



PEACE'22

Research Report

Social economy contribution to peaceful societies: social and economic inclusion of refugees as a response to crises



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Project summary

The P-E-A-C-E'22 project aims at empowering Lithuanian and European organisations working with migrants to build their capacity to promote social inclusion and integration in the labour market, by facilitating inter-community dialogue and ensuring upskilling of the participants. The project will create an international share of knowledge, best practices and educational tools. In the long-term it will create strategies, deploying the methodologies and tools of the social economy to create peaceful societies.

Overall, the project aims to:

- Increase the number of skilled employees in community-based organisations to implement practices that help the integration of migrants into the receiving community;
- Improved the knowledge of community-based organisations based on the transnational knowledge exchange;
- Enlarge the network of the community-based organisations to seek future collaborations;
- Improve the understanding and awareness of the general public on how Social Economy provides tools for peace-building;

In the long-term, the project supports the improvement of current social enterprises' practices and the creation of new social enterprises with the purpose of creating new employment and inclusion opportunities, especially for vulnerable groups such as children, women, and people with disabilities, while promoting a culture of peace by facilitating long-lasting dialogue between the receiving community and migrants, built on the multiplication of shared expertise from our European experiences.

Partners



LiSVA

Lithuanian Social Business Association (LiSVA) is a national umbrella organisation uniting social enterprise organisations. It was established in 2018 to create an environment favourable for social business, increase the awareness of social business and promote the implementation of international best practices. This is achieved through advocacy, capacity building and ecosystem development activities. LiSVA represents the interests of social enterprises in state and municipal institutions, evaluates programs and measures implemented by state institutions, contributes to the formulation of public policy and makes specific proposals to municipal institutions regarding the involvement in the decision-making processes.



Diesis Network

Founded in 1997, Diesis Network is now one of the widest networks specialising in supporting the development of the social economy, social entrepreneurship, and social innovation worldwide. In view of high social, economic, and ecological stakes, we are deeply convinced that a global commitment from all stakeholders is the only response to a global crisis. Functioning as a unique ecosystem, we create and multiply the impact through a close collaboration with our members, who represent over 90 000 organisations and 1.2 million jobs through major national federations and support networks. With a variety of profiles, backgrounds, and origins our team is actively engaged in implementing knowledge based activities such as training, project design, consultancy, advisory services, technical assistance and research.

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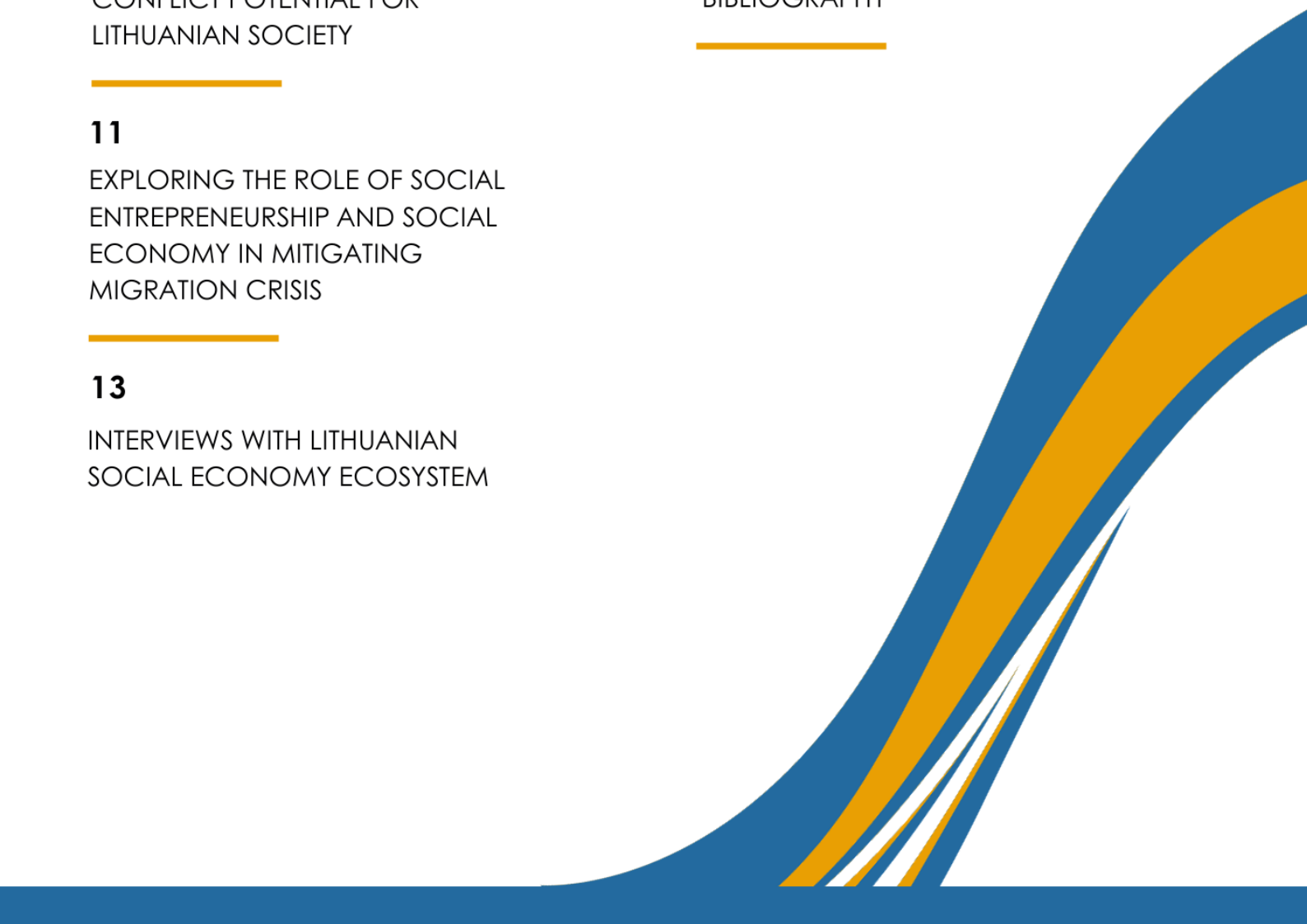
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Introduction

This research is the first output of the PEACE'22 project, and it seeks to understand whether there is a space for social and solidarity economy organisations to support the creation of sustainable peace. Based on the definition of Johan Galtung¹, sustainable or positive peace requires putting in place, alongside the emergency response, long term strategies to properly address the underlying causes of conflicts and identify shared, sustainable solutions that can favour systemic change and ensure social and economic inclusion and fair opportunities for all.

The impact of social and solidarity economy in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in its recognised contribution to the development of more inclusive, just societies raises the question on whether social economy organisations can support the action of humanitarian and development organisations in designing and implementing long term solutions for increasingly interconnected and complex challenges, such as the socio-economic inclusion of Internally Displaced People (IDP) and refugees and whether these action should be recognised as favouring more peaceful societies².

This role is understood to be complementary, and not substitutive, to the fundamental emergency responses granted by humanitarian organisations and traditional peacebuilding and peacekeeping agents. The underlying assumption is that it is fundamental to enhance the cooperation among sectors and bridge the actors involved in the long-term systemic change that is envisioned as the end goal for both social economy and peacebuilding³.

¹ Johan Galtung, Violence, Peace, and Peace Research, Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1969), pp. 167-191.

² Villalba-Eguiluz U. et al. (2020) Convergences between the Social and Solidarity Economy and Sustainable Development Goals: Case Study in the Basque Country, Sustainability 2020, Vol. 12, 5435.

³ Pompermaier F., Orozco L., Bridging practices: The role of social economy in building peace, Diesis Network articles, October 2022, available at: <https://www.diesis.coop/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Diesis-Paper-the-role-of-social-economy-in-sustaining-peace.pdf>.

Research Methodology

The case of Lithuania was chosen for its developing social and solidarity ecosystem and due to the increased influx of refugees from Ukraine that require an unprecedented support and long-term solutions to facilitate their socio-economic inclusion, especially considering the contingent demands of the Lithuanian labour market.

The research methodology for this paper was designed in a several steps: first, a literature review of the most current publications was conducted to look at the role of social and solidarity economy and its potential to complement the actions of humanitarian and development organisations in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, with a specific focus in understanding the role of socio-economic empowerment of refugees and sustainable, inclusive and fair job creation. In parallel, information on the situation in Lithuania were gathered, particularly from the outbreak of the war in Ukraine and the increased influx of refugees that require unprecedented support and long-term solutions.

The field research took the form of interviews, conducted at the local Lithuanian level by LiSVA and at European level by Diesis Network, with a total of 10 organisations included. The aims were different: in the first case, LiSVA sought to gather insights on the most pressing concerns and challenges as well as identified needs of the social economy organisations working in Lithuania supporting the inclusion of refugees. It particularly looked at the activities implemented, at the partnerships and networks established and funding.

The European cases identified are good practices from 5 social economy organisations in Germany, Poland, Georgia, Cyprus and Romania, who are implementing activities supporting the upskilling, training and job market inclusion of refugees as well as specific peacebuilding, community dialogue and conflict resolution opportunities for conflict-affected communities. Specific attention was therefore placed on understanding the identified target groups, methodologies, needs assessments and impact measurement tools employed, and the potential of transferability of the practices in different contexts.

Job integration, socio-economic empowerment and peacebuilding

The intrinsic link between employment, decent work, peace and resilience is recognised by academic literature, international organisations and practitioners alike, highlighting the comprehensive approach needed to address the diverse challenges faced by displaced populations and conflict-affected areas, understand the systemic causes of fragility and instability and operationalise solutions that enable long term recovery and peaceful societies⁴. This approach is often referred to as Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus, a framework that acknowledges the “attempts in these fields to work together to more effectively meet peoples’ needs, mitigate risks and vulnerabilities, and move toward sustainable peace”⁵.

In the framework of this research, it is important to understand the aspects that are traditionally highlighted as bridging sustainable job creation, labour market inclusion of displaced people and sustainable peace to understand whether social economy organisations can or already contribute to the process:

Socio-economic empowerment

Sustainable job creation is integral to enabling migrants and refugees to achieve socio-economic empowerment: by providing opportunities for fair employment and decent work, these vulnerable populations can transition from dependency on humanitarian aid or public subsidies to becoming contributors to local economies. This shift not only enhances the well-being of migrants and refugees but also contributes to the overall stability of host communities, contributing to the establishment of more peaceful societies.

Fostering social cohesion

The creation of more opportunities that facilitate the integration of displaced individuals into the labour market can reduce the risk of tension and societal conflict related to competition for resources and job opportunities. This in turn supports the creation of more peaceful societies as it contributes to the promotion of an inclusive environment, preventing the exacerbation of grievances, discriminations and mistrust between forced migrants, refugees and host populations. It also has the potential of creating a neutral space for contact, dialogue and progressive integration.

⁴ International Labour Organisation, Employment and decent work in refugee and other forced displacement contexts, Compendium of ILO’s lessons learned, emerging good practices and policy guidance, (2020).

⁵ Nguya et Siddiqui, Triple Nexus Implementation and Implications for Durable Solutions for Internal Displacement: On Paper and in Practice, Refugee Survey Quarterly, Volume 39, Issue 4, December 2020, p. 46.



Building resilience

Sustainable job creation also enhances the resilience of both migrant and refugee populations and host communities, especially in terms of re-skilling, upskilling and training. By equipping individuals with employable skills and opportunities, they become better prepared to withstand economic shocks and societal challenges. This, in turn, contributes to the peacebuilding process by creating more resilient communities that can adapt to changing circumstances and are better fit to jointly sustain the green and digital transitions.

Reducing vulnerabilities

A central characteristic of sustainable job opportunities is the importance of fair labour standards, equitable wages, and safe working conditions. Ensuring the inclusion of migrants and refugees in decent work opportunities is essential for their dignity and well-being. When individuals are treated fairly in the workplace, they are more likely to embrace the values of peaceful coexistence.

The activities of social economy organisations fall within the realm of sustainable development, thus could be framed within the HDP Nexus, where the concept of decent job creation is central. Through the inclusion of vulnerable groups, the co-creation and implementation of upskilling and reskilling opportunities, the facilitation of inter-community dialogue and community building, social economy organisations can be considered not only to provide a source of income but also promote dignity, social inclusion, and economic stability for displaced populations and host communities alike⁶.

⁶ Supra note 2.

Navigating the challenges: Unpacking the complex realities of refugee and forced migration issues and their conflict potential for Lithuanian Society

The ongoing refugee and forced migrant crisis in Lithuania has emerged as a critical focus for research aimed at unravelling the complex interplay between these humanitarian challenges and the transformative potential of social entrepreneurship and the social economy. The Ukrainian refugee crisis has added new challenges to Lithuania's social and economic context, with the number of refugees representing more than 2% of the Lithuanian population.

This research delves into the multifaceted dynamics of the refugee situation in Lithuania and seeks to understand how social entrepreneurship and social economy initiatives can contribute to peacebuilding efforts amidst the complexities of forced migration. By exploring innovative solutions, sustainable economic models and community-driven approaches, the study aims to shed light on the role these efforts can play in fostering resilience, inclusivity and stability in the context of the refugee crisis in Lithuania.

Ukrainian refugee crisis 2022

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, Lithuania has received over 77,000 refugees⁷, all of whom have been officially registered for temporary protection status. This figure represents about 2.6 per cent of the population and is the largest influx of refugees in Lithuania's history.⁸

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as of August 2023

- 34% of the Ukrainian refugees in Lithuania fell within the age bracket of 30 to 39 years old;
- 27% individuals aged 60 years and above;
- 15% between 40 and 49 years old.⁹

⁷ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/lt/infographics/ukraine-refugees-eu/>

⁸ *Regional Refugee Response Plan, UNCSR 2023*, p. 12, see at <https://www.unhcr.org/neu/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2023/02/Lithuanian-RRP-EN.pdf>

⁹ International Organization for Migration (IOM), *DTM Lithuania Surveys with Refugees from Ukraine: Needs, Intentions, and Integration Challenges. April-June 2023* IOM, Vilnius, 2023. For more information on terms and conditions of DTM reports and information products, please refer to: <https://dtm.iom.int/terms-and-conditions>

The TOP-main need expressed by Ukrainian refugees was financial support (27%). The analysis shows that the main issue caused by the lack of finances is the lack of source of income.

When asked about the difficulties Ukrainian refugees faced in Lithuania, they cited

- financial challenges (23%),
- language barriers (14%),
- difficulties finding suitable employment (12%),
- difficulties securing housing (11%).

These data allow us to make conclusions about the following issues with a high conflict potential:

- The economic strain could lead to tensions between refugees and the host country, as both sides struggle with the consequences of limited financial resources.
- The competition for jobs and the potential strain on the labour market can lead to conflict if not effectively managed through targeted employment or self-employment support programmes.
- A major challenge identified by refugees is language barriers. This can lead to communication breakdowns, reduced access to services and challenges in finding suitable employment. Addressing language barriers is crucial to fostering a sense of belonging and reducing the potential for conflict between refugees and the host country.
- Challenges related to access to social services and integration into the community are key areas of concern. Adequate support for cultural integration, education and health care can have a significant impact on the overall well-being of refugees and mitigate potential conflicts related to feelings of exclusion or inadequacy in accessing essential services.

Exploring the Role of Social Entrepreneurship and Social Economy in Mitigating Migration Crisis

It is important to acknowledge the significant efforts made by the Lithuanian government, private sector and civil society in addressing the multiple challenges related to the integration of migrants and refugees, as well as economic integration. Significant progress has been made in creating a supportive environment for newcomers. However, within the intricate tapestry of these efforts lies an untapped potential - the field of social entrepreneurship that may open up new avenues for inclusive economic participation of migrants and refugees in host countries.

Local Dynamics: The Landscape of Social Entrepreneurship in Lithuania

In Lithuania, the field of social enterprise is in a developing stage, lacking a legal definition that would facilitate its effective regulation and promote sustainable growth. This journey began in the spring of 2015, when the Ministry of Economy endorsed the concept of social enterprise. By the end of that year, the Action Plan for the Promotion of Social Enterprises (2015-2017) was approved, introducing specific measures to create a favourable legal, financial and fiscal environment for social enterprises. This plan also aimed to cultivate a culture supportive of social enterprise and raise public awareness.¹⁰

In the dynamic landscape of social enterprise development in Lithuania, significant progress was made in 2016 when the Ministry of Economy highlighted the recommendations of the Lithuanian Social Enterprise Criteria. At the same time, the National Progress Programme 2014-2020 set an ambitious target of reallocating 15% of public services to non-governmental organisations, social enterprises or other non-state sectors. However, despite these initiatives, the expected progress hit a roadblock in 2017. While the government adopted a resolution to initiate and adopt a law on social enterprises, subsequent decisions within the legal framework remained elusive. The following year, 2018, witnessed a remarkable attempt to catalyse the development of social enterprises. A draft law on the transfer of public services to social enterprises was meticulously prepared, using individual partnership tools such as public procurement, concessions and public-private partnerships. The main objective was to stimulate the growth of social enterprises by streamlining the

¹⁰ Gianluca Pastorelli, Fabiana Pompermaier, Viktorija Braziunaite, Marta Bruschi, *Pathways for development of Social economy ecosystem In Lithuania: building on European experiences*, 2023, <https://www.diesis.coop/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Feasibility-Study-Diesis-LISVA-02032023.pdf>

delivery of public services - a move aimed not only at traditional institutions but also at encouraging the state or municipality to procure services from social enterprises in the market.¹¹

Unfortunately, the lack of a specific legal framework for social enterprises has limited the popularity of this business model. Looking back seven years after the launch of the 'social enterprise concept', the overarching narrative is one of measured progress with persistent challenges - most notably the lack of a formal legal definition and conducive conditions for sustainable and coherent development within the Lithuanian social enterprise ecosystem. In order to overcome these hurdles, it is imperative to explore the experiences of more mature practices, providing insights into strengths and weaknesses and paving the way for a nuanced definition and support of the evolving Lithuanian ecosystem.

So, the creation of favourable legislative conditions for the development of existing social enterprises in Lithuania, as well as the creation of new ones, is very timely, especially now, in the context of the crisis that led to the influx of refugees due to the war in Ukraine, which have led to about 80,000 Ukrainians in Lithuania. The experience and examples of social enterprises from different countries, including EU member states, demonstrate the effectiveness and multidimensional positive impact for the state of supporting social enterprises that employ migrants and refugees. By providing these people with economic integration and the opportunity to get a job or become self-employed, we reduce the risks of possible internal conflicts at the level of local communities where migrants and refugees live. Therefore, in the long run, the issue of legislation for the development of social entrepreneurship also plays a role in building sustainable peace.

¹¹ See *Ibid.*

Interviews with Lithuanian social economy ecosystem

LiSVA conducted field research in Lithuania, engaging refugee-focused organisations, potential employers, and volunteers aiding refugee communities. The respondents included:

- Lithuanian Refugee Council¹²
- NGO Penki pojučiai¹³
- Ukreate Hub¹⁴
- Social enterprise Mano Guru¹⁵

This research aimed to uncover challenges and barriers in working with refugee groups, and to understand the requirements of these organisations in creating projects for the social and economic inclusion of refugees.

Insights gathered from these stakeholders provide valuable guidance for designing effective initiatives

Continuing working with refugees and implementing similar initiatives

What emerges from a series of revealing interviews is the need to continue working with refugees and to implement similar integration initiatives in host countries, in our case - in Lithuania. The stories and experiences shared by refugees underscore the importance of providing opportunities for economic empowerment and independence. Beyond the moral obligation, the economic and societal benefits are clear. Refugees, with their diverse skills and untapped potential, can make a significant contribution to host communities. These initiatives act as a bridge for social cohesion, breaking down barriers and fostering a sense of belonging among refugees, ultimately enriching the fabric of society. Moreover, as host countries grapple with demographic and labour force challenges, refugees can serve as a vital resource to fill critical labour gaps, catalysing economic growth and sustainability. The resounding consensus from these interviews is that working with refugees to integrate into the labour market is a mutually beneficial endeavour that fosters individual empowerment and promotes the collective prosperity of host countries.

Monetising products and services

The research outcome reveals a notable and encouraging trend among certain organisations: their willingness to embrace a social enterprise model. The organisations providing assistance to refugees on a grant-funding basis are actively exploring ways to generate revenue by selling their services, expertise, or products. What sets them apart is their commitment to reinvesting the profits earned from these endeavours back into activities

For more information:

¹² <https://www.refugeeslt.com/>

¹³ <https://www.penkipojuciai.lt/>

¹⁴ <https://ukreatehub.eu/>

¹⁵ <https://www.manoguru.lt/>

aimed at supporting refugees. This innovative approach represents a fundamental shift in the way organisations perceive their role in refugee aid. By operating as social enterprises, they not only contribute to the financial sustainability of their initiatives but also gain a level of self-sufficiency that can reduce their dependence on external funding sources.

This transition towards a social enterprise mindset signifies a dynamic evolution in the refugee support landscape. It highlights the adaptability and resilience of these organisations in the face of complex challenges. Furthermore, by diversifying their income streams, these organisations would be better positioned to scale their impact and reach a broader spectrum of refugees in need. This research outcome underscores the potential for innovative, sustainable, and community-focused solutions in the realm of refugee assistance, ultimately leading to more robust and effective support systems for displaced populations.

Challenges and Barriers

The challenges presented below are the result of the analysis of the perspectives and experiences collected by LiSVA through the interviews with social economy organisations and organisations working for the socio-economic inclusion of migrants in Lithuania.

Challenges of the target groups

| Challenges |
|---|
| <p>Getting jobs as the crucial challenge for refugees</p> <p>All the interviewees pointed out as the number one problem for refugees is getting a well-paid job. And this becomes problematic for most of the refugees coming from other countries and backgrounds. And it takes much time for them to find a suitable job or a decent job is one of the crucial needs for any refugee coming to Lithuania.</p> <p>The government's financial contribution to the integration of refugees is insufficient. As a result, many continue to migrate to other European countries, and some decide to return to their home country, even if it means risking their lives.</p> |
| <p>Recognition of refugees' educational and professional background in hosting country</p> <p>Among the key barriers there is an issue with recognition of the refugees' education and qualifications. In simple terms, the recognition of education and experience is difficult for many and often takes a long time or is met with rejection. As a result, teachers or doctors may have to work as cleaners or in other physically demanding roles that do not require any specific education or experience of work.</p> |
| <p>Language and cultural challenges</p> <p>Language skills also play a crucial role. On the one hand, the Lithuanian language is mandatory in most cases of employment. On the other - in Lithuania, the government lacks a robust strategy to aid refugees in learning the language, so there is a lack of mechanisms or even strategies to help refugees to learn the language. The existing</p> |
| <p>Lack of understanding legal frameworks and local markets for those immigrants willing to start their business</p> <p>It becomes too complicated for newcomers and refugees, even those having business in their home country, to learn the local contexts and requirements of the hosting country regarding legal entity registry, taxation, entering the local and national markets, etc. What made it easier for respondents is to have a trustworthy person nearby who knows the language, has connections with different stakeholders and helps to start initial processes.</p> |

Challenges of organisations

| Challenges |
|--|
| <p>Challenges with engagement with the target groups and beneficiaries</p> <p>In terms of engaging the target group, the organisations mostly use their own informational resources – website, social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn). The teams also use direct contacts and communication with different refugee communities.</p> <p>However, it's very difficult to find refugees in one year because the government institutions are not sharing the details about the refugees because of the sensitive information. Some of them are political refugees or asylum seekers. Some of them don't want to share their details so it's difficult for government institutions as well to share the details. We have to find the way and we have to know the techniques, how to reach people out and how to get in contact with them and keep them involved and engaged in our projects and activities.</p> |
| <p>Challenges in cooperation with stakeholders</p> <p>Participants mentioned the importance of cooperation with different stakeholders but in some cases they communicated about difficulties in establishing effective communication (like not responding to emails).</p> <p>The other challenge is that it becomes not easy to communicate the value proposition, so the potential stakeholders or partners can't clearly understand their benefits either financial or non-financial ones.</p> |
| <p>Lack of financing and resources</p> <p>All the organisations dedicated to assisting refugees face significant challenges due to a lack of financial resources and limited capacity. These pressing issues hinder its ability to provide essential support to the refugee communities it serves.</p> <p>The foremost challenge is the organisation's precarious financial situation. Without adequate funds, it struggles to offer meaningful assistance to refugees. The organisation relies heavily on grants, which are often insufficient to meet the growing needs of the refugees.</p> <p>The refugee communities supported by the organisations are dispersed across various locations, including small cities and rural areas. However, the organisations lack the resources to establish additional field offices or outreach centres in these diverse areas. This results in limited accessibility to many refugees who are in desperate need of assistance.</p> <p>Due to budgetary constraints, the organisations cannot address the refugee language and cultural diversity effectively. The majority of their materials and communication are in English, excluding refugees who speak languages such as Ukrainian, and others. This language barrier leaves many refugees feeling disconnected from the organisation's services.</p> |

NEEDS OF ORGANISATIONS

The needs presented below are the result of the analysis of the perspectives and experiences collected by LiSVA through the interviews with social economy organisations and organisations working for the socio-economic inclusion of migrants in Lithuania.

1. Data

What is needed is data. In most cases, organisations need data about the needs of refugees and the problems and challenges they are facing. The data is essential in different areas of working with migrants and refugees - in providing them necessary assistance in finding jobs, in supporting to establish business

2. Impact measurement methodology & tools

Some participants communicated that it is too early to measure impact, because their projects have just started.

The others said that the implementing initiatives targeting refugees and forced migrants needs to be measured not just in terms of outputs, but the long-term effect. So, the impact measurement approach and tools are needed.

3. Need for long-term initiatives

To ensure a positive impact on the social and economic integration of refugees, there is a need for long-term supporting initiatives. The current initiatives are mostly project-based ones that foresee a short time (a few months) of support. But when it comes especially to business development, only incubation is not sufficient. Some post-program engagement is needed to track the development of entrepreneurial initiatives, indicators, and interim results. The most crucial thing is not to leave these refugees alone with their ideas and projects but to ensure further support. In most cases, this need is directly dependent on the financial resources the organisations operate.

4. Needs of Financing and Resources

In summary, the organisations working with refugees face numerous obstacles due to their lack of financial resources and capacity constraints. These challenges hinder its ability to reach and assist scattered refugee communities, address language and cultural diversity, improve communication channels, expand facilities, and build the necessary capacity to provide meaningful support. Overcoming these financial limitations is crucial to fulfilling their mission and meeting the diverse needs of the refugees they serve.

5. Education program on SE for refugee supporting organisation

In response to the willingness of some refugee-supporting organisations to become social enterprises, there is a need to effectively design and implement a social entrepreneurship education program for organisations keen on embracing the social business model to support refugees, several key recommendations should be considered. Firstly, it is crucial to develop a comprehensive curriculum that covers essential aspects of social entrepreneurship, including business strategy, market analysis, financial planning, and impact measurement. The curriculum should be tailored to the unique needs and challenges faced by organisations operating in the refugee aid sector, offering practical insights and case studies specific to their context.

Secondly, fostering partnerships and collaborations is essential. Connecting these organisations with experienced social entrepreneurs, business mentors, and experts in refugee affairs can provide invaluable guidance and support. Additionally, facilitating networking opportunities and exchange programs within the social entrepreneurship ecosystem can help these organisations access resources, funding, and potential markets for their social enterprises.

Thirdly, international cooperation for non-formal education could also provide a platform for these organisations to voice their challenges and achievements on a global stage, increasing their visibility and potential impact. Engaging with international bodies, NGOs and global social entrepreneurship networks such as Diesis Network could also support policy advocacy to ensure that the needs of refugees and the organisations supporting them are adequately addressed. This approach not only enriches the learning experience for organisations transitioning to a social business model, but also fosters a more interconnected and resilient social entrepreneurship ecosystem capable of effectively supporting refugees worldwide.

Good practices from the European social economy ecosystem

The five case studies presented below represent good practices in the field of migrants socio-economic inclusion, community building and conflict resolutions that emerged from the interviews conducted with 5 social economy organisations from Germany, Poland, Romania, Cyprus and Georgia.

| ReDI - School of Digital Integration | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Country | Germany, Denmark, Sweden |
| Type of project/organisation | Non-profit tech school |
| Target group | Forced migration background, at least 50% participants in every class. Due to the high demand of admission to the courses, priority is given to the most vulnerable. |
| Context | Created in 2015 at the start of the refugee crisis in Berlin, through a consultative process that brought together NGO practitioners, academia, stakeholders from the profit sectors and local political activists. Based on needs analysis of forced migrants, who expressed the need to upskill, reskill and continue their training to access the labour market in Germany and the intuition that the increasing demand of highly skilled professionals from the tech and IT sectors (currently 123.000 available jobs in Germany) could be an opportunity for integration. Today, ReDI is active in 10 locations in Germany, Denmark and Sweden and offers online courses and self-learning opportunities to over 5500 participants per year, from 124 different nationalities. |
| Objective and main activities | <p>ReDI School of Digital innovation provides free access to digital education, facilitating the integration in the labour market of newcomers and locals. Technology is used as a means to connect human potential to fair and equal employment opportunities.</p> <p>The activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginners, intermediate and advanced tech and digital courses; • Digital inclusion for women • Career workshops • Job Fairs • Inhouse mentorship programmes (partnership with tech companies) • Talent pools portal • Career talks with tech professionals (also available online) • Online company Visits |

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Partnership | <p>Tech companies and profit sector (inhouse volunteers for mentorship, internship)</p> <p>Local municipalities (minor role)</p> <p>Local NGOs partnerships for sensitive topics (eg. domestic and gender based violence)</p> |
| Best practices | <p><u>Co-creation with the beneficiaries:</u></p> <p>Design of the course schedule based on the needs of the participants: the courses are 2 hours in the evenings to allow participants to attend to their other obligations (legal requirements connected to their refugee status, childcare, language courses etc.). A specific portfolio designed for women was added in the weekend, with free childcare available.</p> <p>As the demand arose, it was also added a digital introduction course to facilitate newcomers in learning how to access online banking, digital infrastructures at school and social services.</p> <p><u>Hybrid approach, online and offline opportunities:</u></p> <p>Different locations, in major cities (eg. Berlin, Hambourg, Munich, Ahrus and Malmo) there is a physical school, but courses are also offered inside the refugee camps and online to ensure the widest inclusion possible. Courses are taught in English.</p> <p><u>Conflict sensitive, inclusive methodologies:</u></p> <p>Trainers and volunteers are trained in inclusive, nonviolent communication to facilitate conflict resolution, intercultural mediators are also involved in the team in case of need.</p> <p>The focus of the training is strongly on digital and tech skills, as the participants appreciate having a free space where they can be first and foremost learners or professionals.</p> <p><u>Community development:</u></p> <p>The empowerment process is embedded in the courses, which then leads to the participants being able to independently find internship opportunities. The most relevant feedback from the participants is the sense of belonging to the school community.</p> <p><u>Entrepreneurial mindset as guiding practice:</u></p> <p>Social entrepreneurial mindset is used to structure and set the ultimate objectives of the course: participants are challenged to identify and design digital solutions to present challenges.</p> |
| Funding | <p>Most of the funding comes from donations and corporate foundations (Cola Foundation, Microsoft Philanthropy, L'Oreal Foundation, JP Morgan Foundation, etc.)</p> <p>In specific locations (e.g. Munich and Hambourg) 50% is public subsidies.</p> <p>5% is partnership and self-earning.</p> |



| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Challenges</p> | <p><u>Inclusion of the local German community:</u> Courses are taught in English, which can also represent an impediment for local unemployed or low-educated to access.</p> <p><u>Access to funding:</u> Limited access to funding, due to the nature and structure of the courses, which do not fit the strict criteria of traditional integration opportunities, subsidised by the public. Political consensus shifts, social welfare systems are not impact oriented. Financial sustainability especially to cover for the staff.</p> <p><u>Individual mentorship and job guidance:</u> Providing mentorship and job guidance proved to be challenging in terms of resources and costs, the decision was to outsource that to the tech companies themselves.</p> <p><u>Impact measurement:</u> Impact measurement is central from the beginning, sometimes critical. Use external resources such as Phineo and Salesforce, but still challenging to systemically follow up on the employment rates (most respondents are the positive ones, who feel proud to share the results, but then these are skewed).</p> |
| <p>Link</p> | <p>https://www.redi-school.org/</p> |
| <p>Other relevant info or related resources</p> | <p>Social Impact assessment tool utilised by REDI https://www.phineo.org/en/social-impact-naigator</p> |



| Polish Migration Forum | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Country | Poland |
| Type of project/organisation | Network organisation |
| Target group | Refugees and migrants |
| Context | Polish Migration Forum Foundation (PFM) was established in 2007 to promote the rights of migrants in Poland. PFM works for the integration of foreigners and Poles living abroad, developing initiatives and supporting activities that lead to dialogue between people representing various cultures. |
| Objective and main activities | <p>The priority of PFM is to build peaceful societies where all the different groups live and function together.</p> <p>The activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • direct support to foreigners (psychological, about the job market, regarding legalisation of stay), • training (for teachers, psychologists, government officials), • activities in between formal and informal education (workshops, city games), • provide legal and integration consultations, with specific focus on day-to-day issues, • community dialogue and integration meetings, • support for migrant women by organising childbirth schools and support groups for migrant mothers. |
| Partnership | <p>Member of consortium of Polish migration,</p> <p>Cooperation with international organisations present in Poland, such as UNHCR,</p> <p>Part of different working groups connected with the topic of integration – local municipality,</p> <p>Support the prime minister's office for the promotion of fair migration policies,</p> <p>Local government,</p> <p>churches and charitable institutions.</p> |
| Best practices | <p><u>Connection with host communities:</u></p> <p>The PFM engages in its activities a huge group of volunteers that are involved in the cultural events (open picnics, walks, open to everybody), in the organisation of polish language conversations, run by volunteers; they also offer mentorship opportunities, organised on individual basis, with representatives from the local communities.</p> <p>Activities for older people- international club- combined from Polish and migrants- senior club.</p> |



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| Funding | National and European funding |
| Challenges | <p>Language barriers</p> <p><u>Being a transition country:</u> Some refugees struggle to see Poland as their final destination and are not willing to participate in the language courses or commit to long-term engagements while they stay in so -called- limbo, because the reunification with families can be a lengthy process, often more than 2 years.</p> <p><u>Integration in labour market:</u> Lacking a network of employers, therefore there are struggles in matching the employer with employees. Local employers are still reluctant to hire people from different countries Due to unmatching in skills and host-country requirements, newcomers cannot do jobs that they are doing in their own countries.</p> |
| Link | https://www.forummigracyjne.org/en/ |
| Other relevant info or related resources | |



| Job Direct | |
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| Country | Romania |
| Type of project/organisation | Social enterprise, ADV ROMANIA |
| Target group | People with disabilities, refugees and migrants |
| Context | Established in 2016 by ADV Romania, one of the largest social enterprises in Romania, Job Direct is the first job integration agency specialised in people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. From 2022, as a result of the sudden influx of forced displacement from Ukraine, Job Direct practitioners have expanded their services to include migrants and refugees, adapting their existing methodologies and expertise to fit the new needs and challenges faced by newcomers in the country. |
| Objective and main activities | <p>Job Direct is specialised in upskilling, recruitment, job guidance and mentoring to facilitate the inclusion of vulnerable groups in the labour market.</p> <p>These activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Professional counselling; ● Testing; ● Internship opportunities; ● Job mediation and job coaching; ● Study visits in social enterprises in Romania ● Psychological evaluation for professional purposes |
| Partnership | Local organisations National network of social enterprises Psychosocial support Local municipality Language and cultural mediators |
| Best Practices | <p><u>Adaptation of existing expertise:</u></p> <p>The expertise and long standing knowledge gained through the inclusion of other vulnerable groups, eg. people with disabilities, were valorised by adapting it to an emerging need.</p> <p><u>System of packages of services in partnership with local NGOs:</u></p> <p>The specific services designed for newcomers and forced migrants are organised in different packages, making it easier for the beneficiaries to choose the support and assistance based on their own specific needs. For instance, there are educational services package, psychosocial counselling package, juridical support package, work and professional integration. The beneficiaries are supported in the evaluation of their needs and the best solution is identified jointly with Job Direct practitioners.</p> |

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| | <p>These packages are offered in network with other local organisations to diversify and complement the offer.</p> <p><u>Social entrepreneurship approach:</u> As a social enterprise, the long term vision is to also include vulnerable groups in its own activities: Job Direct received funding from a Norwegian foundation to build a coffee roastery, which in time will employ vulnerable groups.</p> |
| <p>Funding</p> | <p>National funding European funding</p> |
| <p>Challenges</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Language barriers - Different levels of education , and impossibility to transfer their diploma - Different cultural backgrounds - Accommodate specific needs of women and children - Mediate between the previous professional experiences and related expectations and the opportunities available |
| <p>Link</p> | <p>https://www.jobdirect.ro/</p> |
| <p>Other relevant info or related resources</p> | <p>/</p> |



| Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR) and Home Corporation | |
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| Country | Cyprus |
| Type of project/organisation | Non-profit organisation |
| Target group | Greek and Turkish communities in Cyprus, students, teachers and general public |
| Context | The Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR) was established in Nicosia in 2003. Since its foundation, the AHDR has enlisted members from various ethnic, linguistic, and professional backgrounds working at various educational levels in Cyprus, making the first steps towards a greater effort to maintain a continuous, open dialogue about enhanced pedagogic practices that could encourage the values of the discipline of history. |
| Objective and main activities | <p>AHDR pursues awareness raising through a multiperspective history education: exposing people to different narratives, promoting and understanding that there are different lenses to view history, meaning the past, the present and to imagine the future. The underlying belief is that the sooner it is understood that humans are not monolithic beings, the sooner it is possible to promote meaningful dialogue and communication between peoples and cultures.</p> <p>The activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trainings; ● Conferences and seminars; ● Policy recommendations and papers; ● Study visits and cultural tours; ● Panel discussions on historical dialogue and the culture of peace. |
| Partnership | Local municipality (both sides) |
| Best practices | <p><u>Spatial regeneration for community building:</u></p> <p>Home for Corporation is a regenerated building in the buffer zone in Nicosia that the organisation purchased in 2008 and renovated through international funding. It started as a community centre and now it is also a cultural centre and hub for international cooperation in Cyprus. It is accessible for people from all walks of life, communities and houses of different organisations. It hosts public events, festivals, and movie screenings.</p> <p><u>Youth engagement for building bridges:</u></p> <p>The Imagine project aims to increase contact between the two communities in Cyprus and promote peace, understanding and anti-racism on the island in the context of a holistic understanding of a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence inspired by UN documents, resolutions and plans of action. The program also aims to decentralise and</p> |



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| | <p>reach rural areas in the island which have fewer opportunities to engage in activities that bring members of the two communities together. Participation in the project is completely voluntary and free-of-charge. The project is based on a step-by-step approach, and the methodology employed in the workshops is adapted to different age groups and educational levels.</p> <p>Participants (children, teachers and volunteers) are trained in antiracism, diversity, peace education, human rights in their respective languages and communities, and then are paired with a counterpart from the other community. They meet in the buffer zone and engage together in experimental workshops or sport activities.</p> |
| Funding | National, international and European funding |
| Challenges | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changing political support - Currently a conflict society - Stalemate of political negotiation and peace - Widespread racism toward the other community |
| Link | https://www.ahdr.info/project-and-research |
| Other relevant info or related resources | / |



| Rural/Regional Development for Future Georgia | |
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| Country | Georgia |
| Type of project/organisation | Non-profit organisation working in the field of emergency response, crisis response, work towards peace-building component in former war affected areas. |
| Target group | Internationally displaced people |
| Context | <p>As the tensions arose, the government decided to re-settle people from the border regions. This process created several “artificial villages”, where the concentration of IDPs was prominent. This was a trigger to look at how to create economic opportunities for those people living in tough economic conditions.</p> <p>In its initial stage, the organisation provided help to IDPs with humanitarian aid and then supported the integration in the host communities.</p> |
| Objective and main activities | <p>Founded in 2010, RDFG is a development and relief non profit organisation that assists vulnerable communities with social and economic development to strengthen their self-resilience. RDFG works to improve conditions of the most vulnerable people to prevent and alleviate human suffering and protect and respect human dignity with complete impartiality and no discrimination. RDFG’s work encompasses issues such as human rights, environmental protection, gender equality, peace building and disaster risk reduction. RDFG also provides technical assistance to local governments to develop and adapt advanced management systems and methodologies.</p> <p>These activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assisting IDPs with socio- economic development ● Creating opportunities to youth ● Provide support to Women ● Provide support to local authorities for democratic development ● Work on disaster reduction ● IDPs are present everywhere- staff members are IDPs |
| Partnership | |
| Best practices | <p>Youth Entrepreneurship programme:</p> <p><u>Unido: manual on how to support young entrepreneurs:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How to elaborate business idea ● Convert into business plan |



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical implementation <p><u>Integrating LEADER approach (local municipalities):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create opportunities for migrants in rural areas. • Number of tools to work with local youth and create an environment for the digital economy. • Approach discusses the creation of entrepreneurship - for joint economic activities <p><u>Introduce community driven rural development:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as a term • rural development strategy • leader approach. <p>Its already a path where many municipalities are going to join (funding from EU delegation)</p> |
| Funding | International funding (non European) |
| Challenges | <p><u>Financial resources:</u></p> <p>Financial support is inconsistent and often politicised.</p> <p>Big streams of funding usually go to international organisations, leaving small grants to local NGOs. At the moment, the NGO is not able to apply for the EU Delegation funding directly.</p> <p><u>Challenge of implementation in terms freedom of action;</u></p> <p>For the SE, there is no support system for that in Georgia</p> <p>Environment where there is not equal access to opportunities and resources.</p> |
| Link | <p>https://www.devex.com/organizations/association-rural-development-for-future-georgia-rdfg-133632#:~:text=Founded%20in%202010%2C%20RDFG%20is,to%20strengthen%20their%20self%2Dresilience.</p> |
| Other relevant info or related resources | |



Lessons learned & Recommendations

Refugees for refugees

"I'm also a refugee I know very well what are the key problems and challenges on the way over refugees being interpreted"

Akhtar

The driving force behind many refugee-centred organisations and initiatives often lies with individuals who share a refugee background themselves. These individuals, having personally experienced the challenges and struggles associated with forced displacement, bring a unique and empathetic perspective to their work. They possess an intimate understanding of the critical issues at hand, making their efforts incredibly impactful.

In all the experiences gathered across Europe, the common denominator is the codesign and co-creation of the activities, services and opportunities offered, whether this is based on a previously made need assessment and analysis, facilitation of co-development roundtables, adaptation of resources and methodologies from previous experiences. The specific needs may vary from country to country, but it was always highlighted how the design of the responses identified were stemming from a solid understanding of the context (i.e. legal, social and economic systems) paired with the insights, requests and needs of the refugees themselves.

As a recommendation for future initiatives, it is essential to continue this trend by actively involving refugees as success stories and integral contributors. By doing so, we not only honour their resilience and expertise but also ensure that the solutions and support offered are informed by lived experiences. This approach fosters a deeper connection between refugees, their communities, and the organisations working to assist them, ultimately leading to more effective, empathetic, and sustainable outcomes in the journey towards rebuilding lives and fostering integration.

Social economy organisations are characterised by a bottom-up approach, processes of inclusion of stakeholders and shared governance structures that facilitate this approach, as it is their intrinsic nature to do so. They are also facilitated by a close connection with the local communities and a solid awareness and sensitivity towards local needs and challenges related to socio-economic issues.

Communication in different languages of refugees and services in their native languages

A crucial recommendation to improve support for refugees is to prioritise effective communication in their native languages and offer services in languages they understand. This approach not only bridges the linguistic gap but also demonstrates a genuine commitment to inclusivity and cultural sensitivity. Providing essential information, resources, and services in refugees' native languages ensures that they can access and comprehend critical information about their rights, available support, and integration processes.

This initiative fosters trust, reduces communication barriers, and empowers refugees to make informed decisions. Furthermore, it promotes a sense of belonging and inclusion, which is pivotal in helping refugees rebuild their lives in a new host country. To achieve this, organisations and agencies can invest in multilingual staff, translation services, and culturally tailored communication strategies, ultimately facilitating a smoother and more supportive refugee integration process. Another path that proved viable, is to directly engage the local communities and facilitate language exchange, mentoring and intercultural communication opportunities.

People first approach

The majority of interviewees mentioned the need to focus on creating a safe space for refugees first, so that they could then think about their further integration into the local host communities. The volunteers interviewed mentioned that all attempts to provide some concrete hard skills, whether it was the basics of the local language or the legal framework, were often transformed into the safe spaces to talk and provide some basic psychological support. All these lessons became spaces where all the participants were sharing their own traumas and experiences. So they talked, cried and laughed together. And that was their basic need.

Therefore, we can say that all initiatives aimed at the social and economic integration of refugees should include the component of psychological support to ensure a safe space for learning and further development in a new country. Several of the case studies identified offered such an opportunity, some through the allocation of specific 'psychological support packages' that the beneficiaries could choose from, often provided in cooperation with other local organisations. This places their needs and - especially - their own perception of their needs at the centre. They are empowered in assessing their situations, while provided with support if needed.

Other experiences, especially in regions where the activities involved long term migrants and refugees, presented the opposite need: the people-centred approach allowed them to understand that their participants viewed the activities as a neutral space, where they could

be professionals and students who are focusing on upskilling and reskilling, leaving the obligations, traumas and contingencies related to their situations outside.

This observation is particularly interesting for social economy organisations, especially if the potential role in peacebuilding is met with resistance, due to the complexity of the responses and skills needed: social enterprises could represent the venue, the endeavour, the ecosystem that facilitates this empowerment.

Analytics and research before the action plan

There are many different types of refugees, coming from different continents, different countries, languages, mentalities, backgrounds, legal status, financial sustainability. As a result, we cannot come up with one solution that will serve everyone. These people have different needs when they arrive in the host country. For example, those who do not have a place to live or a basic financial income to support themselves and their families will not consider long-term education, but will focus on finding a job as soon as possible to ensure their survival.

Therefore, before designing projects and initiatives for refugees and forced migrants, it would be efficient to have a refugee profile that describes their problems, tasks, pains and gains. Only then would we be able to design appropriate programmes for each specific target group of refugees. This tool could serve as a systemic solution, as government social services and other actors working with refugees would know them better and therefore provide them with more tailored support.

Such a profiling approach is urgently needed to identify other possible problems that may arise when we focus our efforts on integrating refugees into the labour market. We may find that getting a work permit or opening a bank account may be problematic for some specific cases. This issue needs special attention and examination with regard to those refugees who came illegally. Similar cases must be examined by the national government and in most cases require the decision of the court. So this is another argument why refugee profiling would be necessary and effective.

Social economy organisations could provide support in the identification of these profiles as they are, together with humanitarian and first-response organisations, on the front line of the provision of services. They are in contact and oftentimes themselves act as mediator between the refugee or migrant and the institutions.

Creation of Acceleration programs

About 50% of interviewed persons in Lithuania represented organisations and initiatives working in the field of business education mainly with startups. The other half of the

respondents mentioned the need and effectiveness of similar programs, especially those who had an entrepreneurial experience in their home countries.

Similar programs are the perfect opportunities to introduce refugees to the local market regulation, legal frameworks and integrate them into the community of local entrepreneurs. It was oftentimes highlighted the complexity of approaching the receiving country's entrepreneurial system due to lack of knowledge of the regulations and processes, language barriers and impossibility to transfer their previous academic titles and experiences to the new system.

It works even better if there is an opportunity to win the financial prize to develop their ventures in a hosting country, so the refugees feel not just intellectual solidarity from the business community, but also a financial support as a kind of investment in their business.

Create programs to support refugees' business development in different industries

It has become a trend to involve refugees or other vulnerable target groups in various incubation programmes in IT or other technology and digital fields. On the one hand, these are good opportunities for those migrants with some IT or technical background, so that after acquiring some new knowledge and skills, they can easily get a job in the market. The ReDI School of Innovation is a great example of a social economy organisation that manages to offer IT courses, upskilling and training on a variety of tech skills, for beneficiaries with very different backgrounds, beginners and most vulnerable included.

At the same time, such a trend partially excludes those refugees with non-IT backgrounds, such as hairdressers, carpenters and so on. It is therefore necessary to pay equal attention to different target groups and their backgrounds in order to ensure that their entrepreneurial potential and talents can also be developed. Social economy is recognised as transversal in its employability in different sectors and industries, while ensuring the needs and people-centred approach is ensured.

Ongoing mentorship support

When it comes to designing projects and initiatives on business education for refugees, it is necessary to include a component of ongoing mentorship support by a trustworthy person or team easily accessible to help with different issues starting from language barriers to specific legal advice market solutions.

Raising awareness

It is extremely important to raise awareness of the success stories of refugees who have managed to set up their own businesses in the host country, as this helps to change the perception of refugees from receiving to contributing. In this way, we can demonstrate that refugees can contribute to the host country's economy by paying taxes, creating new jobs and developing new products and services.

For this purpose as well as for internal assessments, continuous and prompt impact measurement and monitoring of the long-term impacts of the activities is needed.

Impact on peacebuilding

It is obvious to the organisation that in many of their events and projects, they purposefully establish connections and foster links between refugee communities and the host community. This approach extends beyond merely providing support to refugees; it encompasses the host community as well. By facilitating dialogue and interaction between these groups, between the speakers and learners, they create an environment conducive to learning and discussion.

This process allows individuals from different sides to better understand one another, ultimately forging connections that can develop into long-lasting friendships and support networks. It also promotes an appreciation for the diversity of cultures, leading to mutual respect. Even if not explicitly aimed at building more peaceful societies, these activities contribute significantly to the cohesion and harmony within the communities they impact.

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