



**WG2**  
Industries

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# Stakeholder Brief 2

## Executive summary

The WG2 COST Research Workshop “Tackling the migration and refugee challenge”, organized in the framework of the COST Action Empower-SE, succeeded in creating a fruitful discussion forum among over 40 researchers from 15 diverse EU countries, who are studying the migration phenomenon from different disciplinary angles. During the two-day workshop, economists, sociologists, anthropologists, geographers and political scientists shared the findings of their ongoing research and contributed to shedding light on both the limitations and the challenges faced by current research in a field that has important policy implications.

Presentations drew on both empirical and theoretical work, research actions implemented in the frame of large EU projects and exploratory case studies. Nevertheless, attention was also paid to storylines of welcome initiatives reported by the same protagonists who attended the stakeholder meeting the last day.

## Tackling the migration and refugee challenge

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### 1. Introduction

The second research workshop of the Working Group on fields of activity of social enterprises (WG2 “Industries”) was co-organized by Euricse, the EMES Network and the University of Trento on November 22-24, 2018. Partners included the EU research project ERC StG HOMInG and the Italian project MIUR-FARE HOASI.

While extensive research has been conducted on the migration phenomenon, and particularly on the impact of international migration on countries of origin and of destination, local contexts of settlement have yet to be comprehensively

researched. In particular, insufficient attention has been paid so far to the role of civil society in facing this new challenge through the design of new hosting patterns and work-integration pathways. Similarly, little attention has been paid to the impact of immigration upon remote localities, like alpine and rural areas.

The full title of the workshop—namely “Tackling the migration and refugee challenge. Exploring innovative policies and practices through the lens of social enterprises and third-sector organizations”—reflects the focus on the potential of local communities to self-organize and design effective solutions (among which, in particular,

the creation of innovative organizations) for tackling the challenges posed by migration to local societies. These innovative organizations include social enterprises, understood as organizations which combine an entrepreneurial dynamic to provide services or goods with a primacy of social aims. They can be found across diverse sectors (public or conventional enterprises, cooperatives, associations), rely on a mix of resources (market-based, public and philanthropic resources) and engage in different activity fields. Many of these initiatives are being promoted by individuals, immigrants' organizations, local businesses, religious organizations and groups of volunteers who are self-organizing to deliver first aid, co-provide basic services, facilitate work-integration and social-inclusion pathways and advocate for the recognition of the rights of asylum seekers and refugees to be welcomed, housed and have the possibility to have decent work in the receiving countries, in line with EU values and international law. Social enterprises operate in a plurality of policy domains, including housing, education, work and entrepreneurship, and work-integration paths. Since most of these initiatives developed spontaneously at the grassroots level, they are difficult to grasp. Hence, our endeavor has been to promote an interdisciplinary discussion forum that would contribute to systematizing innovative practices and would pave the way for further empirical and theoretical analysis.

The workshop gathered academic researchers who exchanged initial thoughts in an incipient field of research covered by the EMPOWER-SE COST Action thematic line, namely, as stated above, "social enterprise and migration". The four thematic lines structuring the workshop reflected four areas of interest around which research is currently being conducted:

- > Housing arrangements and pathways for asylum seekers and refugees: state of the art, dilemmas and ways ahead.
- > Innovative tools and methodologies aiming to facilitate the social and work inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees in EU countries.

- > Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers living in mountain and rural localities: determinants of inclusion versus exclusion.
- > Unlocking the potential of third-sector organizations (TSOs) and social enterprises vis-à-vis the asylum-seeker/refugee challenge.

## 2. Main issues of the debate

Several presentations focused on the conditions under which TSOs—including social enterprises—can contribute to effective socioeconomic inclusion pathways that generate a beneficial impact upon recipients and hosting communities alike. These pathways include new working tools and methodologies that, despite having proved to be effective, are still little visible. Against a background of dehumanization in the asylum-seeker welcoming system, presenters also shed light on the isomorphic pressures that push many TSOs to either behave like quasi-public bodies or to mimic the management strategies adopted by conventional enterprises.

Public contracting designed to contract out the delivery of reception services was described by more than a few researchers as highly controversial in several EU countries, because of the inclination to favor large and consolidated TSOs having lost their links with local communities rather than grassroots organizations that are prone to innovate in service delivery. Furthermore, some presenters shed light on the key role played by volunteers in triggering very pragmatic welcome and integration practices that succeed in both empowering recipients and strengthening community resilience. Debates also focused on new forms of engagement via social media and networks, which have the power to mobilize an extraordinary number of people but are also extremely volatile.

**The 5 Houses** (Marseille, France) is an association based in the South of France; it was established in 1919, and provides several services to support disadvantaged people, with a particular focus on women. Since its inception, before any public intervention was implemented in the field, the association has pursued specific actions against poverty, inequality and marginalization. Housing and social-support services are implemented to fight the risk of exclusion. The association takes care of vulnerable women, accompanying them step by step in the definition of individual life projects and long-lasting solutions, with a view to a real integration in society. The association is composed of five distinct centers. Two centers provide services such as reception, accommodation and social reintegration of women in situation of exclusion, focusing on social empowerment and enhancing personal skills and aptitudes. Two centers are dedicated to women with mental-health issues, with the aim of empowering them and promoting an independent lifestyle. Finally, the last center is devoted to the reception of asylum seekers; it supports them in the asylum procedure but also in their social-integration path. The multidisciplinary team is composed of highly qualified individuals, such as social workers, lawyers and nurses.

Attention was moreover paid to remote areas, as a laboratory where hostile reactions of local populations and examples of mismanagement go hand in hand with innovative welcome initiatives. Such initiatives have enabled the experimentation of effective policy tools and strategies that have, in some instances, triggered local development dynamics. Participating researchers focused specifically on the conditions under which migration can turn into a development and revitalization opportunity for remote areas facing depopulation and decline. Migration can also be a driver for reviving civic and solidarity values. Several case studies shed light on the ways in which remote territories face the migration and asylum challenges, on the barriers and limitations they have to overcome and on the potential of migration to trigger innovative policy and territorial innovations that generate beneficial impacts for migrants and local inhabitants alike.

### 3. Salient points from recent research

Based on the discussions carried out in the various sessions, two aspects stand out from many of the case studies presented: the context dependency and the high level of experimentation present

in these experiences. Several presenters shed light on the double-edge-sword dimension of experimentation: indeed, experimentation can generate social- and territorial-policy innovations, when reception experiences are well managed by involving the receiving community and local municipalities, or it can lead to social exclusion, hostile reactions on the part of the local population and low quality of work, when reception is mismanaged by providers uninterested in supporting social-inclusion pathways.

The role of social enterprises in the social and economic integration of migrants depends on a set of structural and contextual factors, as became evident during parallel sessions on tools and methodologies aiming to facilitate the social and work integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Europe. The history of migration of a country determines the availability of policies and infrastructures to accommodate migrants. Refugees arriving via the Balkan route cross countries that have at best *ad-hoc* solutions, while many West-European countries have a number of supportive or restrictive policies in place. This in turn determines the legal framework in which social enterprises operate, as well as the availability of resources.

Likewise, the scope of housing policies and the existence of dedicated access paths to housing for refugees are highly variable on a country-by-country basis. While the “opportunity structure” created by policy and legal provisions has a major influence, several case studies have shown that civic-society coalitions, including social enterprises, can open new and more flexible channels for refugee accommodation. Local and transnational networks for “home sharing” are a case in point. While several good practices can be found all across Europe, their potential for transferability is also rather variable. It is also important to appreciate refugees’ housing “careers”, parallel to their pathways of legal and social settlement. As a matter of fact, accommodation tends to re-emerge as an issue again and again, for single individuals or for families, well beyond the stage of initial reception for immigrant newcomers.

**Neue Nachbarschaft / Moabit e.V.** (Berlin, Germany) is a volunteer neighborhood initiative founded in 2013 by visual artist Marina Naprushkina and a group of active "neighbors". Under the slogan "We don't help, we learn from each other", the initiative uses its premises in central Berlin as a platform for learning, exchange and civil engagement for "neighbors from all over the world". The aim of the initiative is to actively partake in shaping social life and to create possibilities for hierarchy-free forms of social and political cooperation between different stakeholder groups. The weekly program includes a range of activities such as German learning in small groups, swing dance course, legal counselling, yoga, cooking group, writing workshop, jam session, arts workshop, English language courses for children, chess club and Arabic breakfast. The initiative runs a bar, which provides a space for encounters between old and new friends, and is open most evenings throughout the year. Besides urgent services needed by new immigrants (such as language learning, legal and educational counselling and assistance in finding housing), the initiative focuses on creating artistic opportunities for them and promotes social dialogue through arts. In the new [Moabit Mountain College](#) project, funded by the [Foundation for Arts Initiatives](#), the initiative brings together "academics and professional artists with autodidacts and self-taught artists to make art and social engagement freely available to a diverse community". The initiative mainly functions on private donations. All the activities are facilitated by both locals and individuals with different kinds of migration histories.

In the field of work integration for refugees and migrants, challenges identified by researchers include the lack of policies supporting social enterprises (e.g. Serbia), the lack of integration policies per se (e.g. Slovenia), restricted eligibility of asylum seekers to work (e.g. Denmark), the lack of recognition of educational and professional degrees (e.g. Italy) and the lack of capacity of social enterprises to apply to large funding schemes. In many countries, structural discrimination in the labor market also remains an issue. Combined with a lack of knowledge of the national language at individual level, these various challenges often result in situations where refugees and asylum-seekers, even though they have the legal right to work, end up in low-skilled jobs, also when facilitated by social enterprises. This underlines once again that social and work integration must go hand in hand.

**Bagel Bejgl** (Belgrade, Serbia) was established in 2015 by "Atina", the leading NPO supporting victims of human trafficking and fighting against the vulnerability of migrants. Bagel Bejgl conducts several activities. The first one is food production and catering; the shop serves individual customers in its premises and also provides catering (bagel sandwiches, canapes, soups and hot meals) to 24 business companies, two banks, 36 NPOs, four embassies, two universities and two public institutions. Another activity carried out is education; for example, several dozen women victims of human trafficking completed training in cooking. A third activity is the conduction of promotional campaigns to raise awareness of local population and stakeholders about trafficking in human beings. Bagel Bejgl also conducts humanitarian activities, primarily through supporting "Atina" in empowering victims of human trafficking (several hundred women and children).

Bagel Bejgl generates most of its income from sales (30% of which are sales in the shop and 70% are linked to the catering service). It also receives donations and in-kind support from local administrations. It is worth noting that the shop run by Bagel Bejgl had a positive balance already in the first year. Today, Bagel Bejgl provides long-term employment for six women (most of them victims of trafficking), as well as additional jobs on short-term contracts. Four volunteers also work in the organization.

Website: <http://www.bagel.rs/english.html>

Source: European Commission (2019) Social enterprises and their ecosystems in Europe. Country fiche: Serbia. Author: Slobodan Cvejic. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available at <https://europa.eu/!Qq64ny>

Social enterprises and volunteer organizations do play an important role in local settings when it comes to supporting individual migrants. The red thread that unites the good practices presented seems to be the strong embeddedness at the local level, the promotion of active participation of diverse stakeholders, the entrepreneurial inclination, the high propensity to network with a plurality of local actors, the independence from policy lines defined by public authorities and the political resistance these initiatives put in place at the local level to fight against the growing anti-immigration sentiment that is spreading all over Europe.

**K-Pax Social Cooperative** (Breno, Italy) was set up in 2008 as a spin-off of Casa Giona—a reception center for excluded people that has been managed by the Parish of Breno since 2000—on the initiative of a group of volunteers and workers; its aim is to welcome asylum seekers and refugees.

K-Pax draws on a very strong engagement of the community; it has successfully experimented with individualized training paths for recipients that take stock of unexploited skills and competencies, and it ensures a higher quality of work when compared to other private providers working in the same field.

Over the years, K-Pax has gone beyond housing beneficiaries and promoting a welcome culture. In 2013, it bought and assumed the management of Hotel Giardino, the sole hotel in Breno, which was previously abandoned. The re-opening of Hotel Giardino—which generates significant incomes to sustain K-Pax' mission and offers work opportunities to migrants—contributed to reviving tourism, which was notably in crisis.

Another key economic sector managed by the cooperative is the collection and sale of used clothes and shoes through about 60 bins that are disseminated all over the valley.

K-Pax draws on a mix of resources, combining market resources generated by contracts with public authorities following competitive bids and/or contractual agreements, private-market resources from its trading activity, public grants, donations and voluntary work. However, the share of the trading activity has increased significantly over the years, thanks to the successful management of Hotel Giardino and the sale of the collected used clothes and shoes.

Source: Galera, G., et al. (2018), "Integration of Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Remote Areas with Declining Populations", OECD Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) Working Papers, No. 2018/03, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/84043b2a-en>.

#### 4. Emerging ideas from the meeting with stakeholders

One of the traits of EMPOWER-SE is its commitment to connecting researchers with stakeholders through a number of events. In Trento, a double event was organized aimed at involving them: the first one was an informal bridging meeting, on Friday evening; the second one was a full-day seminar, on Saturday. After the two-day COST workshop, a significant number of researchers also took part in the stakeholder meeting that was organized by one of EMES' Italian institutional members, Euricse, in cooperation with the

University of Trento, EMES and the Consortium In Rete. The workshop, entitled "Welcoming territories" (*Territori accoglienti*) gathered around 300 participants, including practitioners and policy makers who are running innovative welcome initiatives, are experimenting with new integration pathways and are designing novel forms of public/private co-planning of local welfare policies. Particular attention was paid to innovative housing patterns; new public/private partnerships; tools and strategies aimed at empowering recipients through work; health services for migrants; migration in remote localities; and strategies whereby conflicts can be prevented and creatively managed by local communities facing the arrival of new inhabitants with a migration background.

**"Tastes of Home"** (*Okus doma*, Zagreb, Croatia) started as a culinary/cultural research project of the [Centre for Peace Studies](#) (CPS); its goal is to introduce in Croatia the culture and customs of the countries of origin of refugees and migrants, by recording their memories of home and recipes (tastes) of their cuisine. This experiment brought refugees and people from Croatia together to share their life stories and culinary skills. "Tastes of homes" were recorded over several years and were finally published as a [book of personal stories and recipes](#). By preparing the food they grew up with, refugees evoke memories and create new friendships and experiences in their new home country; many connections have been built through culinary workshops and food festivals organized in local neighborhoods in Croatian towns.

After several years of operation, Tastes of Home decided to set up a [social cooperative](#). The social enterprise was officially kicked off through a [crowdfunding campaign](#). After raising almost \$20,000, Taste of Homes started a catering business specialized in African, Arabic, Asian and Middle Eastern cuisine and culinary exchange projects (cookbooks, cooking courses and workshops, public dinners and show-kitchens). The organization's mission underlines the economic emancipation of refugees and persons with migrant background through culinary and cultural exchange.

The collective is guided by values based on appreciation of human beings and their agency—human beings in search of happiness and safety, ready to offer the best of themselves, namely tastes of their childhood and youth as well as flavors of their adulthood in the new society.

Website: [www.okus-doma.hr/en](http://www.okus-doma.hr/en)

Several lessons were brought forward thanks to these interactions with stakeholders. A first important lesson is the need to avoid looking at migrants as mere providers of services, as has traditionally been the case. Developing systems that welcome and integrate refugees and asylum-seekers is way more complex and requires a wide commitment and vision from many actors in society. Moreover, and this is another lesson, such development and mobilization should not rest on the “rhetoric of the good immigrant”, because the existence of a welcoming system based on human values should not be contingent on the immigrants being “good”; it should rather be based on the welcoming country’s own duty and responsibility towards the rule of law (in addition to moral principles).

There is also a need to contribute data, explanations and a counter-discourse that goes against the statement: “Immigrants arrive and cost public money”, in order to show that, in fact, immigrants can (and do) contribute to territorial development, as has already been demonstrated in territories that were suffering from depopulation and have been brought back to life thanks to the arrival of people from other parts of the world. Of course, such arrival ought to be based on a system of integration that is coordinated among the various agents and on principles of justice, equality and respect. To use an expression that is dear to public administrators and policy makers, these people “create economy”—as opposed to generating public expenditure. Needless to say, several elements (such as a solid vision, first-hand experience, technical knowledge

and human qualities) are required for this new way of creating economy to emerge and thrive and to avoid that this “Old Europe” grows empty, old and lonely.

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The proceedings of the event are available on the COST Empower-SE website, under the following link: [http://www.empowerse.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Dissemination\\_Proceedings\\_Italy.pdf](http://www.empowerse.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Dissemination_Proceedings_Italy.pdf)

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