



S O L I D A project

 Rete
dei Comuni
Solidali

RECOSOL

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Co-funded by the
Europe for Citizens Programme
of the European Union

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Solida Network Of Municipalities For Promotion Of Immigrants' Democratic Participation



CONTENT



PRESENTATION OF SOLIDA PROJECT

The SOLIDA project moves from the “political will” of 7 local administrations to approach the integration of immigrants in their local communities as a two-way process based on mutual rights and obligation on the part of both immigrants and the host society, in which civic and political participation are a key element. The project will be implemented in 7 different countries, with a partnership composed of 7 municipalities (Gioiosa Ionica [IT], Neapoli-Sykies [EL], Lousada [PT], Novo Mesto [SI], Birgu [MA], Erdut [HR] and Santa Pola [ES]) and 1 network of 284 Italian local administrations (RE.CO.SOL), each one with experience in promoting the integration of immigrants in the local society and the development of new local policies for their active participation.

The objective is to support local administrations to develop new practice, polices and tools to allow immigrants to become active citizens and to establish the first European Network of Solidarity-based Towns (based on successful RE.CO.SOL experience in Italy), a place where the municipalities will get inspiration for new solidarity-based activities and support in improvement of local integration polices.

The partnership has identified 7 topics to be transformed into concrete local policies, that will be addressed during the international events in the partners’ countries: EU Instruments, Introductory programmes, Voting and Political Rights, Consultative bodies, Volunteering, Raise Awareness of local population and Networking.

Supporting municipalities to develop new practices, policies and tools to allow immigrants to become active citizens, will result in strengthening immigrants’ democratic participation at local levels, empowering them to play a different role in their communities and enhancing mutual understanding and positive relationships between local citizens and Third Country nationals.

At European Level, the main impact will be guaranteed by the involvement of the RE.CO.SOL Network, that will directly involve the Municipalities taking part to it in the further dissemination of the project’s results.



Municipality of Gioiosa Ionica

ITALY

Salvatore Fuda, Mayor of Municipality of Gioiosa Ionica and Luca Ritorto, Councilor for Migrants Policies:

The challenge that Municipality of Gioiosa Ionica wanted to take up with the SOLIDA project proposal arise from the firm belief that we need to go beyond the "daily administration", trying to regain an excessive delay that led us to consider too much distant the opportunities offered by the European Union. We need to work hard within our realities on the european subject and its advantages offered in terms of relationships. SOLIDA project has above all the following meaning: projecting local communities in a context of European confrontation on important and current issues such as migration and hospitality, in order to promote effective policies of inclusion and participation of all citizens.

SOLIDA project has offered the opportunity to compare itself with other European contexts on many issues in social, cultural and environmental fields. Many practices in different areas joined by the desire to support the most vulnerable sections of society and to ensure adequate levels of quality of life for our citizens. We have to nurture this idea of Europe to dispute the perception that the European institutions, destined to guarantee peace and development to the "Old Continent", are distant and bureaucratic structures incapable of looking at the real life of citizens.

In comparison with the other European partners, we have described our experience as a country of hospitality gained within SPRAR project of which Municipality of Gioiosa Ionica is title holder since 2014, an experience that we consider extremely positive for our community. The goal, ambitious and not at all obvious, to formally constitute a European network among the organizations participating in the project that could create opportunities and circumstances for our communities has been achieved. A path surely not simple, but that it will can work thanks to the enthusiasm found during the various stages of the project.

In a thorny political moment for our Europe, in which more and more selfishness and fears for every form of diversity seem to take the upper hand, we have to be very determined to oppose to this negative feelings the ability to be supportive, to build welcoming communities, to imagine the future of Europe as a place in which practice the "conviviality of differences", promoting peace and the common good. For this reasons we consider SOLIDA experience as a starting point for the construction of paths useful to help our citizens to feel more and more citizens of Europe.



Municipality of Gioiosa Ionica, thanks to the current administration, decided to give hospitality to refugees in our territory and, our administration, wants to take its own responsibility in contrast to the different economic and social problems of a lot of international policies.

Hospitality and immigration policies are institutional obligations for Italy and Europe, they result from the national and European law and from the International treaties.

According to our opinion, the immigration policies have to be adapted to small number, it means that in little communities the process of 'integration' is easier to realize. In Calabria there are about 180 (one hundred and eighty) municipalities that have decided to participate to the SPRAR hospitality project. Gioiosa Ionica is an example of the good result of the project because it was not only a great example of hospitality,



it was also an opportunity, especially for young people, to increase Gioiosa's microeconomics.

According to our opinion the migration phenomenon have to be conceived not as an emergency, by the contrary, it is a structural phenomenon and it is necessary to develop a broad reach policies in order to create stability and social cohesion.

We have to remember that the migrant is first of all a 'human being', for this reason it is important to reinforce the services and the instruments useful to help migrant's vulnerability. Another important element is to support the collaboration between the guest migrant and the host community.

In the creation of these organized and stable policies, the public subject has to be the central one; it is also important the institutional and social role of territories (volunteer and trade associations and third sector).

According to this perspective it is very relevant the centrality of the municipalities members. For this reason the local public subject has to have the most important role of organization and coordination of hospitality services, in order to improve interventions quality and to support and improve the third sector.

In the last years the Municipality of Gioiosa Ionica supported the cooperation with Re.Co.Sol (the association that coordinates the hospitality of asylum seekers) and with the so called *Consulta delle Associazioni*, a sort of council made up of 40 associations operating in different field: social, cultural, sports, etc.



The past experiences showed to us how it was possible to realize intercultural activities and cultural exchanges, an opportunity to enrich our own personal baggage. Speaking of these experiences, it was precious the work of Volunteers.

Let's analyze few example of activities realized by ReCoSol and municipal administration:

- The Ramadan celebration, realized in collaboration with muslim migrants. It is the most important religious event for their belief and for this reason it is important to respect this tradition. Each year we share Ramadam celebration with gastronomic exchanges and traditional dance;
- Our guests participated to Christian celebration, especially during the Christmas period. This participation was organized by schools and other associations;
- the creation of the band Kunta Kinte made up of migrants and no migrants musicians. They perform live concert during important events;
- our guests participated to important voluntary work in collaboration with administrators and workers, such as the cleaning of the ancient part of the town;
- there were a lot of meetings, especially in the schools, in order to sensitize young people to the delicate theme of migration. A lot of groups of young people moved from different part of Italy to Gioiosa Jonica to learn these important lessons.
- art and painting laboratories in which our guests learned about typical products of Gioiosa's handcraft in cooperation with local associations of artisans.

These are just few examples of the good results of our policy. These things produce a perspective of 'inclusion' that we hope for the future our community. The presence of migrants is considered a precious resource for our municipality.

The realization of an integrated system of interventions to create the 'inclusion' of migrants in our territory was assisted by the principal body in the field of hospitality, The Re.Co.Sol, Italian acronym for Rete dei Comuni Solidali, it means Supportive Municipalities Net. To be part of Re.Co.Sol produce a political act, mayors and council members are aware that this choice means to cooperate with an international net of volunteering in which it is expected the realization of little and concrete projects with an enormous moral value.

Also for the coming years, our municipality has the intention to aim for policies based on the integration and hospitality, conscious that we can reach good results only where is a social fabric capable to share and support the project, creating synergies and joining to the realization of a real migrants inclusion in our community.





Municipality of Lousada

PORTUGAL

The Municipality of Lousada is an institution of local public administration. The council of Lousada belongs to the district of Porto and has an extension of 95 Km². It has approximately 50.000 inhabitants that are distributed within the 25 villages. In the context of the Portuguese public policies for integration of immigrants, of which the High Commission for Migration and Intercultural Dialogue is responsible, the Network of Local Centres to Support Migrant Integration was born on the conviction that the effective integration of immigrant citizens is, especially at the local level. It is with this mission that a network of proximity emerges capable of welcoming and integrating migrants, and that it has been constituted as an effective mechanism in the construction of the multifactorial process of integration of the immigrants in the Portuguese society. Based on the cooperation between High Commission for Migration and Intercultural Dialogue, municipalities and / or civil society entities, Local Support Centres for Migrant Integration, in addition to the integrated services they provide, have been developing projects in the area of Intercultural promotion, fostering a fuller integration of rights and duties for all people.



The constitution of the Local Support Centres for Migrant Integration network proved to be fundamental to guarantee the existence of a territorially decentralized structure that would ensure responses of proximity to the specific problems presented by immigrants. The success of a Local Support Centre for Migrant Integration depends to a large extent on its ability to coordinate with other organizations that play key roles in the process of integrating migrants and promoting interculturality.

Among the added value of the Local Support Centres for Migrant Integration, the following stand out:

- Proximity and confidence - bring the services of migrants closer together;
- Institutional articulation and partnership principle;
- Insertion in lattice structure, resulting from its integration into a structured national network;
- Competence and motivation of youth workers.



There are living in Lousada about 240 immigrants (0.5% of the total population). The Municipality of Lousada has a Local Support Centres for Migrant Integration. We give supports to our immigrants, such as integration in school, in employment, in vocational training and in social terms.

Story of success: Social integration: education, culture, sport, social and emergency support and initial "Intercultural Kit"

The Municipality of Lousada - entity responsible for the Intercultural Kit. The "Intercultural Kit" resulted from an "ICI - Inform, Get Together and Integrate" project, in the scope of the "Promotion of Interculturality at the Municipal level". As in the "Intercultural Box", with this activity, the aim was to make known to the students of the 2nd Cycle of Basic Education of Lousada the traditions, custom and other aspects of third-country culture (habits, modes of life, holidays, gastronomy, etc); to involve the migrant community residing in the municipality of Lousada, as well as the school groups, in the signaling, research and collection of this information relative to their countries of origin; to diminish the lack of knowledge, incomprehension and lack of familiarity with the cultures of third countries present in this Council.

The "Intercultural Kit" is the responsibility of the Municipality of Lousada and is intended for the school population of the 2nd Cycle of Basic Education, namely students and educational agents enrolled in the Clubs of Europe of the Schools of the municipality of Lousada. It also represents a working tool for youth workers as well as for other local agents throughout the country. The activity consisted in the signaling, research and collection, with immigrant communities, of traditions and customs of their countries of origin. After collection, all material has been translated and edited, either in digital format or on paper. The final product was disseminated and used by schools of the 2nd Cycle.



Pedro Gomes,

Mayor of the Municipality of Lousada:

Our municipality implements strategies of integrated and holistic nature, seeking to give simultaneous voice to immigrants and promotes, more actively, the implementation of solutions to the problems detected. We promote positive interactions between immigrants and the host society with several activities. An example is the cultural and recreational activities of intercultural synthesis, such as the "Municipal Days of Interculturality".

Manuel Nunes,

Councillor of Culture:

The reception, but especially the full integration of immigrants is a process that, in Lousada, has a long tradition. The community welcomes those who see our council as a place for living.

We know how complex the processes of cultural assimilation is, but we are also aware of the importance of full empowerment of the new "inhabitants" as full citizens.

Amadeu Costa,

Immigrant:

The Municipality of Lousada is doing a work of excellence in the promotion of artistic activities oriented to cultural interaction and to collective learning. I welcome the collection, systematization and dissemination of cultural elements associated with immigrant groups. This has contributed to the reinforcement of the self-esteem of the immigrants and also to the development of forms of knowledge and mutual understanding. The fact that the activities presented are based on experiences and examples from the local reality, with which children, young people and the population in general contact daily, reinforces their meaning and understanding.



Municipality of Santa Pola

SPAIN

SPAIN is located in the South West of Europe, on the mainland of the country that is south of France and the Pyrenees Mountains and east of Portugal. However, it also has territory in Morocco, the cities of Ceuta and Melilla, islands off the coast of Morocco as well as the Canary Islands in the Atlantic and the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean Sea.

First of all, it should be noted that the National Government is responsible for policies on nationality, immigration, emigration, aliens and the right to asylum, as established by Article 149.1. 2 of the Spanish Constitution of 1978. Municipality of Santa Pola

Geographic location.

Santa Pola is a Spanish city located on the province of Alicante. It belongs to the Valencian Community, it is east of the Iberian Peninsula and next to the Mediterranean sea. Its coastal situation in the Mediterranean area confers a population density over the Spanish average and an economy based on tourism, thanks to the favourable characteristics of the Mediterranean climate.



The most important economic sector of Santa Pola is the tertiary sector. Services, and specially commerce, represent 84%. Hospitality and tourism related activities are also of great importance.

Industrial activities are mostly related to extraction (salt) and food preservation, which comes from fishing and aquaculture. They represent 10% of the employments of Santa Pola.

The whole primary sector employs 2% of the active population of Santa Pola. Fishing is, by far, the main activity of the primary sector.

The population of Santa Pola is formed by different nationalities. 83,74% are Spanish and 16,25% are foreigners, which 73,6% comes from Europe, 12,6% comes from America, 7,5% from Africa, 6,2% from Asia and 0,4% from Oceania. Immigrants registered in the council of Santa Pola come, mainly, from other countries (60%). The rest of them, come from Spain itself, mostly from other towns of the Valencian Community (25%) and, the rest, from other communities (15%).

The net migration rate is balanced on the Valencian Community, slightly positive on the Autonomous Community and highly superior regarding foreigners, with a small decrease on the arrival of foreign immigrants in 2012.

The National Immigration Law (Ley Orgánica 4/2000, de 11 de enero, sobre derechos y libertades de los extranjeros en España y su integración social) establishes a framework of rights and freedoms for migrants in Spain, It seeks to reinforce integration as one of the central axes of State Immigration Policy, pursuing a framework of coexistence of identities and cultures.

And this is - in essence-the aim of our local migration & integration policies: the achievement of the effective equality of rights and the full integration of migrants. But also, in terms of local policies, it is included the promotion and dissemination of Human Rights, in particular the elimination of all forms of intolerance or discrimination, values of Equality, mutual respect and citizen participation.

We understand that integration is a two-way process that requires efforts from both migrants and host society. Civil society plays an important role in the implementation of our local integration policies.

In this way, our strategy includes not only the public assistance to migrants but also actions and activities to enable the participation of all civil actors of local community, building ties between all of them.

The municipal immigration & integration plan establishes the framework and guidelines of the local migration policy. The current document was drawn up for a short-term period (2015-2018) and the next year, according to the results of its evaluation, will be extended or modified. The Immigration & Integration Local Plan reflects the political will, but also the expression of civil community.

It includes different areas to work and defines particular objectives to reach in each one, and the activities to be carried out during the development phase.



PANGEA is the municipal office -specialized local office- in charge of developing and executing the referred activities. There are a small -but enthusiastic - team composed by social workers and a lawyer, specialists in Migration Law, Mediation and Social Services. Professionals work so close with professionals of Social Services Department, but also with local institutions and with migrants associations. The office wishes to be a reference in Migration affairs for the local community.

In relation to migrants' community, the Municipal Volunteering Office aims at being a common workspace for those who want to share their time, knowledge and experience in order to help others, regardless their nationality, age, etc... Currently, many of the volunteers enrolled in the municipal volunteering service come from different countries as Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Uruguay, Morocco, Senegal... All of them, residents in the municipality, are doing a fantastic work by providing their personal experiences to the newcomers, helping them with translations, accompaniment, etc... and taking part in activities and projects aimed at citizens (As SOLIDA Project for instance). They all support programs developed from other municipal departments, as the Migrants Municipal Office (Pangea), social services department, etc...



In this way we could state that the municipal volunteering office has a dual challenge:

On one side, it is in charge of developing the referred programs we mentioned before to all the community, but specially in relation to those who are in a situation of extreme vulnerability. (We can think about a migrant family, recently comers, with no language skills, lacking in resources, needing help for basic needs coverage...) Volunteers will assist and complement the work of social services department and migration office, according to the specific programs they should be enrolled. Volunteers also take part in the municipal activities focused on the migrant community (workshops, informative talks, etc...). But, on the other hand, Volunteering Office has become a real opportunity of integration and participation for all migrants residing in our municipality. They, as volunteers are participating actively, helping others at the same time. In this way, we could say the municipal volunteering office promotes the active contribution of citizenship and their participation in social life. This - participation in social life as a meaning of integration- is something quite important for migrants and will be considered by public administrations to grant their residence or work permits, or even to obtain the Spanish Nationality.



In general terms, we could say that the contribution volunteering makes to society is invaluable. And concerning migration affairs, volunteers are considered as an important piece of our local policies, response of the civil participation, solidarity and social awareness. Finally, we would like to point out that there are other municipal associations or private institutions in our municipality offering volunteering services to migrant people and cooperate with the municipal office.

VOLUNTEERING SERVICE - SPANISH RED CROSS.

We would like to highlight the task carried out by Red Cross in our municipality. Red Cross - Spain is an Institution of voluntary Aid not prompted in any manner by desire for gain. Volunteers from Red Cross-Spain develop an important service in terms of assistance and emergency situation, in Santa Pola.

The voluntary service, maximum expression of the solidary commitment freely undertaken revealed in respect and defence of the ideals of Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, allows the action of the Red Cross, being at the same time its identifying characteristic, its continuity, development and the ideological base of the Institution. Red Cross Santa Pola (As a local Assembly) is prepared to provide services of social intervention, as well as relief and emergency services. Their actions focus mainly on programs for Ederly people, people on extreme vulnerability situation, disabilities, women in difficulties, emergencies and relief interventions, and marine salvage and rescue. In relation to migrant people, their actions could be classified into two groups: on one side, activities aimed at supporting people already residing in our town (e.g. general information, advice, referral to public services, financial aid for basic needs and school materials, legal



advice, phychological care for women victims of gender violence, social integration...) On the other hand, actions aimed at supporting and wellcoming newcomers: asylum and shelter, rescue actions, legal advice, food delivery, health and psychological assistance...) All these actions are carried out by both employees and volunteers of Red Cross Santa Pola, with different occupational profiles and backgrounds.

Samuel Ortiz Perez, Councillor of Migrations, Solidarity and Citizen Participation Area:

SOLIDA Project has represented a great - unique- experience to our municipality. It has also provided a great opportunity to strengthen public awareness - raising about immigration among the citizens of Santa Pola.

The phenomenon that is migration is as old as mankind itself, consisting in the displacement of people for several reasons. However, the current economic crisis -together with the ongoing ecologic and ethic crisis in our society - represents a huge political challenge. The network of municipalities created by SOLIDA Project, allowed learning from each other's experience and sharing good practices in terms of public local policies aimed to attend and welcoming migrant people and refugees who come to different cities of the Mediterranean coast in pursuit of a better life.

Furthermore, SOLIDA Project has also meant an important learning and intercultural process that has greatly enriched our municipal management.

In our own case, around fifteen people from different entities committed with immigration had the chance of participating in the different exchanges within the framework of SOLIDA Project.

We therefore consider the value of learning from other's experiences and public policies as well as the importance of exchanging good practices and different issues affecting the countries in the South of European Union.

Nevertheless, we would like to highlight the social impact and political advocacy that this project has provided to our municipality in terms of local development.

Gema Mollá, Lawyer - Legal Assistance Municipal Office for Migration Affairs:

We live in a globalized world where humanitarian challenges require to pay attention– and understand- to migration phenomenon. Under the umbrella of European Law, we find different legal systems in place in the Member States. However, in terms of migration policies, we all share our commitment to respect, protect and promote Human Rights, regardless of the legal status of the individual concerned. The local and regional authorities are the tier of government closest to citizens. That means they are the first hand to be tended to people who needs to be welcomed and helped. In this way, local policies about migration and integration, are vitally important in terms of make effective the rights of those who come to our municipality looking for a better life opportunity.

If those local policies are connected each other, the efforts and the opportunities of enrichment and improvement- through the exchanges of experiences and good practices- become greater.

SOLIDA Project has been successful in creating that network of municipalities committed to improve the attention, assistance and integration of migrant people. On the other hand, focused on participation in civil and political life of the society as a better way of integration SOLIDA Project has provided a new overall picture to the professionals involved in migration affairs. SOLIDA Project represents, certainly, an important initiative which will contribute to improve the municipal migration and integration policies.



Kunsill Lokali Birgu
Città Vittoriosa

Municipality of Birgu

MALTA

Malta has 12,000 registered illegal migrants and 12,407 non-EU workers in Malta, along with 30,564 from the EU. Malta's ratio of asylum seekers in proportion to population has consistently been among the highest, and very often the highest, among all EU Member States. In fact, Malta received a total of 20.2 asylum applications per 1,000 inhabitants between 2009 and 2013, compared to an EU average of 2.9. Open Centres to provide accommodation to asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection are provided until such time as they are able to settle independently in the community. The nature of such accommodation is

therefore, by necessity, temporary for 12 months. Persons accommodated at Open Centres shall be provided with accommodation free of charge and, so long as they are not employed, with an allowance intended to cover daily expenses, such as meals and transport. Schools take both immigrant and refugee children's alongside other children for better integration. Immigrants with health problems and mental health problems are treated equally and free of any payments.



Society feels that illegal migrants are a burden on society:

- The Maltese were the most likely (75 per cent) to think immigrants were a burden on the Maltese welfare State.
- On the other hand, they were among the least likely (28 per cent) to think immigrants enriched the island's cultural fabric.
- Nearly four in five thought immigrants worsened crime rates.
- But 84 per cent also thought immigrants did a lot of Malta's 'dirty' jobs – generally seen as a positive.

Prejudices are being reproduced with accusations as immigrants increase crime rates, people in the country negatively influence the employment opportunities of the country, their attempts to use the facilities of the country blatantly, and the level of education lowered. However in Birgu municipality no conflicts are recorded with non-Maltese citizens living and working in the locality, this is due to various factors namely:

Birgu hosted the British naval base, leading to locals used to British sailors mingling in society and also through marriage.

Birgu is a popular holiday destination with tourists.

Birgu yacht marina is mostly foreign owned boats with crew and owners coming from different countries.



For the future of mankind, young people and children will play a very important role. We are our own future and the future of the world is hidden in them. If we want to make the world a better place, we should value them as much as our own children hence immigrant/refugee children are given all educational opportunities for the full integration, learning Maltese and English, culture and all subjects offered in state schools.

John Boxall, Mayor of Birgu:

Migration is quite synonymous with our city since over the years Birgu being the first maritime town received most of those entering Malta as invaders or merchants with some staying permanently on the island and making Birgu their abode. It is our council belief that although we cannot legislate on migration issues, as a council we have to strive and initiate initiatives which will lead to the full integration of migrants within our society, making migrants feel welcome and part of our society. This can only be achieved through education and creating initiatives which are sustainable on the long term, with a vision that integration can only take place if society



understands the needs; the culture and possibilities open for everyone are in place. Our council has embarked and undertaken a number of projects which aim to educate our people and to bring down the democratic system down to the people, grassroots level, were with active citizens sustainable development goals can be reached. These measures ensure active participation of all citizens irrespective of age, educational level or socio economic levels.

Measures were debate on most matters affecting the citizens is discussed through open meetings in order for the council to understand the needs, occupations and simplify proposed development. We believe that through such measures we can have more sustainable development in our community which would have undergone a process of citizen involvement. We believe we have a lot of challenges ahead of us and the approaches might be different, but as a council we strive to engage citizens in the full development of our city, our approach is to be close to the people, listen to their opinions and engage on sustainable development with a long term approach, we cannot afford mistakes which will have a negative impact on our community being it short term or long term, all development needs to have the input from the grassroots level because we are a very small city with a population of 3,070 citizens and every decision taken will have an effect on our community.



Dr Mark Causon, Genista research foundation:

GRF has been working on Intercultural, Migration and social work over the past years and started working with minority groups namely refugees, young people with social, educational and economic problems and those with fewer abilities due to health issues. As an active NGO we participated as partners in a number of projects and have coordinated projects namely:

ERASMUS Refugees in society a project for integration of refugees through identification of activities were migrants feel comfortable to integrate.

ERDF 2007-2013 with Arka foundation Gozo- a home for mentally and physically disabled youths assisting in making their lives more comfortable.

Europeaid/129-855/L/ACT/PS in Palestine-Celebrating Cultural heritage through participatory videos working with refugee youths in refugee camps in Ramallah empowering youths with educational tools.

YIA ACTION 1.1 with partner from Belvi Sardengna-Turn off! Reach out! Working with mentally disadvantaged youths for better integration in society.

YIA ACTION 4.3 with partner from Kırıkkale-TURKEY- Sport and Art: Two Magic Keys For disadvantaged young people to have a better life.

YIA Action n 4.6 - 'Youth Support Systems Partnerships
DIPUTACIÓN DE GRANADA - EYIN- Education for the Employment of European Youth Immigrant Network



Having arrived in Malta illegally without documents, I was sent to the detention centre where they started to verify if I can be accepted as a refugee and get my status approved. After a series of interviews and meetings with NGO's who were assisting us, I was given refugee status since I came from a war zone area from Iraq. I was then transferred to an open center and was assisted with financial support, accommodation and various training. I was also offered assistance to search for work and in fact I found work on a full time basis and after some months together with some friends we rented an apartment and started living and working like normal citizens.





Municipality of Erdut

CROATIA

Municipality of Erdut placed at the easternmost part of Croatia in Osijek Baranja county and is a rural area. The Municipality has 7.308 inhabitants and is extremely multicultural area (62% of population is ethnic minorities). Economic base are: agriculture, wine production, construction, trade and in the last 10 years sustainable tourism development. Municipality of Erdut in cooperation with Entrepreneurship Development



Centre is launched a volunteering program of young people in the community. In Municipality operates 60 associations. Developing democracy at the level the municipality government has supported youth council and different well as various NGO.

Municipality has strengthened its capacity in the field of twinning and have experience of the EU policy. Also, is a signatory series of agreements of cooperation.

In Croatia and our local community in the last three years the present is emigration of the population in other developed countries. The problem of migrant crisis spread to Croatia and neighbour countries such as Serbia. People are prejudiced against people from third countries. Through participation in projects and talking about these issues we are trying to change people's consciousness. From 2015. to 2017. through Croatia passed over the 1.400.000 migrants. Finally destination for all immigrants are development countries in Europe. Number of seeking asylum is growing, than 2015. until 2017. Croatia has more than 1.400 seeking asylum (695 Afganistan, 341 Irak, 167 Pakistan, 144 Iran and other). The situation for immigrants and refugees in Croatia was organized by the opened the Acceptance Center for Immigration and Refugee in



Tovarnik, Kutina, Slavonski Brod, Ježev, Opatovac, Belom Manastir and the Acceptance Center for Asylum Seekers in Zagreb (Hotel Porin). In the Municipality of Erdut we don't have the Acceptance center, the nearest Acceptance Center is 40 km away in Tovarnik. Our associations and organizations go there to work and assist immigrants and refugees.

The role of civil society organizations is organizing volunteers and referring to actions where and what to do, allocating humanitarian aid, coordinating with other organizations on the ground, and raising awareness of the importance of solidarity and humanity in crisis situations. Some of our organizations who working in this area are:

VOLUNTEERS CENTER OSIJEK RED CROSS OSIJEK

The role of the Volunteer Center Osijek is primarily to organize social support for refugees and migrants, more specifically asylum seekers, through a volunteer program.

Volunteers of the Volunteer Center OSIJEK are organized in the reception centers for asylum seekers in Kutina on different activities according to their own interests (creative workshops with women and children, information workshops, cooking workshops, sports activities, aerobics, teaching English and Croatian, and providing social support through conversation and socializing). The Red Cross of Croatia and the Red Cross of Osijek from the first days of the refugee crisis in Croatia were involved in providing humanitarian aid to thousands of refugees and migrants who entered or went through Croatia. As a coordinator of the activities of non-governmental and international organizations, the Red Cross Osijek, with its large organization, has provided all refugees and migrants with a decent human life.

Volunteers and employees of the Red Cross Osijek were active first in Tovarnik, then in Opatovac and Slavonski Brod. The Red Cross of Croatia has done more than 190,000 volunteer hours and distributed more than 615 tons of food, more than 580,000 liters of water, almost 67,000 hygiene items, 176,000 blankets and 81 tons of clothes. Activities in the area related to the migration crisis have taken place since the opening of the so-called Balkan route. During this period, assistance was provided to equip the Acceptance center in Opatovac and the Winter Acceptance and Transit Center in Slavonski Brod with the procurement of 20 housing containers, providing rental space for tents of 2500 square meters and more than 3500 interviews with migrants. There are 180 language and cultural orientation workshops and many other things needed for solidarity and humane treatment with migrants and refugees.



During the activities, special attention was paid to the protection of vulnerable groups of migrants and refugees - women with children, elderly people and people with disabilities. These activities contributed to a better understanding of the needs of migrants, and they were provided with the support of coordinated action by state and humanitarian actors in providing adequate assistance to migrants and refugees.

Since migrants and refugees who remain in the Croatia still have the needs to be provided, organizations will continue to actively seek opportunities to provide human and dignified assistance and to protect migrants and refugees for the benefit of all.



**Jugoslav Vesić,
Mayor of Municipality of Erdut:**

Since the beginning of the migration crisis, many organizations in Croatia have been actively involved in assisting the Government of the Republic of Croatia in the management of migrants and refugees. Together, in co-operation with the police, they directed and secured the needs of migrants and refugees to have warm housing, hygiene needs and information in their language. Many immigrants and refugees have been through Croatia, and organizations and reception centers have focused on helping the most vulnerable groups, pregnant women, mothers with children, the disabled and the elderly. I think that those organizations that worked hard and helped make a big deal for migrants and refugees in this area. Migration is a global challenge demanding global humanitarian contribution to the entire international community and each of us should personally contribute to it.

Ahmad, 21 years:

I've been 11 months in Croatia already. At first I was bad, very bad, because I had already built such a life there, but after the first shock I told myself that Croatia was a safe country and that, if I did a lot of work, I could have a good life. I'm not long waited, I filed an asylum application and started learning the language. My dream is to get a positive status, I want to live here, I want go to school, I want find a job, work here, have a family.

Samir, 46 years:

I started with my family and friends from Syria, our goal was to get to Germany because we have a lot of friends there that can help us. When the borders were closed we tried to come to the goal in various ways, but they brought us to the Accepted Center in Tovarnik. In the beginning we were all scared but there were people helping us and they were very good to us all. Our goal is to continue to Germany, we hope we will succeed.



The recent refugee crisis has tested the resistance and shown the limitations of the EU migration policies. An integrated policy for immigration and asylum ought to be based on the principles of solidarity, mutual trust and shared responsibility among the EU member states.

Greece is south-eastern border of the EU which poses significant pressure for migration management.

Greece, since 1990s has been a host country of migration movements.

The integration of legal migrants is fundamental for the Greek society and State.

Main goals of the Greek migration policy are:

The management of migration flows

The management of legal migration based on the needs of the labour market

The harmonious social and cultural integration of the legal migrants

Municipality of Neapolis-Sykeon has been a model of a structure of policies for the integration of migrants.

Especially, the last years with the refugee crisis, the Municipality has expanded its social programmes so as to include more actions for the refugees hosted within the limits of the Municipality.

The Municipality as an area was established and inhabited by refugees in the early 1920s with the refugee crisis of the Asia Minor.

Municipality of Neapolis-Sykeon in cooperation with the Municipality of Thessaloniki – as the Lead Partner – the Municipality of Kalamaria, the Region of Central Macedonia, the YMCA of Thessaloniki, the Hellenic League for Human Rights, the Greek Council for Refugees, the NGOs Praxis and Arsis, is implementing since 2016 the REACT (Refugee, Assistance, Collaboration, Thessaloniki) project. REACT project involves mainly asylum seekers that are beneficiaries of the Resettlement Programme in EU countries. It is implemented under the UNHCR. Main issue of the project is to ensure decent living conditions for those that are granted the status of international protection.

The goals of the programme are:

- Identifies and establishes 858 temporary accommodation positions in private leased apartments
- Ensures decent living conditions for asylum and relocation candidates, with emphasis on vulnerable social groups.
- Currently focuses on social integration

To ensure decent living conditions REACT provides:

- Housing in rented apartments, coverage of all utility costs, repairs and maintenance, domestic equipment
- Monthly subsistence allowance through prepaid cards
- Urban transportation cards

In addition REACT provides:

Legal assistance / counseling - Psychosocial support and enrollment in schools - Medical examinations and health assistance - Athletic, recreational and educational activities for children - Interpretation services - Accompaniment of beneficiaries to medical services and public authorities

Municipality of Neapoli-Sykeon has been focusing on the enrollment of children into compulsory education within the local schools. As a result, school integration has been achieved to a great extent: 50 refugee children are enrolled in local public schools. As far as preschool education and activities are concerned, social workers compile reports which enable infants and children to have access to nursery schools and kindergartens free of charge. Among others, nursery schools and kindergartens provide:

- 1.Recreational activities
- 2.Meals

In the afternoon, between 14:00 and 21:00, children of refugees, from 5 to 12 years old, have access to Municipal Centers for Creative Learning, which include activities such as:

- 1.Study support on school curricula
- 2.Learning of foreign languages (English, Russian, French and German)
- 3.Computer classes
- 4.Theater
5. Visual art classes
- 6.Music (theory and instruments)
- 7.Chess
- 8.Dances (Greek folk dances, Ballet, Modern Dances)
- 9.Sports (Tennis, Football, Basketball, Volleyball)
10. Gymnastics
- 11.Martial arts
12. Swimming



The “Cultural Neighborhood” is an area within the Municipality of Neapoli – Sykies where workshops and courses take place. Refugees of all ages have attended the workshops and the events of the Refugee Museum of Neapoli – Sykies. The workshops and courses include:

- 1.Drawing classes
- 2.Workshop of Environmental Education
- 3.Pottery workshop
- 4.Photography workshop
5. Musical instruments workshop.

Hosting refugees in the local community has already shown significant impact in social and economic terms. Social impact concerns the enhancement of solidarity, acceptance and cohesion among members of the community and economic impact concerns the enhancement of income through the leasing procedure and through the local market support.

Until today Municipality of Neapolis-Sykeon has hosted within 45 leased apartments, 345 refugees, out of whom 182 have already resettled within other EU countries



Concerning the integration and inclusion of immigrants in the local community, the Municipality of Neapolis-Sykeon has developed over the last 15 years a series of actions and programmes:

Immigrants integration Council: Since 2007 its role is to identify and promote the needs and problems of immigrants at local level and develop and promote solutions and participation in civic life and also advocate in the Municipal Council matters for the improvement of immigrants lives.

Greek language school: Learning the Greek language is a necessary step towards the inclusion of immigrants in social and civic life and in labour market.

Since 2009 the Municipality has established the Greek Language School under the scientific guidance of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

10 classes

Levels : A1, B1, B2, C1, C2

Extra courses : Writing, Greek History, Culture and Geography

Last year the courses were attended by refugees from Syria and Iraq, adults-parents with their children.

Every May our students-immigrants visit high schools of the Municipality and make a presentation of their country, their language and their culture to high school students.

Every year, in early June, the last week of the school year we organize the “Cultural Week”.

5 days with thematic walks and visits around the city

Get know the city and realize the cultures and religions

Currently there are 120 students attending the classes of the school.

Mr Simos Daniilidis,

Mayor of the Municipality of Neapolis-Sykeon:

The refugee crisis is foremost a humanitarian crisis, and within its core lies the hunted by their country human being, who in despair seeks to catch a thread of hope and restart a new life. All of us together we ought to continue the fight to preserve the universal values of Europe of culture, peace, democracy, humanity and social justice, either by putting pressure on the governments of the EU countries or by participating in programmes and actions that promote the human rights and hospitable traditions towards the refugees. Those of us believing in these values we can push Europe to move forwards.

Mr. Michalis Voulgaridis,

deputy Mayor of Social Policy:

From the beginning of the refugees crisis the local government has been at the forefront. Based on the principles of solidarity, hospitality, acceptance and tolerance – characteristics of the Greek tradition- the local authorities we have implemented interventions and programmes for the mitigation of the refugee crisis risks.





Slovenia became an independent country in 1991, and since then we can also talk about the formation of the first migration policies, mainly related to migration of the population due to the war in the former Yugoslav republics. In 1991, a large number of refugees from the former Yugoslavia came to Slovenia. First migration flows considered in Slovenia from the former Yugoslav republics (mainly Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo) also today represent the largest number of foreign immigrants in Slovenia. Before Slovenia's accession to the EU in 2013, foreign immigrants are roughly composed of two or three groups with differing status - the first group consisted of those who had Slovenian citizenship and are given according to the current Law on Citizenship of the Republic of Slovenia, the second group was represented by immigrants who had permanent or temporary residence in the Republic of Slovenia, and third group represent those immigrants who does not fit to any law and are thus considered to be on Slovenian territory irregularly. On the other hand, Slovenia joins those developed countries that are facing labour shortages as a result of the aging of the active part of the population. Migration, its management and monitoring have become one of the important political priorities from an economic, and also from a social and cultural point of view. Like most other European countries, Slovenia is also striving to achieve the goals of a pluralist model of integration policies, with the desire to create a multicultural, tolerant society.

An integrated society in a multicultural model is composed of culturally, ethical diverse groups that promote equal treatment, tolerance and have a positive attitude towards different ethical, religious and cultural identities.

The State, like an important creator of legal and formal rights and laws implementing the integration policy, must at the same time provide the conditions for the successful integration of migrants in society. With its policies based on human or civil rights, it creates a set model for integrating immigrants into a new environment. An important role in the integration of migrants into the local environment, that state defining the concept of integration, designing different models and can exclude or involve an individual or social groups in a majority society. The realization of the success of the migration policy thus covers the following areas: language knowledge, appropriate social conditions, positively relations of the majority population with migrants and positive attitude of political actors to the diversity and multiculturalism of society.



From the point of view of the integration process, the overcoming of discriminatory practices, racism and xenophobia is very important, since only with closer relations with the majority society can the migrant successfully integrate into society. In order to overcome social exclusion resulting from the unsuccessful integration process, it is necessary to establish inclusive state policies and the participation of socially excluded groups by building social networks of the individuals. The major disadvantage of migration policy, which is reflected in the failure of integration of migrants in the local environment, is a strong focus on the involvement of migrants in the local environment, whereby the local population is often neglected. In the light of the policies put in place, it is very important to raise awareness within the society, to promote acceptance of diversity and multiculturalism of the society.

Governments and local communities faced serious challenges related to the housing and/or transit of migrants across their territories or, in the case of the Urban Municipality of Novo Mesto, with the rise of racism and xenophobia, which increased among the population due to ignorance of the situation, lack of information, their own experiences, and media populisms in 2015. For the UMN, it was crucial to maintain the focus on understanding migrations as an added value, to look for opportunities for how to retain migrants and include them as full members in the community that contribute to its development, and not as a burden and cost. These findings and guidelines have encouraged us to connect in a local partnership (shorter LP). This model of solving local issues, involving all three sectors - non-governmental, public and economic, works by all of us finding the challenges and solutions together, and based on concrete tasks, acting as equal partners. Thus, we have been able to mutually exploit all our resources (assets, staff and influence) for better results of a more inclusive environment.

Dr. Jure Gombač, Slovenian Migration Institute, University of Nova Gorica:

Following the collapse of its border policy in September 2015, the European Union has set up a complex border regime, which has almost completely closed the borders for people who identify them as undesirable. According to EUROSTAT, the number of people who cross the European borders, despite their ingenuity and perseverance, has fallen sharply in the last three years. This has succeeded in the European Union through externalization or with agreements with third countries where we have exported our border policy (Turkey, Libya, Lebanon, Sudan ...), strengthened border controls, where people (by FRONTEX, EURO-SUR, EURODAC) are hunted, sorted and rejected by the latest technology and biometrics, and internal control which, through the granting of various statuses (permanent and temporary residents, refugees, asylum seekers, undocumented migrants), is carried out within each member through a variety of checks, registrations, variable criteria whose main goal is the reception of desirable and the deportation of undesirable (around 200,000 people per year). Media, political and public discourses are becoming less and less focused on solidarity, respect for human rights and humanity, and mostly prefer to focus on the aspects of our security and the criminalization of people on the move. This way, we can follow a whole range of different border spectacles where people on their way take dignity, humanity and present them as a threat to our security, culture and prosperity. All of these policies, however, successfully prevent the arrival of European countries on the ground, but on the other hand the world and people are increasingly divided, spreading inequality and laying the foundations for various racisms, discrimination and (xeno) phobias.

They cause the suffering and even death of many people, which certainly calls for rethinking fundamental European values, such as humanity, solidarity, respect for human rights and hospitality.

On the other hand, they are still alive, as reflected in a number of good practices at local levels throughout the world. For example, in many smaller European cities, we managed to successfully integrate undocumented migrants, asylum seekers and refugees into their society, and many of them write interesting success stories. Every such story is important because it brings together the various people who together create the future of their communities.



Gregor Macedoni,
Mayor of the Municipality of Novo mesto:

Novo mesto has always been a geographical cross-road of different routes, which were shaped by culturally diverse populations. As an economic center of the region, we actively seek mechanisms for integrating the potentials brought by migrants. We believe successful integration programs, which we develop together with NGOs and other stakeholders, represent a way of securing all available potentials to achieve economic prosperity, community development, higher quality of life for all citizens and an inclusive society. Local communities, in cooperation with the state, can play a key role in integrating all the potentials, therefore migration is understood as an opportunity that can have a positive impact on the development of the local environment.

Maja Žunič Fabjančič,
Association for Developing Voluntary Work:

The local community plays a very important role in integrating migrants into everyday life. It is crucial to establish local partnerships of all key stakeholders who can contribute to the environment where people feel accepted and offering them holistic integration support. At the same time, it is important to promote solidarity and protection of human rights through various programs, and to raise awareness among the general public about the positive aspects of migration. Integration is a two-way process, so it is necessary to establish conditions and spaces where people can meet and build social networks through understanding and acceptance.

The Association Recosol - Rete dei Comuni Solidali - was founded on November 14th 2003 with the first one hundred participating municipalities.

In 2012 membership stood at about three hundred municipalities that have joined from all over Italy (17 regions represented).

The registered office of the Network is in Carmagnola (Turin). The governing body is composed of a legal representative and four coordinators.

Recosol was founded to promote decentralized cooperation in developing countries. In cooperation efforts, municipalities Recosol favour the direct relations between the administrations and those of local partners. Typically projects are managed without a permanent presence of Italian staff, but using local expertise and stimulating supported at a distance and cost incurred for necessary action.

International Projects of Solidarity, small but concrete, managed and determined by the population of the villages with their direct involvement.

Joining the Network is a way to enable the exchange between different cultures and a real opportunity to help future generations to live in a world with fewer social and economic differences.

The Recosol projects also involve immigrant communities in the various Italian towns. Today Recosol is an association continues to grow.

Making "network" facilitates the exchange of experiences, knowledge of projects and promotion of culture. Any city, bringing its experience, influences other municipalities to follow suit.

Recosol has co-founded the festival in Riace, the Festival in Lampedusa and “Rete del Caffè Sospeso”.

Among the many projects of decentralized cooperation, in recent years has developed (in country) a major collaboration with other networks of local authorities involved on issues of peace, solidarity, environment, civil rights and immigration, such as the Association Comuni Virtuosi or Avviso Pubblico.

Recosol also actively collaborates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with ANCI, with the IOM - International Organization for Migration, with the SPRAR, with the Association about Immigration Law Studies, with Caritas, with the Anthropos Association of Polizzi Generosa (Sicily).

The Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR) was created by Law N° 189/2002 and is made up of the network of local institutions that implement reception projects for forced migrants by accessing, within the available resources, the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services, managed by the Ministry of the Interior and provided under the Government finance law.



At local level, the local institutions, in cooperation with voluntary sector organisations, undertake ‘integrated reception’ interventions going beyond the simple distribution of food and housing, also providing complementary services such as legal and social guidance and support, and the development of individual programmes to promote socioeconomic inclusion and integration.

The primary objective of SPRAR is to provide support for each individual in the reception system, through implementation of an individual programme designed to enable that person to regain a sense of independence, and thus enable effective involvement in life in Italy, in terms of employment and housing integration, access to local services, social interaction and scholastic integration for minors. Recosol supervises in Calabria two SPRAR projects in the municipalities of Gioiosa Ionica and Cinquefrondi.



Diallo Amadou, guest of Gioiosa Ionica SPRAR:

I'm 19 years old and I'm from Senegal. My family is in Africa. I left Senegal in 2015 because in my country I didn't have the opportunity to study or work and I dreamt a best future for myself. I have decided to risk my life to searching for best future. I went through Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and finally I reached Libia. At the beginning, I thought to stay in Libia in order to work but, with the passing of time, I saw several violence episodes: many of my friends worked without salary and other were killed.

So I decided to left Libia and I tried to cross the sea for reaching Europe. The crossing was terrible: I paid a lot of money for the trip and in the boat there were 110 people. We had left for 15 minutes and suddenly three Libyan boys arrived and asked us for more money but we did not have them. We asked for help from the boy who had boarded us but he could not help us and so the three guys stole the engine from the boat.

We remained at sea without engine for more than an hour. Then the Libyan police arrived but we were too many and not everyone who was with me could get on the Libyan ship. I stayed at sea a long time. We saw some fishermen and we talked to them. They gave us an engine and so we could continue the journey. We arrived in Malta and asked for help and the Italian navy came to rescue us. We landed in Reggio Calabria. I was very happy because I was alive, I had arrived in Italy and I thought my life would change. I stayed in a center for minors and then I was transferred to Gioiosa Ionica in the Recosol project. I get on very well in Gioiosa Ionica, I could take the diploma of middle school and the driving license. In Gioiosa I met many friends and in the project they treat me very well. I consider myself very lucky. In these months I also had the opportunity to meet the representatives of the municipalities participating in the Solida project. Thanks to this project we migrants have got to know the Sprar and our stories.