. Additionally, coordination between national and local governments, as well as state and non-state actors, rather than mutual suspicion and hostility, is important and state policies need to recognize and take stock of the diversity of civil society actors involved in the field, enabling rather than hindering their work.

Coordination is particularly essential at the local level and local authorities can play an important role in that, liaising with state services, formal and independent organisations as well as local social movements. Registering systematically the needs, but also skills and work experience of newly arriving migrants may be beneficial for integration and could be done in collaboration between local authorities and civil society organisations. Monitoring and evaluation of specific policies, projects and actions is crucial, instead of simply “advertising” activities for electoral clienteles. Consultation and opportunities for participation of both Third Country nationals and local communities can open up ways for mutual encounter through actual involvement. More than anywhere else, it is at the local level where the need for information and awareness-raising campaigns becomes more important.

Another set of “policies” related to migrants’ volunteering concerns voluntary organisations themselves, and civil society organisations more broadly. Coordination and collaboration is essential among different types of organisations – e.g. small independent or informal ones as well as large formal organisations – despite their differences, in order not to duplicate activities and be able to respond to needs on the ground complementarily. Organisations need to value the work of volunteers, recognize the differences among them as well as their needs, empower them and give them a voice at least regarding their specific domains of activity. This includes to seriously consider providing cultural awareness and diversity training, as well as the specificities regarding specific groups of beneficiaries (e.g. women, minors, refugees, etc), not only to

volunteers but also to employees and professionals. Under specific circumstances, large organisations may need to be more flexible in allowing both employees and volunteers to approach “beneficiaries” and establish relations of mutual trust. Serious consideration should be also given to non-victimising “beneficiaries” and thus to avoid contributing to their passivity and welfare dependence, but to hear their views, involve and empower them.

Volunteers need to be culturally and socially aware as well as open to difference (e.g. with respect to different cultural codes of practice among men/women, young/old), and approach respectfully specific groups of “beneficiaries” such as refugees and asylum seekers). At the same time, however, they should pay respect for people in local communities who may have different perspectives on their activities and the groups of beneficiaries they support. On an individual level, volunteers should be able to recognise their personal limits in order to avoid “burn-out”. All this applies equally to migrant volunteers, yet these latter may have some specificities, despite their diversity, including for example their need for language fluency; the challenge of mobilising people in their communities while avoiding to be ‘used’ as ‘intermediaries’ in the sense of making favours and developing patronage and/or clientalist relations; the importance of keeping in mind their sometimes double capacity as volunteers and beneficiaries at the same time – i.e. paying also attention to their own personal, family and social needs.

A number of more specific policy recommendations derive from the different types of pilot actions implemented by different project partners in Greece, as described below.

### 1. Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

#### 1. Recommendations towards an institutional-legal framework for volunteering

There is a need to build a stable frame of reference, for the activation and central coordination of volunteers and voluntary actions of civil society, to address inadequate information and fragmented local action. Therefore, there is a need for a **national intervention framework** for a more comprehensive and integrated response to common problems of voluntary activity. Similar attempts were made by Ministries to organize voluntary work since the 1990s, which were however never concluded.

- **Creating Immigrant and Refugee Volunteer Registries** is needed in order to have a potential recording system of their individual skills and matching them with the respective needs in the fields of intervention and volunteering.
- Institutional arrangements – such as that of **Law 4547 (12/6/2018) article 78 (5) (Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs)** which made voluntary experience a prerequisite for the post of Refugee Education Coordinator – are cases of institutional and legal recognition of voluntary action for recruitment purposes in the public sector. Gradually, the systematic exploitation of the voluntary work of migrants and refugees and the relevant institutional provision can contribute to the creation of specialized job opportunities for them and consequently for the labor market and social inclusion of wider migrant and refugee groups.
- In this effort, there is also a need to address the lack of material / organizational infrastructure and resources needed to carry out volunteer work, in particular, **the provision of basic health and education infrastructures for volunteer work** through their respective public provision systems rather than through occasional and fragmented voluntary interventions.

#### 2. Specific recommendations for regulating a clear distinction between voluntary participation and dependent employment

It is necessary to **develop a legislative framework on volunteering**, by clarifying the terms of voluntary offer to bodies such as associations, clubs, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations in general. The institutional framework should emerge from the assessment of key parameters of identifying voluntary work and distinguishing it from forms of dependent, undeclared or unpaid work.

- In particular, the nature of voluntary work offered should verify the general definition of the concept of volunteering as a **conscious, selfless human activity with the aim of social solidarity and shared benefits.**



- The specific terms of volunteering should be explored, such as the distinction between voluntary work and the types of work used for basic, enduring and permanent activities of the organization to which voluntary work is provided. In this, it is crucial to identify additional criteria that can assess whether a certain activity can be described as voluntary work, such as the way **a particular form of work is usually provided, in the context of the productive activity of the organization** (if, for example, this particular form of work is usually provided by salaried dependent work contracts). Moreover, the voluntary work provided needs to be distinguished **from the standard operating procedures, the existing standard logistics infrastructure, the facilities and opening hours**, where the salaried dependent work is integrated.
- **Assessment of the subjective criteria and incentives of the voluntary offer on the volunteer's side** is necessary, such as in cases of volunteering to gain work experience, due to lack of relevant work experience.
- Also necessary is a more specific evaluation of the terms of volunteering by members of the social groups that voluntary organisations serve as their usual activity (the “beneficiaries”), such as **immigrants, refugees** or **vulnerable social groups** in general.
- The formulation of a solid institutional framework should also be concerned with the value of the work offered in relation to the livelihood of the person offering it **(e.g. community / social work offered by a social worker on a voluntary basis, which is the main subject of his/her employment and livelihood, in the formal institutional framework that defines a dependent employment relationship).**

### 3. General recommendations to civil society organisations and international voluntary organisations

There is a **need for clarification of the position and role of organizations** in the wider area of civil society, and parallel assessment of the position and role of volunteering within the framework of their operation.

- This also includes, inter alia, the **need to clearly define the role of voluntary work and of volunteers** in the fields of activity of civil society organizations. The necessity of these clarifications is influenced by the evolution of many civil society organizations and by the gradual change of their role, from voluntary organizations to organizations with a growing workforce, due to the undertaking of large part of direct functions in providing social services in key areas of social policy, through funding projects the design and evaluation of which has been maintained by the State. These developments, related to the withdrawal of the welfare state from the field of social care, seem to have led to successive qualitative changes in the way

civil society organisations operate and in the planning of their work. This resulted in shifting organizational characteristics and significance of volunteering, increasing its technical skills' requirements and professionalism, which has led to confusion of its nature and role.

- In this context, there is a long process of evolution and reconstruction of the so-called third sector, directed towards its organic participation in the functioning of the state and the market. Voluntary organizations become competitive actors in this process, adopting practices that contrast the traditional values that inspired the functioning of non-governmental organizations, including volunteering.
- On this basis, there is a **need for organizations to set up a distinct field for voluntary action**, with consequent shielding of its social and solidarity character against labor exploitation practices.
- **Consultation among civil society organizations and actors**, in particular issues of collective protection and practical confirmation of the value of volunteering, could help the above objective.
- **Coordination of International Voluntary Organizations with Greek organizations** operating in the field of direct intervention (in places of first-entry), with the aim of developing a common methodology for achieving the objectives of addressing the issue of the initial reception of migrants / refugees. International Organizations are found to be particularly active in first-entry places in eastern Aegean islands (e.g. Lesbos), with collective volunteering projects such as Day Care Centers (kitchen, health), educational and intercultural projects (including language courses), but also ecological projects for the benefit of immigrant groups with the active participation of volunteers from these groups. There seems to be a lack of cooperation and coordination of these teams with local voluntary organizations operating in the field, so the potential benefits are very limited and fragmented. For example, the need to teach Greek to immigrants / refugees with second language teaching methodologies is essential and can be offered through the cooperation of International Organizations with existing Greek organizations.

#### **4. Recommendations to civil society actors regarding the volunteering of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers**

With respect to volunteering of refugees and migrants, civil society actors should ensure that **the values of volunteering are adapted to the needs of immigrants and refugees**, as identified through the implementation of specific interventions.

- Civil society actors should work to **enhance the resources and training** that volunteers will need to contribute according to their capabilities (**education, language, work experience**).
- They should make **efforts to activate collective resources and collective community capital of voluntary contribution**, giving community support to the individual endeavours of immigrants / refugee volunteers and **preventing them from being alienated from communities**.
- **They should protect refugees-volunteers from being used as "intermediaries"**, which could lead to an internal tension between their dual position as beneficiaries and as volunteers in supporting the work of the organization.
- Similarly, civil society actors should **ensure that the voluntary actions of immigrants serve the interests of migrant communities** and improve their social living conditions, far from managerial practices and goals that are alien to those communities. In particular, they should **ensure that the voluntary offer of refugees and immigrants contributes to their own benefit**, in order to facilitate their social integration in the host country.
- Experience of working in the field of social integration of immigrants / refugees highlights the need for actors to develop an **educational framework for volunteering** that combines both the recognition and exploitation of migrant / refugee volunteers as providers of community life experiences.
- The recognition and exploitation of the social and educational capital held by refugee and migrant volunteers is important, as it is observed that this is not recognized and exploited because of their current socio-economic situation.

### 5. The VAI project and potential synergies between Academia and Civil Society

The above findings are also a starting point for reflecting on the **need to explore possible synergies** in this area. In particular, the possibility for organizations to collaborate with the University, for example in studying the specific issues concerned. A team of AUTH experts already working with the University's Volunteering Committee to coordinate actions for the benefit of immigrants / refugees may be able to provide answers on the legal framework of volunteering in Greece and in particular in relation to the Legislative Framework under consideration since 2014. In this respect, it is possible to assess the rich international experience in volunteering, study and come up with proposals in relation to the framework under consultation and in cooperation with all organizations concerned.

## 2. Hellenic Red Cross

Hellenic Red Cross (HRC) is a traditional volunteering organization. Its long-term experience on volunteering and also on migration was the reason for the participation of the organization in the VAI Project, which also explores the dimension of migrants' inclusion via volunteering. HRC is a member of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). For the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, **volunteering began at the conception of the organization**, in 1859, when the organization's founder, Henry Dunant, rallied local villagers to attend to the wounded on the battlefield of Solferino. The volunteers did what they could to help the wounded soldiers, regardless of which side they were fighting for. This event is often referred to as the **birth of modern humanitarianism**. More than 160 years later, **voluntary service remains at the core** of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and **it is one of the seven Fundamental Principles**, officially adopted by the organization in 1965. Today, up to 14 million local volunteers are engaged in Red Cross or Red Crescent National Societies in 192 countries.

### 1. Recommendation for the development of volunteering in voluntary organizations

Volunteerism, as "central" to the Movement, is often described as the "backbone" of the Movement. The IFRC's Strategy 2020 identifies **volunteering** as being "**at the heart of community building**" and that it "**contributes to sustainable human development**". The **definition of a volunteer** in the Movement is articulated in the IFRC Volunteer Policy (2011): "A Red Cross Red Crescent volunteer **is a person who carries out volunteering activities** with a National Society, **occasionally or regularly**. It is carried out by people motivated **by free will**, and not by a desire for material or financial gain, or by external social, economic or political pressure." This definition applies to all the potential volunteers, regardless nationality, religion, social or economic status.

In our perspective, the organizations which would like to involve volunteers in their corps should adopt a **clear definition** as the above mentioned, in order to avoid misunderstandings on the role of volunteers and the nature of volunteering within the organization.

Volunteers operate in a range of diverse and complex circumstances in a fast-changing world where social, demographic, economic, and environmental trends as well as technological advancements are altering the shape and functioning of communities and how people volunteer.

In any voluntary organization it is recommended that the **volunteers need to be genuine partners in the efforts with an equal voice**, and as **drivers of change for vulnerable people** rather than dispensers of services. If volunteerism is to continue to be a powerful development force, it needs resourcing, research and a strong policy framework in order to continue to grow and to drive change in communities around the world. Voluntarism gives **people the chance to have a voice and active role** in the development processes.

In an environment which rapidly changes and the communities host so many diverse parties, the necessity to **localize resources, expertise and authority** is obvious. This is a welcome focus, and one in which community (migrant) volunteers will play a critical role. Volunteerism, if appropriately supported, can ensure that **development agendas are owned at the local level, and are developed appropriately in line with cultural and social contexts**.

Volunteers not only assist in crisis, but they help **strengthen community resilience, develop social cohesion, engage in civic processes and advocate** fiercely on behalf of **vulnerable people**.

**Volunteering** plays a **critical role during emergencies**, especially in **migration crisis**, as well as contributing to the **development of long-term, sustainable solutions** to some of the world's most intractable social and economic challenges. It is an increasingly significant feature of social and development policies as governments, civil society, local communities and individual people look for ways to improve education, health and reduce poverty.

But **volunteering is neither a panacea nor a simple proposition**. The contributions that volunteering makes needs to be situated in the context of complex and interdependent social, political, economic and cultural forces that are going through dramatic changes and are constantly reshaping who volunteers, why they volunteer, how they are able to engage and what they are able to accomplish.

## **2. Recommendation on volunteering as an integration component**

Today, more people are on the move than at any other time in history, according to organizations that track migration patterns. Around the world, meanwhile, millions of people have recently settled into new homes and communities, creating **new challenges and opportunities for those who propose voluntary service as a means to improve life and reduce suffering**.

It is worth noticing also, that migration is a global phenomenon impacting volunteering. Most could readily identify **the challenges as well as benefits and opportunities** presented by migration. In VAI research one could identify the **social- and human-**



**capital benefits** that come from volunteering as **playing a role in the inclusion of immigrant communities**.

Volunteering can be viewed as a **strategy** from the voluntary organizations that could be used to **help build cohesion and social inclusion**, by providing an avenue for **newly arrived groups to participate in society, develop new connections and encourage a sense of belonging**.

For some organizations, patterns of international migration have meant that large numbers of people are moving away to seek **employment or educational opportunities**. This too creates challenges for **volunteer engagement**.

In addition to striving for a national reach, the organizations also aim to ensure that they have **appropriate representation from all community components**. In this spirit, the IFRC Volunteering Policy (2011) advises that “National Societies recognize the value of a diverse volunteer workforce, and actively recruit volunteers, irrespective of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, disability or age.” It goes on to say that **voluntary organizations should “remove physical, economic, social and cultural barriers to participation, and recruit volunteers based on their potential.”**

### **3. Recommendations on a volunteer management system for diverse volunteer groups**

The Voluntary Organization must:

- Designs voluntary actions in favor of the **needs of migrant communities**;
- Recognize the **value of a diverse volunteer workforce**, and actively recruit volunteers, irrespective of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, disability or age;
- Define **rules and procedures** that ensure quality in delivered services and protection of the stakeholders (volunteers, beneficiaries & organization);
- Sets out the **rights and responsibilities of both** the organization and its volunteers;
- Provide volunteers with **guidance at work, training and development opportunities**;
- Adopt practices to **supervise, support and encourage volunteers**;
- Provide **systematic information**, through meetings, printed material (manuals), etc., for the policy of the organization;
- Distribute volunteer work **according to the capacities and skills** of each volunteer, without discriminating;

- Define the **limits of cooperation** between paid staff and volunteers;
- When there is the need or opportunity for a volunteer to carry out **paid work as casual or contracted labour** with the organization, the organization recognizes this **change in status** and ensures that the employment complies with the relevant laws of the country
- **Encourage volunteers to participate in its decision-making and membership;**
- **Work with governments, the corporate sector and other partners to promote an enabling and inclusive environment for volunteering in national life.**

#### 4. Recommendations on protecting and supporting volunteers

The organizations should **establish well-functioning management systems and practices to supervise, support and encourage volunteers.** These are adapted to the specific context of their work and responsive to new trends in volunteering that may go beyond the established structures of the organization and corporate other institutional forms of volunteering, including new target groups as migrants in voluntary action, or for example, informal, on-line.

Voluntary organizations ensure that their volunteers are properly prepared to carry out their work, through providing them with **relevant and timely information, training and equipment, feedback on their performance,** as well as appropriately **assessed safety and security measures.** They insure their volunteers against accidents, and provide them with appropriate **psychosocial support** when required.

In certain circumstances, **volunteers may themselves be vulnerable** and the organizations must **ensure that their needs for assistance and protection are given due attention.** The organizations provide volunteers with **access to accredited learning and personal development opportunities,** so as to help them to better undertake their agreed tasks or roles, as well as to motivate them to grow their skills and capacity and undertake future roles within the organization.

#### 5. Recommendations on the promotion of an enabling environment for all volunteers

**Public authorities** must work with volunteer-based organizations to protect, promote and recognize volunteers, especially in emergencies.

- **Understand the economic and social value volunteers bring to communities**
  - Develop credible data to encourage new policies for volunteers.
  - Invest time and resources into volunteer development at all levels.
- **Promote volunteering and recognize volunteers**

- Create incentives for volunteers and encourage employers to take volunteer experience into consideration.
- Support volunteer organizations in recruitment.
- **Strengthen the legal protection of volunteers**
  - Review existing laws and address gaps in legislation.
  - Ensure that volunteers' rights and responsibilities are clear.
  - Implement existing laws.
- **Improve the conditions of volunteers acting in emergencies**
  - Volunteers make it possible for humanitarian aid to reach the most vulnerable and they must be protected. Authorities must emphasize this message during peacetime and in conflict.
- **Integrate volunteer capacity into domestic emergency response plans** ○
  - Recognize the role volunteers play in extending the reach of government.
  - Improve disaster planning between government and humanitarian actors.
  - Make sure that volunteers are insured while responding to disasters.
- **Include psychosocial support for volunteers in all response management plans**
  - Consider volunteers' psychosocial needs when they face traumatic situations, especially if they belong to the migrant population.
  - Offer psychosocial support before, during and after disaster response.

Finally, it is quite essential to recognize the significance of **VAI projects manuals** which were produced during the implementation period, as **valuable tools** which should be **promoted to a wider audience and network**. The voluntary organizations could make a great use of the material so that they **understand, support and mobilize volunteering in varied settings with diverse communities in success, targeting the social inclusion and integration of migrant volunteers in the host community**.



### 3. Four Elements

#### 1. Recommendations to organizations for the orientation of immigrants towards volunteering

The following proposals summarize the results of the research carried out for the development of a comprehensive Orientation Manual for Volunteering, that addresses organizations that already provide volunteering opportunities or are planning to do so, focusing on recruiting, managing and training immigrants as volunteers. The research included not only bibliographical review and best practices analysis, but also the implementation of Focus Group meetings in partner countries, thus ensuring the involvement of all target groups of the Project.

- Organizations should be able to **identify their own needs** in order to involve immigrants in their volunteering activities. The most common assumption of organizations is that immigrants who wish to volunteer should be the ones who have to adjust their needs and ways of working. The work carried out in the framework of the Project proved that this is not the case under any circumstances. In order to bare the benefits of having a diverse group of volunteers, organizations should be able to adapt too: among others, **continuous training** of their staff should be considered a priority; recruiting **staff specialized** in training and managing vulnerable groups can be a valuable asset; introducing new methods of recruiting, training, managing and assessing volunteers can significantly improve a volunteering programme.
- Building **cultural awareness** will benefit not only the individuals involved (both volunteers and staff), but also the organization itself. The dynamics of a **diverse group of people** are unique in terms of complementarity, which is a key factor for efficiency. Cultivating an inclusive working environment ensures that all voices are heard and the best solution is adopted. Taking into consideration that supervisors or managers distribute the relevant tasks according to each individual's experience and interest, either staff or volunteer, the organization can acquire a functional structure which ensures that an individual's shortcoming can be covered by another's strength.

### 2. Recommendations to trainers for the appropriate training of diverse groups of volunteers, focusing on immigrants

The following recommendations sum up the research results collected during the preparation of the Guide for Training Immigrants-Volunteers and the Toolkit for Training Migrant Volunteers, as well as the relevant Focus Groups organized in partner countries.

- The **continuous update of trainers' skills and methods** should be viewed as an integral part of their personal and professional development. Nowadays, providing substantial training is quite a challenging and demanding task, since circumstances rapidly change at various levels. Being able to follow these changes, for example in target groups, methodologies, and tools, is crucial for achieving the actual objectives of training. In the specific context of training immigrants volunteers, strategies to be followed include the creation of a welcoming and respectful learning environment, the provision of support and guidance, the utilization of training methods that consider diverse preferences, abilities, prior knowledge, etc.
- The importance of **assessment** should not be underestimated. Assessment comes in different types: assessment of trainees, for example with a simple quiz or exercise, self-assessment of trainees and trainers, through questionnaires, assessment of trainers by trainees, also through a set of questions. In order to sustain, and most importantly improve the training programme, it is of significant importance to undertake an organized and structured assessment process that involves both parties of the training (trainers and trainees). In many cases, it is, also, very important to explain to trainees the process and its objectives beforehand, so that everyone can understand and embrace their role within this context.

### B. Italy

The possibilities and forms of participation and volunteering of migrants and refugees in Italy are shaped by their administrative status, their conditions of inclusion, well-being and stability. An irregular or precarious condition and the related deprivation, stress and social and economic vulnerability can evidently influence the position of migrants and refugees in society and their relational possibilities with respect to local communities. On the other hand, immigration policies as well as the public rhetoric by the media and political parties can influence the attitudes and sentiments of collectivity towards migrants and refugees. For these reasons, the construction of a more coherent policy framework to promote regular migrations, safeguard asylum seekers and refugees, and foster integration, is an important premise to the expansion of solidarity and cooperation relationships involving migrants and refugees, the contrast of discrimination, racism, xenophobia and marginalization dynamics.

When not adequately protected by national or European institutions, human rights are protected by private subjects. Volunteering and humanitarian action has had an important role in this sense. In times of radicalization and polarizations of attitudes towards migrations, humanitarian and solidarity actions have assumed a strong politicization. In Italy, the social attitude towards migrations has been largely influenced by public debates and political parties' rhetoric, especially in the 2015-2020 period. National policies have undermined the protection and inclusion of migrants and asylum seekers and have contributed to the "criminalization" of solidarity and migration. For example, in the summer of 2017, Save And Rescue (SAR) NGOs in the Mediterranean were forced to sign a code of conduct forfeiting the neutrality and independence at the heart of their ventures, which requires SAR NGOs to allow police to board rescue boats and makes them answerable to the Libyan as well as the Italian coastguards. In Summer 2018, the Interior Minister Matteo Salvini ordered the closure of Italian ports to NGO vessels transporting refugees and objected to their SAR operations in the Mediterranean.

The situation of vulnerability of asylum seekers – already affected by the law n. 46 of 2017 (named "Minniti-Orlando") "for the acceleration of proceedings regarding international protection, as well as for the fight against illegal immigration" – has been significantly exacerbated by the provisions of the Law-Decree on immigration and security ("Decreto Salvini") adopted in October 2018. This Decree abolished residence permits for humanitarian reasons, which were rolled out by Legislative Decree No. 286/98 (Consolidated Act of provisions concerning immigration and the condition of the third country nationals) to protect people in situations of humanitarian need, including vulnerable migrant women and minors as well as victims of torture. Given that this

permit has been issued mainly where international protection has been rejected, the provision entailed an increase in the number of rejected asylum requests as well as of migrants losing their current legal status, which, in turn, boosted the number of irregular migrants. In line with an emergency-based approach to migration, the Decree also excludes asylum seekers from the decentralized state (second) reception system SIPROIMI (Sistema di protezione per titolari di protezione internazionale e per minori stranieri non accompagnati) – that substituted the SPRAR (Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati) – which is run by local municipalities and supports refugee' social and labour inclusion. Asylum seekers are crammed into emergency reception centres known as CAS (Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria). Most of these centres, as well as the government first-reception centres, lack adequate structures and services as well as hygiene and safety conditions, are also often overcrowded and do not provide effective inclusion programmes. Lastly, the Salvini Decree bars asylum seekers from enrolling at municipal registry offices, with the risk of excluding them from a number of health and social services and rights. In addition, the Law-Decree on immigration and security bis ("Decreto Salvini bis") contributed to the criminalization of solidarity and to the influence of public opinion, establishing economic sanctions, together with the confiscations of boats, for the organizations involved in rescue operations at sea.

Subsequently, it is important to change national policies to safeguard humanitarian action and to affect collective feelings towards migrants and refugees as well as volunteers and activists supporting and cooperating with them.

Concerning volunteering, according to scholars and civil society actors, the reform of third sector by the law n. 106 of 2016 introduced significant and critical changes, profoundly affecting the "identity of volunteering". After some years from its application it is important to produce a monitoring and evaluation of its effects, involving volunteering and civil society organizations and actors.

With respect to migrants' volunteering and participation, it is important to change social perspective in order to remove stereotypes portraying them as passive, vulnerable, when not dangerous. But it is also important to not intend volunteering as an obligation and to respect personal attitudes and desires of migrants, to stimulate effective collaboration and reciprocity with local communities. In this sense, the Decree Law n. 13 of 17 February 2017 (converted into Law n. 46 on 13 of April 2017), establishing voluntary initiatives to involve asylum seekers in welcome projects, in work of social utility, in favour of local communities, had some controversial effects.

Recommendations at different levels and areas derive from the activities carried out by VAI project partners in Italy (University of Calabria and CIDIS onlus) in the form of research and pilot actions.



## 4. University of Calabria

A set of recommendations addressing different actors and areas derives from the VAI study, roundtables and workshops carried out by the University of Calabria in Italy.

### 1. Recommendations to national and European institutions

- Coordinate the roll-out of legal and safe entry channels to Europe by establishing **regular programmes for migrant workers and humanitarian corridors for asylum seekers and refugees**. EU member states must commit to taking part in common initiatives.
- Revise EU asylum policies, ensuring **effective access to asylum procedures**, harmonising reception systems and ensuring all member states provide **decent accommodation and social inclusion programmes**.
- Create **permanent regularisation mechanisms**, also establishing a permit to search for a job.
- Overhaul the reception system for asylum seekers and refugees, providing **substantive and solid protection and integration measures**, and reversing the trend towards cutting costs for social inclusion.
- In order to address the migrants' and refugees' condition of vulnerability and precariousness, it is urgent to abolish the Law-Decrees on immigration and security (Decreto Salvini) and to reform the reception system for asylum seekers.

### 2. Recommendations to local institutions

- Local institutions must be careful not to degrade migrants in their process of social inclusion. They have to **stimulate the valorization of skills and the collaboration and exchange with local communities**.
- Local institutions should give support to volunteering organizations also in order to provide adequate services to migrants and asylum seekers or to local communities, and to **make relevant voluntary action and cooperation at the community level**, for example by strengthening skills and knowledge, organizing events and initiatives, giving access to places, structures and tools useful for volunteering activities, and promoting networking among volunteering organizations and different actors.
- Local institutions should recognize the important role of volunteering actors and civil society organizations in addressing migrants' and refugees' needs, and in promoting social cohesion. For this reason, they should promote **mechanisms**

**for confrontation and exchange** in order to promote local policies and initiatives following the recommendations by volunteering and civil society organizations,

and to promote systemic organization among the services for volunteering and voluntary interventions.

- Local institutions should support migrants' and refugees' participation, for example giving **space and visibility** to their collectives or organizations, and to their public initiatives.

### 3. Recommendations to civil society organisations, national, local, or international

- Civil society and voluntary organisations should be able **to work connecting in a network** in order to exchange their experiences, to enhance collective learning and training processes, to express a collective voice to put pressure and stimulate institutions and promote changes in policies of resource allocations, or to involve more energetically local communities.
- They should be able **to develop alliances** with other organizations and actors.
- They should consider and strengthen individual skills, personal background and expectations of migrants and refugees, give them responsibilities and involve them in the decision processes.
- They should **support migrants and refugees' participation, initiative and selforganization.**
- They should openly **oppose racism and discrimination**, also by local and national institutions or actors.
- They should **develop a critical connection of voluntary activities to institutions**, in order to monitor their activity and policies, to stimulate changes and interventions and to address migrants' and refugees' as well as collective needs and rights.

### 4. Potential synergies between Academia and Civil Society

Volunteering is imbued with iridescent and conditionable components and sensibilities. For voluntary organizations there is a therapeutic dimension of the inward-facing or **reflexive research to introduce an alternative narrative about migrations, and migrations and volunteering.**

From the Academia perspective, it is important to reflect on volunteering policies, militancy and direct action. There is, in fact, an interesting **remixing of categories**, also due the current phase of transformation in migration dynamics and policies, and of

debate on these issues. The present reality should be read with new categories to understand and define volunteering, activism and participation, with a sensitivity, and a flexibility different from the past, also because the border between **the forms of action results to be more fluid and blurred**. In addition, researchers should be able to commit themselves more to bring the results of their work to society and to the territorial level, with the **idea of actively involving local civil society and voluntary organizations in discussion and reflexive processes**. For example, the activation of a circuit of political consciousness within these organizations could be favoured by a work intentionally oriented to retrace the practices in which these organizations are engaged from a reflexive perspective.

## 5. CIDIS Onlus

CIDIS has been active in the migrant field since 1987, with more than 30 years of continuous and constant action for social change at a local, national and European level. The following recommendations are addressed to NGOs and civil society organisations working with volunteers, and summarize some observations made by Cidis during the Pilot Action implemented during September 2019/June 2020. The Pilot Action has allowed CIDIS to focus on volunteering as a sector with undiscovered potentials in promoting, sustaining and fostering integration of long and short-term migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. Here are listed six golden rules for practitioners when carrying out volunteering activities to make them effective, more inclusive and adherent to local needs.

### 1. Open to and encourage a wider and diverse participation of locals

Open up the activities to locals and migrants. One of the goals of volunteering is to **create a sense of community and solidarity** that encourages a more cohesive social environment. Avoid any risks of being “exclusive” instead of “inclusive” and encourage groups of volunteers of both migrants and locals together. The best composition of a volunteering team is a mixture of different nationalities where locals are also represented. **Diversity** is the keyword for inclusive organisations.

### 2. Give expression to the social nature of volunteering

Conceive volunteering primarily as a **social exchange among volunteers and people benefitting the volunteering action**. In the volunteering process, all sides should value each other through sharing experience, learning new knowledge, improving skills and redefining every day the sense of belonging to a place. This is even more true in the case of small informal organizations where the process of recruiting/practice/end of the volunteering experience is a spontaneous and non-professional activity, where there is no coordinated effort, special training for volunteers, appointed supervisor, antidiscrimination and social inclusive policies. Volunteering



can be a central tool to shape a more inclusive and diverse social texture. Understand volunteering as a ground for microrelations, based on a bidirectional process where the “giver” benefits of the “taker” experience.

### 3. Speak to the younger generation

Volunteering could play a central role in supporting youngsters becoming citizens belonging to a community. Youngsters should be informed and made aware of the impact volunteering has on the community life and, on a more individual level, on how volunteering could prove an enriching human experience, reinforcing feelings of being part of a meaningful process of social interactions. Involving youngsters in volunteering is a way to **invest in the future and reshape social boundaries**, ultimately making social change possible.

### 4. Exploit volunteering as a chance for networking with other organizations

Networking with other organizations is essential yet not easy, exploit volunteering activities to establish meaningful cooperation with other NGOs by offering them a platform to promote themselves and encourage volunteering. **Networking** is central to create a sense of common goal and of a shared space of social inclusion, interaction, multiple needs and complex reality. It brings together different expertise, perspectives, people and gives expression to an entire community.

### 5. Keep in mind the intercultural approach.

A core recommendation. Migrant volunteers, because of their origin, life experience or family background, are expressions of differences on multiple levels: language, culture, sensitivities, etc. Any organization wanting to be inclusive should **offer diversity or multicultural training to employees and volunteers**. Diversity training is a course aimed at building the participants' cultural awareness, knowledge and skills. Any organization should be aware of the benefit of protecting its member's civil rights, opening up to the inclusion of different identity groups and promoting teamwork. Applying the intercultural approach within the organization itself, it is central to understand its impact on the social environment. Including migrants living in the area in the organization's staff can contribute to the review of prejudices and discriminations towards them.

### 6. Answer local needs, do not forget the neighborhood

One of the most important principles of any form of volunteering is **assessing the needs by listening to people benefitting from the action**. Any volunteering that rely on a bottom up approach, base its work on a cooperative process and answer with flexibility the needs of the neighborhood, is on the road to make a difference and impact on the local community as a whole, migrants included.

### 7. Self-assess the organization's inclusiveness towards migrants

Any organization should self-assess the inclusiveness towards migrants in its action. For this, it could answer the following questions.



### IS YOUR NGO INCLUSIVE? START FROM HERE

1. Does your association declare itself openly inclusive and against any discrimination? Is this mentioned in the organization Statute or any official documentation? Would you like your organization to take an anti-discrimination stance?
2. Starting from the demographics of the area on which you operate, does the association reflect its composition to some degree? Are there any citizens of migrant origins acting as volunteers? How many are they and of what nationality? Do they come as individuals or want to be recognized as part of a specific community?
3. Through which channels and in which locations does the ngo promote its activities? Have specific activities been targeting foreign citizens? What are the difficulties in reaching and communicating with migrant communities?
4. Can you name any obstacle a migrant volunteer might face in joining your volunteering activities? Do you think possible that linguistic barriers have prevented citizens from taking part in the activities? Make a list of other potential obstacles (practical: lack of transport, economic difficulties, etc.; cultural: activities promoting a less inclusive local identity, hostile environment for migrants, etc.)?
5. How does your organisation value migrant volunteers' knowledge?
6. Name a change introduced in the operating practice of your organisation thanks to the contribution of migrant volunteers.
7. What kind of initiatives could the NGO implement to ensure greater inclusiveness?

### C. Austria

The results of researches carried out in Austria shows that the participation rate of migrants in voluntary work is higher than that of people without a migration background. A closer look shows that migrants are less strongly represented in formal voluntary work, but more in informal voluntary work. According to the IFES survey in 2012, 37% of the first generation of immigrants had volunteered in an association in Austria, while 41% of the second generation volunteered. In order to make comparison, migrants with a participation rate of 22% are less often active voluntarily than people without a migration background (29%). A look at the participation structure, i.e. the percentage of migrants in all voluntary workers in Austria, reveals a similar picture: totally 17% of all volunteers have an immigrant background. In the area of informal work 19% are migrants, in formal voluntary work only 13%.

Austria has a long tradition of volunteering and it is a widely respected way to get involved in a society. However, it needs to be stressed that volunteering can only contribute to a certain extent so that people can find a place in a society. It is not the responsibility of organizations, NGOs and associations to find solutions to the issues of the asylum and migration policy in Europe. Volunteering can and should only be seen as a supplement to a responsibility that lies within the countries or the European Union itself. With this important notion in mind, we also want to emphasize the importance of a network that allows people who are interested in volunteering to actually find an organization, NGO or association to volunteer for. People with migrant/ refugee experience often don't have the networks and overview of volunteering possibilities in their local communities. In order to find a volunteering-position it is crucial for people to know what is possible in the area they live in. Through VAI we managed to build a network of organizations in Europe that are open and willing to include TCN's into their work.

## 6. Verein Multikulturell

To understand the factors that hinder the voluntary participation of migrants, three aspects have been outlined: structural obstacles related to the local social context, subjective obstacles for volunteers and operational obstacles. As regards the first aspect (structural obstacles related to the local social context), it is highlighted that the migration policy is the most important issue, while hostility/mistrust is increasing every day in Europe and other places of the world and it is possible to say that institutions have weak impact according to migration policy. In the light of these data, it is essential to understand the current situation of immigration and volunteering and the needs of youngsters with immigrant backgrounds in Austria.

Regarding the obstacles of volunteers that prevent their participation into the volunteering work, the most important is their professional responsibilities and the problems arising from family life, as another reason is low motivation to be a volunteer and be anxious about the problems arising from cultural differences that can face in their volunteering process. Moreover, language barriers and weak organisational capacity also seem to be a major problem; lack of resources is also among the main reasons why migrants do not participate in voluntary activities.

In order to remove these obstacles, the contribution to be carried out by policy makers is essential, so effective provisions need to be done at policy making level. Among the factors which can facilitate the removal of the above obstacles, it is therefore interesting to note that training of volunteers with experience in immigration and asylum (62,8%) is considered to be the most effective and that information and awareness-raising measures (53,5%) for all citizens are considered to be extremely important in removing obstacles to the participation of migrants.

Furthermore, legislative reforms to promote **individual access to civil rights** (civil, social and political rights) could support the process of voluntary participation of migrants and the increased involvement of immigrants in decision-making processes. In addition, the organisations state that economic subsidies for voluntary work and strengthening the regulatory role of public institutions can be considered as important.

Moreover, it is necessary to collect **transnational innovative approaches and good practices** by the actors of civil society and public level and understanding on volunteerism and disseminate good practices which enable the volunteers with immigration background to increase their competences for better social and economic opportunities and increase awareness of society about volunteering and needs of immigrants and the link/relationship between these two factors.

All these developments will also encourage the organizations in other fields to adopt the methodology used, such as organizations/institutions which provide educational and employment opportunities and create a context to recognize the needs of volunteers for better inclusion of them into daily life and employment areas.

As another point, it is necessary flexibility and capacity within the content to meet the existing and the next **training needs of volunteers in the long term** and also there are multi-ways of learning and approaches in order to fulfil the demands of employers and focus on volunteers' learning process and enable them to be involved in volunteering process with a learning by experience and practice.

### 7. Initiative Minderheiten Tirol

Reflecting about the work experience within the VAI project, we want to share some general findings and feedback with broader political implications.

#### **Reflections on the self-understanding as a volunteer organization**

Compared to traditional and established volunteering organizations, such the Red Cross, the Initiative Minderheiten Tirol did not really have a self-understanding as a voluntary organization. It is active in the area of cultural work and various people from different backgrounds contribute to the Initiative's activities and bring in their ideas, thoughts and time. As the area of cultural work – especially in the context of minority issues – is rather precarious when it comes to finances and funding, the people freely contributing to the projects do rarely get fully compensated for their efforts. During the VAI project, it became obvious that we do then indeed qualify as an organization working with volunteers. Reflecting on this experience, we think that this lack of self-understanding as a volunteer organization could be the same case for many other smaller organizations. It would therefore be crucial to spread products of the VAI project to such organizations, like the manual for volunteering, that explains concepts of volunteerism e.g. used by the United Nations or the IFRC and outlines the obligations and responsibilities that go along with engaging people who volunteer. Even for organizations not actively searching for a big number of volunteers, this could lead to a higher quality of the volunteering experience, framed by proper induction, support and training during the project.

- Necessity of information for small organizations about volunteerism, its management and the responsibilities that go along
- higher quality of the volunteering experience

### **Reflections of the concept of integration used and implemented in the project**

While presenting and discussing the VAI project to and with different actors, we noticed that there were many different understandings and valuations of the concept of integration.

“Am I integrated? It’s a good question. Because I think that integration is not from one side. About my integration in Austria, you should talk to my friends, my Austrian friends also. They, my Austrian friends, integrated in my life, into my personality. Integration means for me that my friends, my Austrian friends respect my traditions and my way of life the way I respect Austrians way of life.” Sofiya Darsaniya

We share the criticism that the notion of integration implies the unilateral adaption or even assimilation of one part to another and prefer the concept of social participation. We think that the focus should not lie on one group’s effort to be an acceptable part of society, but rather on the structural dimensions facilitating the social, political and cultural participation of the group. With the focus on changing institutions, giving recommendations to policy makers, preparing deliverables to help organizations and trainers to change their own structures to be more accessible and inviting to people who migrated, the VAI project is acting more on the side of participation and inclusion than it is in the sense of integration – even though using this notion in the project description.

### **The importance of the reflection on the concepts used in all kinds of organizations and institutions**

On the other side, the overall idea of the VAI project seems to put responsibility for social participation on the shoulders of the people who migrated and organizations of civil society. In our view, it is the state that should engage in finding solutions to provide means and ways for people living in Austria to be able to access, contribute to and engage with the society they live in – if it’s via work experiences, access to cultural and political life, etc. To simply increase possibilities for groups such as people who migrated or fled to volunteer – organized by civil society themselves - cannot make up for a state’s intervention and the changing of political structures (such as conditions of accommodation, asylum procedures, coverage of basic needs, labor market integration and providing for the acquisition of a language that enables participation) that keep this very group from participating in society in other ways.

### **The importance of structural support and networks**

In the situation where the participation of people who migrated or fled is amongst others organized by civil society institutions and not necessarily supported by bigger networks or state institutions, one problem is the connection of people who are interested in and

organizations that offer volunteering opportunities. Apart from the well-known established organizations, successful contacts in our experience arise mainly out of personal relationships and word of mouth. Therefore, we want to emphasize again the importance of especially local networks and structures that bring the different actors in contact. VAI project made a great effort to build up these kinds of networks and we think that this should be continued and maintained in the future.

### 8. FREIRAD

#### **Self-understanding as a volunteer-organization**

Since it was founded in 2002, FREIRAD has only worked with volunteers and sees itself as an example on how volunteering can look like. All radio programs that are produced within the radio-station are designed by people who do this in their free time. FREIRAD doesn't see itself in the classical conception of volunteering work as an altruistic activity where an individual or a group provides services for no financial or social gain to benefit another person, group or organization. The radio sees itself rather as a platform for mainly underrepresented groups who want to take action in taking up space in society by producing radio programs. We invite as many people as possible to bring their themes and content on air themselves. This appeal is directed particularly at individuals and groups that are largely ignored by established media. In this way we aim to counteract social marginalization. We currently have over 100 broadcasts that are sent regularly. 47 of these are in German and another language or only in another language. In total, there are currently 16 different languages represented at FREIRAD. Many programs are already designed by volunteers with a migrant / refugee experience. FREIRAD sees the designing and conceiving of a radio show as a means of getting involved in a society, to make oneself heard and to participate in it. Since our system of broadcasting evolves around volunteers with lots of different backgrounds, we see FREIRAD as a best practice for successfully involving the potential of TCN's into the local community.

#### **Development as a volunteer-organization through the VAI-project**

Throughout the time span of the VAI-project, FREIRAD put its focus on the matter of how the already existing volunteers can be more included in the whole work of FREIRAD as an association itself and how we can also directly approach communities that are not represented yet in order to gain them as volunteer broadcasters at the radio station. The pilot action helped us set our focus on how to directly target specific marginalized groups such as women with migrant / refugee experience, learn about their needs and how to

approach them. In order to be able to represent communities, languages etc. equally, FREIRAD must also work on addressing specific needs. The program consists of a diverse pool of broadcasters with a variety of languages spoken on air. Still not all local communities are represented. Through the VAI-project FREIRAD started to set actions on directly targeting groups, communities or languages that are not part of our association yet in order to constantly work on a broader spectrum of our program and to work towards social inclusion.

Apart from targeting groups directly, we also developed our understanding of how volunteers can be part of the FREIRAD-association. Not only by producing their own shows but also by getting more involved in the structures of the station. As future perspectives we are aiming at involving people with migrant / refugee experience also in the FREIRAD management board and in the designing of the overall radio-program through setting up steering groups. The inclusion into the structures of the organization should help to create a broader perspective and to better respond to different needs. Organizations that are working with volunteers for some time should reflect on how much space they actually give to the potential evolving from volunteers. From our experience, organizations can only profit from involving people with migrant / refugee experience into decision making and the general structure of an organization, not only on a volunteering-basis.

We don't see language as the key element of integration and foster a broader understanding of the term "integration" in general. Language is an important element in finding one's way into a society. But speaking the local language is not a basic prerequisite for "integration" at FREIRAD. We promote participation in society in all its diversity and recognize the diversity of our broadcasters. The term integration implies adaptation/assimilation to an existing, dominant society. This means people have to take on (some of) the values and practices of the mainstream or majority in order to be socially accepted. It is often assumed that people with migrant / refugee experience can only be integrated if they also speak the local language. Social inclusion and social participation on the other hand means that all people living in a given society (should) have access and participation rights on equal terms. This also means that institutions, organizations and structures should be designed to accommodate diversity of circumstances, identities and ways of life in order to make it possible for people to participate in them. Opportunities and resources should be distributed so as to minimize disadvantage and marginalization. FREIRAD aspires and works on creating conditions in which people can participate easily and the potential and diversity are used and seen positively and equal to the mainstream culture.

## D. Germany

During the research, capacity building focus groups and the round table implementation, it became clear that society reacted immediately to the political and social developments in Germany. Even though some organizations were founded as in the context of historical events in Germany, before the refugee surge in 2015, others reported that the refugee crisis had an impact on their work, such as new fields of activities and thematical focus of the voluntary activities as well as an increase in new volunteers who wanted to help migrants and refugees. This shows that the German society is willing to help if help is needed – even though it was reported that this help sometimes does not continue in the long term. On the other hand, on multiple occasions, it became evident that the term “migrant” is very difficult to handle, as Germany looks back on a long history of migration with different groups of migrants involved. Different groups of migrants have different histories and prerequisites, which also has an influence on their possibility of civic and social participation today. Furthermore, migrants in Germany hail from a wide range of educational and economic backgrounds. These are additional factors that have an impact on the process of integration as well as on the participation in civic engagement. Therefore, more research is needed for deeper insights into the circumstances of different groups living in Germany, specifically the conditions they live in as well as their actual participation in any form of formal or informal voluntary activities. In what follows, we draw on the policy implications of different outcomes and results deriving from project activities and provide recommendations for appropriate decision-making.

## 9. Leibniz University of Hannover

Migrant volunteering has many benefits and factors for success on a number of levels, which can be roughly grouped into the categories of the individual and those for the community and society. On the one hand, it is necessary to create incentives for migrants to participate in volunteer work. On the other, forms of cooperation and networking need to be established between organizations run by migrants and those who are almost exclusively run by non- migrants. Moreover, the social commitment of well-integrated (second-generation) immigrants should be further promoted and infrastructures expanded, while the participation hurdles for so-called "newcomers", i.e. immigrants with poorer German language skills needs to be reduced. The following policy options may hence be considered.

**On an individual level, intrinsic motivation of migrants has to be boosted by addressing the benefits of volunteering.** Language proficiency needs to be enhanced





and the availability of time and resources for volunteering needs to be secured. Both virtual volunteering and educational opportunities in schools may be promising. Special attention must also be paid in order to involve migrant women into volunteer work.

In order to get migrants to participate in volunteer work, their **intrinsic motivation needs to be strengthened**. Volunteering has many benefits for the individual. Psychologically, it increases self-confidence and creates a feeling of personal connection to a community. Socially, it facilitates integration because it is an excellent opportunity to get to know a country and improve language competences through regular interaction with German native speakers. Especially for migrants who have just come to Germany, it can help overcome social isolation and put their abilities to meaningful use outside the traditional work environment. It is also important to mention that, in contrast to traditional work, social volunteering is not subject to any bureaucratic hurdles, which is why it can be started right upon arrival. Economically, the acquired networking skills can be beneficial for access to desired jobs. Volunteering improves legal and economic knowledge and helps at increasing and acquiring skills. An example is 'Refugee Law Clinic', provided by the Leibniz-University, in which students advise refugees on their rights.

Language appears to be one of the most important factors for successful integration and participation in volunteering, therefore **providing free courses is crucial**. For example, in Sweden, immigrants not only have the possibility to attend free language courses, but also receive a further monetary bonus when they complete them. As there is a reciprocal relationship between language acquisition and the social setting, improving language fluency aids interaction with the host society and therefore social integration.

In order to **establish incentives for participation**, the discrepancy between the described high educational background and a low economic background of migrant, that can be explained by the difficult process to recognize work experiences and educational degrees, must be reduced by an enactment of adequate policies.

It is therefore necessary to **issue training work and education certificates** as uniformly as possible and **reduce the bureaucratic hurdles in the process of recognition of foreign certificates**. Migrants' tendency to 'down-skill' to positions below their formal educational qualifications is most likely not because of a lack of ability to work in their field abroad, but because of an interplay between language difficulties and other factors. In view of the shortage of skilled workers in Germany, **effective assessment to find the individual strengths and qualities of migrants** to better their will to get involved in volunteering through specially designed tests needs to be established. Furthermore, political action is needed by **promoting programs that**



**facilitate working opportunities.** In this context, **the adult learning sector must be expanded further.**

Because a low economic background often directly relates to less capacity for unpaid volunteer work, factors that hinder from participating, especially lack of time and resources need to be minimized. Migrants generally tend to suffer from more financial problems and have less social and economic security. While this has to be addressed on a structural level, participation also has to be made more accessible for low-income groups. **Information on volunteering opportunities must be available via wellknown social media platforms** (Facebook, Instagram, etc.) that are used by many people on a daily basis. **Organizations specializing in working with migrants should also increase their offers of personal, social and legal support.** Most newcomers are left without guidance and cannot easily access information on national system, training and employment opportunities. More **coordination between authorities and support** are required to help migrants achieve their goals.

Successes in this direction have been made in the field of **virtual or online volunteering**, which is currently growing. It requires only an Internet connection and some time. It is fast, simple and does not depend on meetings of local groups, which means that participating in the project involves less effort and allows for a more flexible allocation of time. However, however, they tend to depend more strongly on clearly defined tasks and responsible contact persons. As this will probably become more significant in the future, these forms of engagement should receive more public support.

Promising results have also been obtained through **introducing volunteering work to young people in schools and (sports-) clubs** from early on. Learning about opportunities for engagement on a local level and working together with their classmates on projects empowers students. This requires the **consistent implementation of the principle of action orientation** in politics classes and a **closer cooperation between school and out-of-school actors.** In this context, more use should be made of **service learning approaches.** These combine the development and application of learning content with services for the common good. Pupils develop methodological and social skills and, above all, notice that their involvement can make a difference. Integration of migrants is strengthened by teamwork and self-organization of the participants. Moreover, studies have found that young people with a migration background are clearly underrepresented in youth voluntary services. By **qualifying migrant organizations as providers of youth voluntary services** (in Germany called 'FSJ'), it is hoped that young people with a migration background will be reached and mobilized better.

Volunteering should be more easily accessible to migrant women from different backgrounds. Migrant women are more vulnerable to deskilling, unemployment and

social isolation. Therefore, they should be considered a special target group for migrant volunteering. Many women report problems in balancing work and family responsibilities, and it seems that migrant women also face more challenges in communication with public authorities. However, many do believe that the involvement in volunteer activities can play an important role in their self-development, access to labour market, engaging in community and coping with uncertainty. Organizations need to provide more information on available opportunities for migrant women, adapt their recruitment strategies and offer guidance on balancing child care, job seeking and volunteer work.

**On a communal and national level, cooperation of migrant and non-migrant organizations at eye level should be encouraged.** In order for that to happen successfully, stereotyping has to be diminished and state-funding must be increased.

**Migrant and non-migrant organizations need to cooperate in a meaningful** way in order to exchange their experiences, cultures and knowledge. Newcomers and locals work together for a good cause and get to know each other personally. Through **open exchanges**, additional opportunities for intercultural learning are created. Newcomer volunteers experience firsthand how people in Germany live, work, and communicate. Refugees and migrants bring in new ideas and specific knowledge, which has a high relevance for many projects in the social sector. This can be achieved by **jointly preparing and carrying out projects on a local level**. There is already a great diversity here, covering a wide range of different interests. Past and ongoing projects include e.g. jointly conceiving/presenting a radio programme, planning cultural activities, or cooking evenings. All projects share the goal of promoting integration and strengthening social solidarity. Within these projects, some notes must be taken into account. According to a representative of an established institution, it is particularly important that the initiative to cooperate comes from the migrant organizations themselves. Only when the member associations express interest and come to the established institution out of their own motivation would they sit down together, design a project together or write the application for funding. Otherwise migrant organizations would quickly feel that they were "water carriers" if this kind of bottom-up mobilization did not exist and often perceive a hierarchical interaction with the non-migrant organization. A further factor for successful cooperation is the appreciation of both cooperation partners as fully-fledged civil society actors and mutual transparency in cooperation, especially when it comes to delays or omissions during the process of carrying out a project.

**Best-practice models** of voluntary engagement of migrants and cooperation of different organizations are to be presented in the media at federal and state level in a way that is both publicly noticed and effective in advertising.

Lasting cooperation can only be achieved if **stereotypes towards migrant communities are reduced**. Many migrant associations still report instances of discrimination and a lack of participation of non-migrants in their work. This can be seen as the result of general hostility towards migrants in parts of German society that is exacerbated by certain political parties. This can be combatted by **providing information on the benefits of culture exchange for natives**, especially in times of globalization. Generally, many immigrants have positive attitudes towards volunteering. This should be recognized by different actors, and volunteering ought to be made easily accessible to all migrants from different cultural backgrounds. Here, more research is necessary in order to ensure that every person is treated individually in a diverse way. This can work to counteract the often perceived lack of sensitivity by native volunteers. **Special courses for volunteers and staff members need to be offered**, to teach them how to connect to ethnic minorities and integrate migrants in their work. Target groups do show variability, but students and young people are still the main target groups of volunteering and internship programs in Europe. In order to achieve more diversity, the **voluntary engagement of migrants should become the subject of scientific research** in qualitative and quantitative terms in order to be able to support it in a more targeted and sustainable way.

In response to the criticism that volunteer work is a means of providing cost-saving social services and to enable the professionalization of organizations, **more state-funding is needed**. This has to happen in order to ensure the working capacity of organizations, while at the same time preserving crucial features such as flexibility, responsiveness to and emergence from local needs, freedom to critique, and self-determination. In addition, **the distribution of state funds must be fundamentally reformed** to counteract the market economy orientation and operational discipline of non-profit practice. In order to attract external funding, many organizations feel the need to quantify their success using market-based criteria and thus, often reduce the connection to their communities and demands. With adequate government assistance, the ratio between full-time employees and volunteers can become more balanced and volunteers feel less overwhelmed by chaotic and high workload. For these reasons, **more regular support for integration projects** to guarantee the supply of important resources must be provided and the **transferability of funds from one project to another** needs to be facilitated.

In conclusion, volunteering is an opportunity for migrants to re-apply their unique talents to a new context and develop valuable skills while making new friends. Factors that increase participation of migrants are, among others, intrinsic motivation, free language courses, better governmental funding and incentives to cooperate with non-migrant organizations, as well as the reduction of barriers of participation and communication.



### Conclusions

The VAI project points out that volunteering can be both an instrument for and an indicator of social inclusion of migrants and refugees. Project partners addressed the very different motives and the contexts of volunteering with/for/by migrants and refugees. However, shortcomings, obstacles and contradictions in relation to volunteering among immigrants emerged, especially considering the European and national legal frameworks on migration and asylum, in the light of the European Agenda on migration and with regards to the special reference to active participation and social inclusion in the Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals. Restrictions to regular migrations and asylum have severely undermined the prospects for social and economic inclusion for migrants and refugees, their participation in local communities, and their initiatives and forms of cooperation and collective organization. The lack of an exhaustive legislative framework on volunteering and the no-profit sector in some countries, or feeble institutional recognition of refugee and migrants' voluntary action, participation or collective organizations, result in additional obstacles to the social inclusion in local communities. The professionalization or entrepreneurialisation of the no-profit and voluntary sector has affected its anti-racist and progressive role at social level.

Controls and legal sanctions have been introduced by national legislations to oppose social practices of solidarity and search and rescue operations, at national borders or in the Mediterranean Sea. One of the main effects of the anti-migration political rhetoric and the laws criminalizing migration and solidarity has been to feed blame, racist and xenophobic attitudes at a societal level. However, many forms of solidarity have risen from civil society organizations, social collectives or individuals, to address the needs of and to offer support to refugees, asylum seekers but also undocumented migrants.

If the VAI project recognizes the beneficial impact of volunteering among migrants on society, the economy and individual lives, it is important not to attribute excessive responsibility on civil society organizations to find solutions to the dead ends of the asylum and migration policies in Europe, or on migrants or refugees to volunteering and work for their acceptance in society or demonstrate their efforts to gain residence permits. Volunteering can and should only be seen as a supplement to a responsibility that lies within the countries or the European Union itself.

Some obstacles or limitations to volunteering among immigrants have been identified in the civil society organizations' approach and knowledge, in their management structure or in their attitude towards migrants and refugees as passive and weak subjects. The scarce networking among voluntary actors as well as the weak or discontinuous support

by local institutions are other factors affecting voluntary action, its transformative capacity or efficacy and continuity in the long term.

The pilot actions helped to identify evidence-based and innovative actions involving immigrants as volunteers, or transforming voluntary and cooperation practices to employment opportunities and local development or social innovation initiatives. The capacity building tools produced (Orientation Manual for Volunteers, Guide for Immigrants Volunteers, Guide for Training Immigrants-Volunteers, Toolkit for Training immigrants in Voluntary work) can help migrants to construct themselves as volunteers, NGOs and other organisations to engage immigrants, and generally enhance participation in voluntary groups. Finally, the promotion of a European network of national contacts and initiatives in the field of migrant volunteering aims at increasing transnational dialogue between different stakeholders.

Based on these reflections and main results and findings, we hereby resume the key recommendations produced by all partners addressing different actors, from decision and policy makers to voluntary organisations and (prospective/migrant) volunteers, at the European, National, regional or local levels.

At the broader level of policies of **migration, asylum but also social inclusion**, European and national institutions should develop a coherent policy framework to provide safe entry channels, substantive and solid protection and integration measures for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. At the variegated policy fields relating to the **recognition, promotion and support to volunteering and solidarity**, European and national institutions should recognize and support the role of solidarity action and volunteering by individuals, social collectives, as well as migrants and refugees, also through the increase of specific funds available (i.e. at the EU level: Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps; AMIF; H2020). National institutions should develop clear legal frameworks for the NGO and non-profit sector at national or local level. Civil society organizations, on the other hand, should work to increase social awareness about volunteering, and the respective needs of and expectations for third country nationals. At the same time, they should establish well-functioning management systems and practices to recognize, supervise, support and encourage volunteers (the VAI guides and toolkit can be helpful to this aim).

With respect to measures to ensure **cooperation and networking**, Local institutions should make relevant voluntary action and cooperation at the community level, strengthening skills and knowledge, organizing events and initiatives, support migrants' and refugees' participation. To this end, they could develop mechanisms and create spaces for meeting and exchange, in order to promote local policies and initiatives following the recommendations by voluntary and civil society organizations. Civil society

actors would benefit from being part of wider networks, to improve their activities, while at the same time develop a critical connection of voluntary activities to institutions. Civil Society organizations can develop synergies and forms of collaboration with Academia in order to mutually benefit from the exchange of different types of knowledge, critically review and evaluate practice in their respective activities, and develop socially innovative methods to understand, support and address migrants' needs and their inclusion through participation in local communities.

Finally, as far as strategies to promote **inclusiveness and participation** of third country nationals, National institutions should promote information and awareness-raising measures for all citizens about volunteering and migrations and allow legal recognition of (migrants') voluntary work. Local institutions can crucially intervene in raising awareness, and should systemically organize their services for volunteering and voluntary interventions. Civil society actors should ensure that the values of volunteering are adapted to the needs of immigrants and refugees, and that voluntary actions addressing them serve the interests of migrant communities and improve their social living conditions. At the same time, organizations should also be able to identify their own needs in order to involve immigrants in their volunteering activities. They should seriously work to remove obstacles to the participation of migrants by training of volunteers with experience in immigration and asylum and enable volunteers with immigration background to increase their competences for better social and economic opportunities.

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