

RESEARCH

REPORTS

RECOMMENDATIONS

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THE WAGES OF FEAR

ATTITUDES TOWARDS REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS IN CROATIA



INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
European Programme

The report was published in the framework of the project “Empowering Communities in Europe” led by the British Council in cooperation with: Multi Kulti Collective (Bulgaria), Centre for Peace Studies (Croatia), People in Need (Czech Republic), Menedék Hungarian Association for Migrants (Hungary), Institute of Public Affairs (Poland), Romanian National Council for Refugees (Romania), Milan Simecka Foundation (Slovakia)



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

Empowering Communities in Europe (ECE) project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



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Published by:

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INTRODUCTION INCLUDING METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of the analysis on European communities living with refugees in Croatia, research team has conducted 3 focus groups in local communities where Reception Centres for Asylum Seekers (2) are located or communities where some refugees granted international protection are permanently located (1). Croatia has been developing its asylum system since 2004 (when first Asylum Act was announced), and until today has had many challenges that needed to be faced. Research team has therefore conducted focus groups in two cities where Reception Centres for Asylum Seekers are located:

- The City of Kutina - located 80 km east from Croatian capital Zagreb, in Sisak-Moslavina County. According to the census from 2011¹ it has a population of 13 735, while the total municipality population is 22 760. In Kutina, Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers was open in 2006, and since then asylum seekers have been living there while waiting for the state decision on international protection. In 2013 the Centre was transformed into the centre for vulnerable asylum seekers (women, children, elderly people). Focus group was conducted on May 31st 2017. 7 participants confirmed their participations, but in the end only 3 of them showed up - 2 females (adults in the age range between 30-40, working in schooling system) and 1 male (adult, in the age range between 30-40, working in schooling system).
- The City of Zagreb - capital of Croatia, located in the Zagreb County. According to the census from 2011, it has a population of 792 875 citizens. The focus group was conducted in the neighbourhood of Dugave, where in 2011 a second Croatian Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers was opened. Dugave is a residential neighbourhood situated on the outskirts of the Croatian capital. Built in the 1970s to accommodate to growing housing needs of the city of Zagreb, it is self-sufficient in sense that it has all the necessary facilities (local health clinic, kindergarten, primary school, post offices, super markets). Focus group was conducted on May 25th 2017 - 7 participants confirmed their participation, but in the end only 5 of them joined. All participants were females in the age range between 30-40 years, and they all had interactions with

1 *Census of Population, Households and Dwellings 2011*. Zagreb: Croatian Bureau of Statistics. December 2012.

refugees so far (either through their work or private life). Two of them are working in schooling system in the neighbourhood - one, a primary school teacher, works in the local primary school since last year, and already in her first class to teach has had a few refugee children, who were at the time living in the Dugave reception centre (hotel Porin). Second, a psychologist from a primary school close to Dugave, works on trauma, crisis and personal loss issues within her school but cooperates with the relevant stakeholders and other schools on integration issues, as well as NGOs, volunteers, and the university of Zagreb. One participant is working in child care system in the neighbourhood - as director of the kindergarten close to Porin. Last two participants are locals, parents of children that go to school with refugee kids - one is professionally connected to this particular vulnerable group as a government employee and formerly a volunteer providing Croatian lessons to asylum seekers; and the other has been living in Dugave neighbourhood since 2010, and has initiated different local community actions, all with the aim of bringing people together, getting everybody know each other better, and including refugees while doing that.

The City of Zagreb - last focus group was conducted in the neighbourhood of Peščenica, on June 27th. It is the area where few refugees are located after they have been granted international protection. 6 participants confirmed their participation, and in the end 5 of them actually joined - 3 males (in the age range between 25-50) and 2 females (in the age range between 25-40).

Methods of recruitments that were used to motivated participants to join were based on public procurement, email list and invitations. Some of the participants stated how they decided to join because their friends/colleagues told them about the possibility so they joined. All conversations lasted up to 2 hours and were jointly facilitated by two researchers.

PART ONE – SECONDARY DATA

1 Migration profile (recent immigration trends, brief description of main groups of migrants and asylum seekers, etc.)

According to researches and available data, Croatia is primarily perceived as an emigration country. “The Republic of Croatia has an area of 56 594 km² and in the total area of the EU participates with only 1.3%. By the number of inhabitants in the Union it is at the 21st place and it, in comparison to the number of residents of other EU countries, can be considered as submissive and rarely inhabited land (Grizelj and Akrap, 2011: 21). The Croatian population, according to the results of the 2001 census, has decreased by 2.9% compared to 1991, i.e. from 4 784 265 to 4 437 460. The results of the last census from 2011, when 4 284 889 residents are listed, point to further population decrease of 3.4% compared to 2001. Population decline (depopulation) in Croatia by 10.4% in the period from 1991 to 2011 is a result of negative natural and mechanical population movements. In addition to population numbers and density of population of about 78 inhabitants per km², is well below the EU-27 average (115 inhabitants per km²).”²

According to the latest available data of Croatian Bureau of Statistic, “In 2016, there were 55.3% of Croatian citizens and 44.7% of foreigners who immigrated into the Republic of Croatia, while 95.6% of Croatian citizens and 4.4% of foreigners emigrated abroad. Out of the total number of immigrants, there were 31.1% of persons who arrived from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Out of the total number of emigrants from the Republic of Croatia, 56.1% of persons departed to Germany.”³

Main groups of migrants living in Croatia come from European countries.

Asylum seekers and persons granted international protection in Croatia do not create big portion of population. According to the data of UNHCR Croatia (provided to them by Croatian Ministry of Interior, that is in charge of registration of asylum seekers), since 2004 (when first Asylum Act was accepted) until August 2017 there have been 8228 people seeking asylum in Croatia, and 350 people were granted with some type of international protection (256 recognized refugees, 94 subsidiary protection). The highest number of people seek-

2 Gregurović, Župarić-Iljić, *Kontekstualizacija migracijskih trendova i statusnih pitanja položaja stranaca u RH*, p. 55; in “*Pregled pravnog i institucionalnog okvira za zaštitu stranaca u Hrvatskoj*”, ed. Bužinkić et al., Centar za mirovne studije, Zagreb, 2013.

3 URL: https://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2017/07-01-02_01_2017.htm

ing asylum in Croatia are coming from Afghanistan, followed by Syrian Arab Republic, Pakistan, Algeria, Somalia and Iraq. Persons granted international protection come from Syrian Arab Republic, Afghanistan, Iraq, Turkey, Eritrea.

Table 1: Overview of asylum seeking countries

COUNTRY	TIME PERIOD	NUMBERS
Afghanistan	2007 - 2017	2 211
Syrian Arab Republic	2006 (1 person) 2010 - 2017	822
Pakistan	2004 - 2017	603
Algeria	2004 (9 persons) 2010 - 2017	591
Somalia	2008 (1 person) 2010 - 2017	520
Iraq	2004 - 2017	439

Table: Overview of countries with recognized refugee status in Croatia

COUNTRY	TIME PERIOD	NUMBERS
Syrian Arab Republic	2012 - 2017	101
Afghanistan	2008 - 2017	43
Iraq	2010 - 2017	43
Turkey	2008 - 2017 *only recognized refugee status, no subsidiary protection	19
Eritrea	2012 - 2017	18

Croatia became an EU member state in 2013, what was the main pull factor for increased number of asylum seeking applicants. Until 2010, numbers didn't go above 300, but then they increased up to over 1000 applicants per year (it is in that time period that the government decided to open another Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers). Decrease in asylum seeking application happened

after Croatia has joined EU; in 2014 there were only 453 applications, while in 2015 only 211. Reason for such trends is joint European Asylum System followed by Dublin Regulation that defines if a person seeks asylum in one EU country, it is not possible to seek it in any other.

2. Recent trends in migration policy (since 2015)

Legislation that is the base on any migration policy in Croatia are: Constitution of Republic of Croatia, Foreigners Act (first one adopted in 2003), Asylum Act (first one adopted in 2004 - today called: International and Temporary Protection Act), Migration Strategy (there were two strategies so far: first one for time period 2007-2008 and the second one for 2013-2015), Citizenship Act (first one adopted in 1991), Antidiscrimination Act (first one adopted in 2008), Action Plan for removing barriers to the realization of certain rights in the field of integration of foreigners into the Croatian society for the period 2013 to 2015, Action Plan for Integration of persons that have been granted international protection for the period 2017 to 2017.

Croatia became an EU member state on July 1st 2013 - time prior to that moment included a process of years where legislation was harmonized according to the EU standards and EU legislation. That also meant that EU citizens can freely move to Croatia, but also that Croatia will join European Asylum System that puts an obstacle on asylum seekers moving around EU (through Dublin regulation that defines how only one member state can be responsible for asylum process - often explained as "burden sharing" among member states).

Year 2015 was an important year for the EU in sense of migration influx and policy trends regarding refugee issue. Prior to entering the EU, Croatia has had around 1000 persons seeking asylum per year - then it was a neighbouring country to the EU and if a person was not granted protection in one of the EU member state, it could seek it again in Croatia (country soon to be an EU member state). After entering the EU, the trend has changed and numbers have dropped to only few hundreds per year seeking protection. In 2015 numbers were still low, since Croatia was not perceived as a target country but as transit country. Croatia was an important actor in creating a safe path for refugees on the so called Balkan route, and from September 2015 until March 2016 it was transporting refugees toward the Western European countries in a joint coordination with Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia. However, that practice was stopped in March 2016 with joint decision of the countries to close the Balkan Route and stop entry of refugees into the EU.

The Act on International and Temporary Protection defines procedure of applying for international protection, rights that asylum seekers and persons under international protection have and integration of the mentioned groups into Croatian society. The act is the basis for the according Action Plan on integration of persons that have been granted international protection for the period from 2017 until 2019 - which has been approved by the government in June 2017. The Action Plan measures include a list of regular and non-ambitious jobs where the state establishes minimum practices of its own action, while the integration of persons with international protection is neglected. The direction the Action Plan sets is almost entirely focused on social rights and puts high expectations on the persons who were granted international protection, in terms of their integration. Realizing rights from the social welfare system should only be short-term support on this path, and not the focus of their treatment in Croatia. The key direction of the state should be the one in which state administration bodies provide for protection and support for refugees in the form of support to overcome trauma, social inclusion and participation in the new socio-economic context.

In March 2016, the legislative procedure for amending the Aliens Act was initiated under emergency procedure. Although in May 2016 the final draft of the Act on Amendments to the Aliens Act was adopted, the Croatian Parliament did not decide on it by the end of 2016. In December 2016 however, the final text of the bill was decided upon again during the session of the government. The final text of the Proposal of the Act on Amendments to the Aliens Act brings many changes to existing legal institutes and introduces some new ones. Some of those institutes are positive, such as the institute of alternative detention that follows the international legal standards and principles of detention only as the ultimate measure. The proclaimed task of entering these legislative changes is the alignment of the EU Directives. By analyzing concrete provisions, the Proposal of the Law is only partially successful in fulfilling this task. Some changes have been made irrespective of the directives (e.g. abolishing the possibility of issuing travel documents for aliens on temporary or permanent residence), and some are stricter and more repressive than the provisions of the directive. The most alarming is the institute of “criminalizing solidarity” (criminalization of helping to refugees) . In July 2017 Croatian Parliament has submitted to the Government to adopt a new proposal for the Amendments to the Aliens Act, which acknowledges the exceptions of criminalizing people that

provide humanitarian aid toward persons that are in illegal stay on Croatian territory. The current proposals of the Aliens Act have left the possibility of punishing human solidarity by helping others in distress, which is detrimental to society because it violates the dignity of the human person, the one in distress as much as the one who wants to help.

3. Attitudes to migrants and refugees – changes since mid-2015 (public opinion polls, qualitative research results, etc.)

As previously mentioned in the text, population of refugees and migrants was and still is quite low in Croatia; even though the path of refugees through Croatia and events that happened afterwards in Europe left an effect on public and citizens. Apart from that, Croatia as an EU member state has an obligation to accept refugees through relocation and resettlement program, what is something talked about in public and among politicians - so, attitudes towards the population of migrants and refugees is a subject to change.

According to a survey published by the Center for Peace Studies “Representation and Indicators of Discrimination and Xenophobic Attitudes in the Republic of Croatia”⁴, conducted in May and June 2013 on a nationally representative sample of 800 adult citizens of the Republic of Croatia, refugees and asylum seekers were the third most unwanted group in Croatia (after Serbs and Roma). Examining xenophobia at a general level, survey concludes that the citizens of the Republic of Croatia are on the border between xenophobic and supportive attitudes towards immigration of foreigners to Croatia: roughly equal numbers express xenophobic and friendly attitudes towards foreign immigrants. It is interesting to note that xenophobia is particularly pronounced in two areas: fears that immigrants will take jobs for those who have always lived there (63.4%) and the suspicion that foreigners will not be in the first place (63.6%).

Another research conducted by Župarić-Ilić and Gregurović in 2013 on population of students, shows a greater experience of refugees as social threats among students who study technical science, who are politically positioned as right or far right, who are believers and those who do not have or have only one foreigner friend in Croatia.

In 2015 another group of researchers conducted a survey on attitudes toward refugees among population of Croatian capital, the city of Zagreb - Carević et al: “Who supports the arrival of refugees in Croatia? Determinants

⁴ URL: http://www.cms.hr/system/publication/pdf/26/Istrazivacki_izvjestaj_KNIZNI_BLOK.pdf

of attitudes and social distance to refugees and preferred forms of refugee acculturation Zagreb citizens”⁵. The results show that Zagreb’s citizens have moderately negative attitudes towards refugees. This finding is in line with the theory of O’Rourke and Sinnott from 2006 that people are on average less hostile to refugees rather than immigrants. The researchers explain moderately negative attitude toward refugees through the perception that refugee migration is unconvincing/unwanted - two thirds of respondents (67%) have agreed with the statement “The refugees have valid reasons to leave their country”.

All researches have concluded how the area of refugee acceptance and integration is insufficiently researched, and offer their results for further analysis, actions and policy proposals. Especially after 2015 when most of Europe was affected by refugees arriving and the ones still waiting to be moved through programs of relocation and resettlement agreed in European Agenda on Migration⁶.

4. Public discourse, role of media and civil society

Croatian media have various approaches towards the topic of migration, but since 2015 the situation has worsen and as the participants of the research have stated – lately the focus of the mainstream media has mostly been negative. It happens because of the incidents done by migrants or refugees, and certain media follow them with high tone of generalization. The Croatian Journalists’ Association has published a public communication on the issue stating the following: “The Croatian Journalists’ Association urges journalists and editors to report on the violence in which asylum-seekers are involved professionally, to check all information before publishing, and to ensure that citizens are not encouraged to prejudices, stereotypes, intolerance and hate.”⁷

However, there are examples of positive stories that portray integration of refugees. These types of stories are mostly focused on individual stories where refugees stress their current success and future plans. Big role in such

5 URL: https://apps.unizg.hr/rektorova/upload_2016/jesu-li-izbjeglice-dobrodosle-u-Hrvatsku_pre-daja.pdf

6 URL: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf

7 URL: <http://vijesti.hrt.hr/401616/hnd-poziva-medije-da-ne-poticu-predrasude-kada-izvjestavaju-o-nasilju-u-koje-su-umijesani-azilanti>

stories have civil society organizations that are supporting refugee integration through different initiatives, projects and actions. It is important to stress how last few years in Croatia there are more and more examples of migrant-refugee collectives who are also becoming actors. Some of them are: social cooperative Taste of Home⁸, civil society organization Society of Africans in Croatia⁹, migrant choir¹⁰.

Research published by Jurišić et al. in 2017 shows that “mass media can positively influence public opinion and political attitudes towards migration through establishing agendas and framing debates (Berry et al., 2015). Analysis of 12 721 announcements and 416 374 comments on these disclosures on the refugee crisis in eight online Croatian portal from September 15th 2015 to March 15th 2016, showed the agenda of the media partially matches the audience’s agenda. From the first day of the refugee wave entering in Croatia, the number of articles in the media was in fast grew from day to day, and in October 2015, on the analyzed portals, they were published in total of 3 094. Each portal of that month had more than 300 articles containing the selected keywords “migrant” and “refugee”, and Index.hr more than 600. During the research periods media have changed their perspectives, using the word ‘refugee’ in the beginning of the crisis more often and at the very end the word ‘migrant’”¹¹.

PART TWO – FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUPS (FG) INTERVIEWS

1. Experience with refugees and other migrants

Experience with refugees and other migrants varied in the three localities where focus groups were conducted, due to different experiences the neighbourhoods have had and are still having with refugees and migrants. The city of Kutina and the neighbourhood of Dugave (in the city of Zagreb) are communities where Reception Centres for Asylum Seekers are located, so participants could reflect on the past and present experiences and could give recommendations for improvement. Neighbourhood Peščenica (in the city of Zagreb)

8 URL: <http://www.okus-doma.hr/en>

9 URL: <http://dah.hr/>

10 URL: <https://www.facebook.com/zbordomacigosti/>

11 Jurišić, Vesnić Alujević, Bonacci, *Stvaranje agendi: slučaj izbjegličke krize u hrvatskim medijima*, p. 53; in „Mediji, novinarstvo i ljudska prava“, ed. Car, Matović, Fakultet političkih znanosti Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung, Zagreb, 2017.

on the other hand, is specific because of admitting refugees from Bosnia and Hercegovina in the 1990s, but also because in the area there is a Roma community - so participants have reflected on experience they had with these groups (which they also perceive as minorities).

Participants from the neighbourhood of Dugave, in the city of Zagreb, assessed the reception of refugees and the refugees' of locals as varied (source: the media, word of mouth, or first hand testimonies). The reception centre, although within the neighbourhood, is far enough from the neighbourhood centre (from the city centre even more so) which contributes to the feeling of dislocation, and the locals sense of the place as on the fringe of their society (literally as well as symbolically). The refugees are visible only on public transport and around the reception centre and around commuting areas in the city. Another experience was that they are "neither visible nor invisible" - visible at places heavily frequented by everybody: public transport, local health clinics, the park, or at a previously organized event aiming at refugees as members of public, but not outside of these areas.

Experience with refugees and migrants depends a lot on how people experience the neighbourhood: through their children (extracurricular activities and play time in the park) and through interactions with other parents. During summer, interactions are more straightforward (because days are longer and people tend to spend more time outside) and don't have to be planned out. Interviewees agree local people are more reserved if they encounter a group of men, and that everybody is open to families with children.

In the City of Kutina, participants were perceiving refugees through their work - schooling system. They stated how all of the refugee children were well accepted in schools, both from the side of their co-pupils, and the teachers. They, as the teachers of these refugee children, reportedly do their best to ease their trouble of fitting in and understanding the curriculum; although numerous obstacles and problems were described.

Problems they perceive are following:

- The effect of refugee children provisional yet permanent state of living in the reception centre, with nobody to supervise whether they do their homework (and usually they don't), and if they have any problems with understanding the curriculum.

- The academic success of refugee children was identified as the uncertainty of their legal status - parents are unmotivated to take part in their children's education because they cannot predict what tomorrow brings and whether there is sense in pursuing school in Croatia(n). One participant stated: "They see themselves as passers-by, mere guests".
- For following years participants suggest as useful to organize separate parent-teacher meetings with refugee parents and translators so that parents understand better and can take some part in their children's education, as well as to work on cultural adaptation issues (gender balance among the students was mentioned). Building on the experience of the school year still going on at the time the interview took place, the interviewees working in schools expressed they would like to prepare better for the upcoming year. Admittedly, it would be easier if they did not have this extra work on their hands - when a Croatian speaking student misbehaves they can together go see the education specialist and resolve it, with a non-speaker they don't know what to do.
- Similarly to what was reported from participants in the neighbourhood of Dugave, school staff and educators received no preparation ("The children arrived quietly, overnight.") before refugee children entered their schools, and had to rely on themselves how to best fit the newcomers into the class. In some cases there were behavioural issues - where teachers struggled with it and to resolve it they had relied on social workers (although there is no formal communication with social workers working at the Reception Centre). Croatian teachers especially, regardless of how much experience they had, were unprepared for working with refugee children. Participants stated that the Committee for Education (within the Ministry of Education) is doing nothing around these issues - they should have prepared the staff and teachers in schools accepting refugees and give concrete measures, exercises, examples of work - the Committee has no continuity and depends on the will power of whoever is in power momentarily and whether they think this issue is a priority or not.

"How to prepare classes for them? There is no procedure, we can't speak the language, and are reduced to using mime so to be able to explain something, and one has to wonder - what is the purpose of this kind of education? How to measure the level of education I am providing for this child, what to expect of

him/her? For some of my students who attended and left I am not sure if they received a certificate or not.” (Participant 1, focus group conducted in the City of Kutina)

“We don’t have the direct human experience with them, so to be able to understand them, to understand the person in the position of an asylum seeker. Until we do, everything we said here is hypothetical - we are talking about imaginary people. Some of us with refugee experiences can relate to what it means being totally uprooted, in a place where you don’t know the language and can’t participate and relate to things - and we have learnt the hard way that some interaction can function outside language. However this depends on the people - how outgoing they are, both on the giving and the receiving side. Just the fact that the child is in the classroom is already a big deal.” (Participant 3, focus group conducted in the City of Kutina)

- The Croatian textbook used for learning Croatian language is designed for Croats living abroad to stay connected with the language and the culture, and not for students learning Croatian as a second language.
- Preparation classes for the refugee students were too short and teachers handling preparation classes have no training in working with diversity, and obstacles presented by working with non-language speakers.
- The authorized institutions like state employment agencies or the Ministry of Education cannot evaluate teachers’ work - there is no set standard to evaluate a teacher working with vulnerable groups - so it really is all up to every teacher’s enthusiasm. However, the Ministry cannot and should not “play dumb forever” - some of these people will be staying and the children will need to be integrated into the school system according to previously set instructions. Although not everything can be predicted some major directive in working with non-Croatian students should exist.

Neighbourhood of Peščenica, in the City of Zagreb, according to participants has the history of coexistence with “the Other” within the boundaries of the neighbourhood and although reputed as a part of town with “the Roma and too many refugees from the 1990s war”, participants added life in the neighbourhood is good and without frictions of any kind, especially when talking

about ethnic coexistence. However this does not mean this is because integration has been implemented so well, but more because of the practice of “good fences make good neighbours”, where the Roma are let be, and their practices will in many cases be tolerated exactly because of their origin (children drop out from schools), i.e. for the reason the state and the society does not care all that much. Refugees on the other hand are perceived as wanting to assimilate/integrate better, because they want to accept this way of life to fit in well, but they need to be let to do so. Participants stated that if they are caught illegal in Croatia (outside asylum resettlement procedures), the state has to be the one to say they will be allowed to stay here and that citizens are called to house them for a while if necessary, and there will always be people wanting to help. However, the state has to ensure this minimal legal framework. Whereas, what happens is similar to situation in Serbia, a constant limbo for a large number of people who spend the winter outside, and if found in Croatia deported back to Serbia, so there is practice to let as little people in as possible.

2. Arguments against the reception of refugees

Participants in the neighbourhood of Dugave, in the City of Zagreb, were mostly on the pro side of refugees living in their community. The group was quite specific: women with university degrees, working in education or government, with a proactive attitude towards living in the local community, and open to the idea of better integration of refugees. The incidents the interviewees described, or negative feelings towards having refugees as neighbours or towards a larger influx of refugees in neighbourhoods were retold from acquaintances, friends, neighbours, some of which hold a more reserved attitude towards the refugees. “The darker they (refugees) are, the bigger the fear is”, as one of the interviewees laid out - the feelings of acquaintances who, for instance, because they ride the last night bus home from the city centre, their experience of refugees is different from those who are in contact with them in more “protected” circumstances (like organized events that mostly families attend), the experience is somewhat different. The participant retelling these friends’ reflections explains it as the fear of the unknown, the fact that unlike Western countries with a history of immigration stretching into the 1960s, Croatia has not had something similar, and this is what feels like the first time of facing so many different cultures and races all at once. The fear of sudden surrounding by complete strangers in area inhabited by similar looking and behaving people - the participant described as normal.

Participants also connected the possible spread of fear and xenophobia with knowledge about the groups of refugees, basic relevant information, and whether there was any content to the social contact, as seen on differences of organized social events where people can relax, meet, learn something new, and random, passer-by sort of contact reduced to public transport, and a single parent in a quiet corner of the children's playground (if any - one interviewee was provoked to organize public events explicitly after she noticed no parents nor children of the refugee community from the nearby reception centre ever come to the park with a children's playground area). Another issue is the commonly spread fear of spending means of a country at the EU's bottom on social aid for refugees - interviewees imagined what the perception of refugees might be by the unemployed in the country (Croatia has one of the highest unemployment rates in Europe), pensioners fearing their pensions might be lowered due to the pressure on the welfare fund, and similar quick conclusions people sometimes make, all of which is connected to how much they know, how much they are ready to find out or not, and what kind of messages is being presented by the media.

Participants agreed that the less informed and the less educated have phobias or xenophobia, and that some local residents are in discomfort – they fear groups of refugee men because they cannot predict how they will be around local women and girls.

In the City of Kutina, although the participants talked about integration as it were a positive thing, most felt detached from the situation and felt comfortable only from the position of the stand-byer. If the refugee children misbehaved, it was because they were culturally ill-adapted; it is understandable that local people have certain fears because of the global threat of terrorism; if they thought refugees did not or do not fit in well, it was because the system (state, town, municipality) did not provide ways for them to do so. Although not completely powerless within the social hierarchy and dynamics in the municipal affairs, participants felt they had no power nor right to intervene in any of the issues described - some of the reservations and prejudices, described as if belonging to acquaintances, possibly were shared by some of the participants themselves. (Examples: As Croats are leaving Croatia for economic reasons to Germany and other countries, refugees are moving into their places, a dynamics possibly planned ahead by someone; cultural backlash of 'Islamic values'

being brought to Croatia/ Europe; real refugees are fleeing danger whereas some of the people in the migrant wave are mer' economic migrants, not in life threatening situations - anxieties of some of the acquaintances retold during the interview). It yet has to be seen how a small community such as Kutina, neither urban nor rural, will find better ways of integrating those who will, at least for a number of years, permanently stay there.

The neighbourhood of Peščenica, in the City of Zagreb - although participants were above average sensitized to the idea of reception of a larger number of refugees into the Croatian society, obstacles to the refugees sense of belonging when it comes to fitting into the Croatian society were discussed. Media representation of refugees, fear of terrorism the participants have encountered when covering the subject of refugees in their networks (family, friends, relatives, neighbours), and the fact one whole identity has been reduced to a fear that in time of crisis is difficult to work with and break. On the whole, participants believe the general public attitudes are mostly positive but emphasized the great responsibility of the political elites to shift the accent from terrorism to a more humane, individual approach, thus to influence the general public's approach to this population, especially those living in less diverse areas like the countryside and smaller towns with no recent history of coexistence. The participants also commented on the Current Foreigners Act (that was at the time of conducting focus group highly discussed in the media) which reportedly purposefully outlaws people looking for shelter from grave circumstances. The reactions of the Croatian public were also mixed – refugees were accused of 'just wanting to get to Germany', i.e. not really wanting to fit in Croatia, while it was obvious most wanted to reach other countries because they already know or have somebody there, so it will be easier to be included in the community, there will be more job opportunities, or wanting to stay, adding to the fear of being washed over by refugees. Regarding integration issues, the group decided they perhaps cannot dwell on these when it comes to the refugee community of which there are not many, but there are experiences with the Roma population in the neighbourhood, a fact that puts many off when deciding where to settle. During the 1990s and the co-existence between refugees from Bosnia, the Roma and the local population, experiences are more or less neutral to positive, and participants living there at the time could not remember a significant negative incident – the newcomers were poorer and

somewhat 'different' yet their children continued education, they found jobs, they contributed to the neighbourhood, life went on.

3.Sources of information

In the neighbourhood of Dugave, in the city of Zagreb, on many occasions the participants working in educational institutions reflected lack of information they think should have been provided by relevant institutions - in their case the Ministry of Education, which without clear integration policies to follow did not know, and for the time being, still does not know, how to approach the integration of refugee children into the Croatian educational and other systems. Situations considered miniscule in some countries, such as lack of knowledge of host language, are presented as real obstacle to education or continuation of education in Croatia. Because the group was specific in terms of vocationally being a part of the educational system, most have had many first hand experiences (teachers with refugee parents, children, reception centre staff) which makes them an atypical group to represent the average of the neighbourhoods close to the reception centre. Participants mentioned how although people often complain they are not provided information on time, at a meeting organized by civil society organisations (Centre for Peace Studies, Jesuit Refugee Service) in 2016, which aimed at gathering associations, state institutions, local community and asylum seekers in one place, there seemed not to be a big number of local population although this was an excellent opportunity to ask questions. Lack of motivation from the side of the local population is at the same time good and bad - it alleviates the number of direct conflicts but on the other hands makes integration less possible. The role of the local council was raised as an issue, i.e. its inefficiency and the lack of fulfilling its role.

“It is a nice building which locals don't use, nor know about. It would be an excellent opportunity for locals to start using it, to start organizing refugees' countries' presentation there, through food, music, flea market; a very good way for people to relax, meet, and subsequently, inform themselves about the newcomers.” (Participant 1, on local council facility in the neighbourhood of Dugave, City of Zagreb)

Participants had concrete proposals on what could be done to improve the situation in their neighbourhood:

The local council spaces should be present in every neighbourhood and community, and become routine. Apart from the local municipality (buildings),

former centres for culture (from socialist period) should be reactivated and used for art events - these buildings were initially designed and built exactly for socializing purposes. For example, a part of one of these public municipality buildings in one of the neighbourhoods close to the reception centre where one of the participants lives was made into a computer lounge so that refugees can stop by, check their email, use the internet, but in terms of events, there is no routine program, and when there is no routine, people forget about it, and an effort has to be made every time something new is organized.

Other places identified as quintessential for information sharing and important regarding the knowledge of what goes on in the local communities are educational institutions which through programs with the parents and children have the power to affect information circulation. The responsibility of education institutions was highlighted by one of the participant as profound because children are integration-carriers of their families, primarily due to language skills mastered sooner, and secondly due to contacts with the domicile culture. The parents on the other hand remain unemployed, live in poverty, stay indoors a lot. One of the participants pupils accompanied its mother to the hospital - they either did not ask for help, or have not received it - they walked for more than 5 hours to the hospital, otherwise a 20 minute car ride and the only reason child went along was to translate.

The media has an opportunity for knowledge sharing through publishing personal stories, presenting people, families, kids. Unfortunately, the media is quick to respond when ever something bad happens, an incident, a fight. Participants agreed a serious problem and a threat to the security and integrity of refugees was that the media rarely makes a point to say that the terrorist attacks in Europe were not committed by people who got into Europe in a refugee wave but second or third generation of immigrants. In terms of representation of refugees, when there is an isolated incident, all reception-residents are treated with suspicion by the surrounding neighbourhood-residents, which contributes to the problem of harbouring prejudices. At the time being, all residents share communal spaces in the centre, the “well-behaved” individuals and families, and those with behavioural issues, drug abuse issues, physical abuse issues, so because all live at the same address, outsiders can make no distinction between them (source: previous experiences and interviews with members of organizations working at the reception centre; note - Interviewers).

Participants discussed how to prevent tell-tales (refugee men sexually provoking local women, media covering incidents where the members of the refugee community is involved, ...) to develop momentum by affirmative and well-developed campaigns of introducing the refugee community to the local way of life and vice versa - which would ease the tensions in otherwise stressful situations like riding public transport at night, night life in general, safety of women, and similar - all of these require initiative, organization, coordination and time.

In the City of Kutina, sources of information for participants were direct contacts with social workers, refugee children, through either working with them or being a parent of a student going to school with them; word of mouth; and the media - often during the interview the latter was blamed for misrepresenting the situation and contributing to the panic and conspiracy theories. Some interviewees stated they believe people are more at ease if they know refugees are only passing through, waiting for resettlement in Germany or other places, than they would have been if they knew they were here to stay permanently.

In the neighbourhood of Pešenića, in the City of Zagreb, participants stated that the media often abuse incidents involving actors of different ethnic backgrounds, especially if the victim is local and the abuser foreign, to enhance panic regarding the entire refugee population in Croatia which contributes to the panic that one abuser point to a wave of people who will not be able to fit in and who will torment their surroundings with violence and harassment.

4. Attitudes towards hate speech and violence against refugees

Dear project team - since this aspect was not mentioned before the process of conducting focus groups, our research team in Croatia did not focus on it during the interviews and we are not able to provide information about it. However, we do mention participants' perspective on violence towards refugees in other chapters. We hope this is satisfactory for the purpose of research. Thank you for your understanding.

5. Response to pro-refugee arguments

In the neighbourhood of Dugave, in the City of Zagreb, participants stated that many popular opinions depend on how things are presented in the public sphere. During the path of refugees through Croatia in 2015 (event often called “the refugee crisis”), economically deprived towns of Opatovac and Slavonski Brod in the eastern part of Croatia supported housing refugee camps because locals had a direct economic gain from it, and the community largely supported it. The consensus among the FG participants was that resources are actually never the issue and there is always enough, the only question is whether the authorities know how to use it (the resources), and to prioritize - especially in smaller communities where the Government has to provide more support than in bigger cities. So, depending on the preparation by the authorities, such will be the outcome and the general atmosphere of the general population. Otherwise when people try to do something, to help out, and if they fail due to too many structural obstacles, they are more likely to give up organizing for help, and will not try again.

The interviewees did not provide any direct views against the reception of refugees. All stated they personally would not mind if a number of refugees were to be resettled in the city/ neighbourhood, although some did always make a point of an obligation from the side of the relevant authorities to “prepare” the local population somehow for this possibility, and certainly prepare better than it was conducted when some refugee children found their way to schools and kindergartens where they work. Notably, there is a generational difference between the concepts of ideal preparation of the arrival of possible refugees (senior) and the absence of it (junior).

In the neighbourhood of Peščenica, in the City of Zagreb, participants stated the following regarding arguments against and examples of refugees living in their community:

There is a previous experiences with refugees and IDPs settlement and resettlement from the 1991-1995 war in the former Yugoslavia; area of the Peščenica neighbourhood was to a large extent inhabited with Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H), so tolerance towards newcomers is “hopefully higher than in other parts of town”, according to one participant, and a lot of them were active during the 2015 refugee crisis. Others agreed that this fact should be used in the campaign to advocate for local citizens’ inclusion in the

cause, to communicate empathy better. 90% of the outer outskirts of Peščenica have been settled by the Croatian refugees in the 1990s.

One participant knows about an Afghan family in Peščenica, whose children are partly integrated and partly mocked in school.

One participant expressed a wish to connect refugees from Iraq with an acquaintance who has been living in Croatia since socialism when Yugoslavia and Iraq cooperated through the non-aligned movement, and that companies working in the Arab world should do the same, and hire people from the migrant crisis whenever they can, but this has to be coordinated.

It is the first time since WW2 that such a network of solidarity is needed

A few dozen people housed in Zagreb, city of almost a million is nothing, so we can't talk about either solidarity or xenophobia because it has not been tested with a significant number of influx of refugees (few thousand at least), and the several ones are invisible outside the Porin / Dugave reception centre, Train and Bus Stations, and in between.

6. Other, country specific issues

Regarding attitudes towards the refugees, situation in the country was assessed by the participants as better than it was at the beginning of the crisis. People got used to seeing more different people than they used to, hearing new languages. Identified problems were not 'ordinary' people, among whom all participants think there will be always enough of those who are ready to react, to give a hand, to help in any way they can but with the institutions - on the level how the state organizes and coordinates the cooperation of various stakeholders, different ministries, offices - this is where integration fails. With a relatively small number of children, of people in general whom you need to take care of, the system will not show malfunctions, but with a bigger amount of people, and without providing help and support to people who work with refugees, people working as educators, social workers, medical workers, will become frustrated, perpetually faced with unresolved problems which add up to constant frustration. Specific to Croatia is that institutions themselves do not recognize it is up to them to resolve an issue, or do not see it a priority nor know how to support those people or organizations who are providing a service in question (one among many examples is the inability to organize Croatian language classes for asylum seekers, people granted asylum, other migrant groups). Without language skills, especially for adults, integration lin-

gers. Although obvious, the state cannot find a way of organizing classes for a few hundred people in Croatia. And refugee adults then cannot find a motivation to learn the language themselves, which adds to mental health issues, and sense of isolation. One participant shared that other than her ordinary job she works for a state education agency, and on her own tries to find out what are deficitary job occupations, so to share with those granted asylum for what they could retrain for to work, which would hopefully bring them to the point of becoming independent and more equal citizens of this country. Although she works within the system she is having a hard time finding out what these occupations are, as the institutions are not ready to share this so to make it easier for the refugees to permanently settle in Croatia. So among most of the participants there was frustration that it all comes down to the local community, and ordinary people's good will.

The education system was assessed as similar - not only that inquiries by school managers and staff remained unanswered, but there were no suggestions on how to implement something when it comes to working with refugee children, advice or help. Teachers and child development experts rely on intuition and do what they can with the restricted resources. Pre-school system has less administrative issues, such as how to grade children, whether to keep score of their grades at all (still an issue at the point the interview was taking place, end of school year 2016/2017), so they are more free to design their own programmes and can get creative, but despite this first formal recognition of refugee children in the system after the crisis was months after they were actually admitted. The participant working in the preschool system stated her feeling was the educational authorities were a little scared of the situation, and it took a while before the cooperation between UNICEF, the Ministry and other stakeholders gained a certain momentum when it comes to preschool system. Other thing is the differences between cities and smaller towns - in cities there are civil society organizations, and a wide spread Islamic community that educators can call to translate or purchase something needed that day, but in smaller towns the situation is completely different. The system was assessed as centralized, slow and ill-efficient. Examples for it are following:

Refugee children at the time of the PG were still not a part of the electronic system of grading because they had not been issued a personal identification number. For months the Ministry kept saying they were working on it but until the end of the year nothing had happened. Without that they cannot get a

diploma nor graduate primary school to move onto high school.

Other provided example was vaccinating - mandatory for the child to enter the state run kindergarten, and the kindergarten where one of the interviewee works had to contact the city to raise the issue. The City of Zagreb did not know how was in charge - them or the state. So the kindergarten had initiate to find a solution through the Infectious Diseases clinic to sign a contract with the city to organize vaccinations. The issues described were usually resolved and some were characterized as trivial by the interviewees but they all pointed to one crucial thing: it is unclear for all of the participants whether the state of Croatia wants these people to integrate or not. From their experience there is no clear answer, or if there is one it points more to the negative answer to that question than the affirmative.

Participants identified how it is important to find out what the refugee population actually needs, without assuming they all wanted to play sports or similar. Except with children, nothing is being done towards adults - like gender equality among the migrant population, health issues, social welfare issues, employment issues. One participant shared she was impressed by learning one of her pupil's parent is a carpet-maker from Afghanistan. Where could this person work, to contribute, whom could she call, can the state find out what people are good at to yield them somehow towards finding at least a temporary job solution? These are all unanswered questions. There obviously needs to be some sort of a coordinator of these issues and everyday problems, on the county or state level.

Regional differences were highlighted to be substantial: in areas with no experience with "the Other", some interviewees working in seminars aimed at educators and treatment of refugees, they found the responses more xenophobic than in areas with at least a few local minorities or a history of immigration. Experience and knowledge change everything, attitudes as well - for this reason the FG participants did not judge teachers with more xenophobic attitudes, because teaching colleges do not prepare future educators how to teach Croatian, at least basic, as a second language, or about inter-cultural competencies.

For another participant, the explanation of how fear is spread and persists is different. Because of the turbulence of the transition era in Croatia, and the drastic reshaping of the social environment, the neighbourhood web of relations were lost and the influx of refugees is yet another hub for fear of the previously alienated neighbourhood. Another example of lack of knowledge is the treatment of all visibly different (women wearing the hijab for e.g.) as members of the refugee community although some of these Muslim families have lived in the area for years prior to the refugee crisis and might be completely local. Having children and dogs were, somewhat anecdotally, mentioned as good ways of breaking the social discomfort barriers.

The interviewee working in the elementary school library shared she felt 'excited' at the prospect of having so many different cultures at arm's length yet does not know how to approach organizing something that would connect the locals and the newcomers - she does not feel comfortable walking into the Reception Centre, but would rather if that was organized formally through the town of Kutina. The participants remarked how years of living next to a few Roma settlements should have prepared the township better for this sort of situation because of all the programs and projects that went into the embetterment of life conditions in the Roma settlement, projects aimed at better academic success of Roma school children and aimed at achieving lower drop out in later stages of primary school, etc. Also, when people organize events and integration activities by themselves, they will make mistakes and "the good and the bad will come out", causing many not to want to deal with the pressure of criticism if they fail at a desired goal when it comes to inter-cultural activities. What is unclear to the participants and seemed important to know is whether these families and people want to live in Kutina in the first place - the refugees' dedication to staying there seemed key to empathy or level of interest and help local residents will show towards them. 'Investing' into families who will only move away is seen almost as futile by some of the interviewees. One participant contradicted by saying people choose what is best for themselves regardless whether they are refugees or not - if they eventually opt for moving away it is not due to selfishness but a decision made on experience of life there and chances to move on in life.

The interviewees stated it was not fair that towns at the Adriatic coast were not admitting any refugees, which is because of the tourism industry which does not last year round anyway.

Further on, all agreed the reservations arise from fear, grave fear towards the changes brought by the newcomers - in institutions as well as ordinary people, so the issue is how to start breaking the fear. The school staff admitted sharing the fear as well - refugee children are their responsibility, and if something went wrong, the responsibility would be theirs as well. While the migrants come in small numbers, the system can work with it, but with great numbers comes panic and backlash - which can be prevented with a good housing policies and a well-prepared integration system.

Church traditionally plays a big role in the Croatian society, but has decided to 'sit this one out' when it comes to refugees. The Archdiocese has failed to convey Pope Francis' message that every Catholic parish should organize housing of at least one refugee family, and overall it is still tied to the Croatian national, to some extent even nationalist, identity. Unlike many Protestant churches and mission in Germany, which help bear the burden of settling down of so many newcomers, and are happy to do it. In Croatia the only religious affiliation that comes to mind is the Jesuit Rescue Service, operating in both Reception Centre (in the City of Zagreb and City of Kutina) – the mainstream churches in Croatia and the former Yugoslavia, for the most part were not vocal on the issue, and if they had it might inspire families who rely on what is said from the altar.

When asked how they see the integration procedure and process would be best organized on the neighbourhood level, participants shared ideas from including all of the branches of the local government, institutions essential for social welfare, accommodation – how families and individuals will be settled needs to be according to a previously designed plan, health care, language skills, academic success support, mental health protection, and to organize as many activities as possible to provide reasons for people to mingle and meet new people, if they are willing to socialize. Social networks are a good way of coordinating some of these actions among local residents and different stakeholders such as CSOs, but the support must come from the state as well. The support to education institutions and school teacher is very important as

for a lot of school staff and educators in Croatia, burdened with administrative work apart from class preparation and execution, non-Croatian language speakers present only an overwhelming burden for the normal functioning of class. To provide support, teachers with refugee students in class should receive support in the form of preparational language classes, and if there is an opportunity, a practice in socio-emotional and intercultural competences for teachers and students. A lot can be organized through the local municipality, which doesn't have to wait for state institutions such as relevant ministries. All activities should be designed in such a way to connect the local population with the refugees, like the JRS Christmas initiative to connect refugees of all creed with locals celebrating Christmas Eve dinner.

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, GOOD PRACTICES

Participants in all three conducted focus groups gave deep and valuable insight on the situation they perceive within the community they are living. Participants from the neighbourhood of Dugave (the City of Zagreb) had more interactions with refugees and more experience in local events, so their observations were the fullest - what is logical since Zagreb is the city with most active civil society organisations that are very involved in the issue and do cooperate with local communities. Participants from the City of Kutina focused mostly on the schooling system since they themselves understand it the best by being within it. They expressed lack of afterschool activities that could counter fear and connect locals with refugee population living in reception centre. The neighbourhood of Pešenička in the City of Zagreb had participants who were observing the situation with least experience of direct contact with refugees. However, their observation and awareness gave great insight on overall situation within the country - focusing mostly on the responsibility of the media and state actors.

Conclusions and recommendations that we extract from the analysis from all three focus groups are following.

Conclusions:

- lack of coordination among state institutions
- lack of preparation of professional staff working with refugees
- lack of preparation of communities around reception centres for asylum seekers
- professionals are left on their own intuition while working with refugees

- no motivation among parents of refugees to motivate their children on school success, since their legal status is actually a status quo while they stay in reception centres
- no proper material that teachers can use to work with refugee kids (the existing one are made for Croats that live abroad)
- no interest on responsible institutions to improve the integration practice
- Croatia has a potential because of the experience in the 90's
- refugees are perceived as wanting to integrate better, because they want to fit in well
- existence of the fear of the unknown among broad population of Croats
- possible rise in xenophobia because the institutions do not react towards the incidents
- existence of the fear of the global threat of terrorism
- media representation of refugees is mostly negative
- lack of information that should have been provided by relevant institutions
- lack of involvement of the local authorities

Recommendations:

- Responsible institutions should enable parents of refugee kids to visit schools, see the classrooms, come to class to introduce themselves shortly in their language. This approach would improve the chances of their children to be more involved in school work and give it a more significant meaning. At the moment, it isn't clear who would be in charge of organizing something such as this - the person in charge for education affairs on the town level does not hold it a priority.
- Apartments around town would be a better way of housing people than former motels or hotels - living in reception centre only stigmatises people and creates unease with the the locals.
- Extra-curricular activities should be organised, like swimming pool, the library, etc.
- The nearby town of Sisak is implementing inclusion projects in cooperation with UNICEF and other NGOs, to work with school teachers, students, and parents on Roma integration issues. A similar project

could be started in Kutina, only aimed at the refugee community. It could include excursions, vacation time, reading activities, and it has to become routine. What was highlighted many times in the Dugave and Kutina FGs was the importance of routine and making something become a part of the year-long cycle of activities in the neighbourhoods and towns with a significant refugee population. This would help the refugees integrate and the locals to get used to the fact they are participating in activities together, and so are their children. In Zagreb there is the “Live Library”/ “Live Book” project when people present a book title from their country, or just talk about their life’s experience, in libraries or cultural organizations.

- Political elites have a great responsibility to shift the accent from terrorism when talking about refugees and migrant to a more humane and individual approach.
- Local authorities should put in use their facilities and create spaces of local gatherings, meetings and events.
- Media should be more responsible while dealing with the issue of migration and refugees.
- State institutions and civil society organisation should make more campaigns that tell positive stories and open dialogue.
- Church should be more included in the issue and work harder on practical aspects of integration.

During the interviews, participants mentioned good practice examples they have encountered and believe are important to be mentioned.

Civic Initiative Dugave, in the City of Zagreb (CID)

One of the interview participants in the FG Dugave has, together with a small group of friends and neighbours launched the citizens initiative aimed at the improvement of real-life social networks within the neighbourhood. It has many goals, and the improvement of inter-culturalism is one of many - especially in view of the changes brought into the social dynamics of the neighbourhood after a former hotel, now Porin reception centre has been turned into refugees and other migrants housing facility.

This informal group of citizens, in cooperation with the public library Dugave and other associations which have already accumulated experience with similar initiatives within the framework of a green network, organic pro-

duce placement and sustainable living platform. Expanding on these ideas of solidarity, networking in the local community, farmers market, through showing care for Dugave, nature and just distribution, CID introduced refugees as one of the topics it wanted to tackle to combat fear, prejudice and ignorance in the local context. They organize presentations of countries, public discussions, culinary events, children friendly events, and during the warm part of the year try to get families with children to the park to mingle together. Key to their success, they highlighted, was the willingness of the local library, branch of the City of Zagreb Public Libraries, to cooperate and provide space for the activities, workshops, discussions - this is especially significant in the light of what another participant from a neighbourhood close to Dugave described as neglect of former neighbourhood/ local council socializing/cultural centres, which during socialism and before the war in Croatia used to be a hub of neighbourhood activities, today unfamiliar to neighbourhoods' residents.

School examples on individual efforts (both in the City of Kutina and the City of Zagreb)

Despite structural obstacles represented by the Ministry of Education, executive and other branches of government, local government, different public education institutions, teachers and staff who have received refugee children into their schools and classrooms overnight in most cases have done their best to make the children feel comfortable despite the language barrier, trauma, and possible culture shock - they have kept record of the attempt at grading them although without them being issued a Croatian personal identification number it was impossible to include them in the online grading system, mandatory in Croatia; education specialist in the Dugave interview mentioned trying to find out ways of at least temporarily employing refugee children's parents; and in the Kutina example a case was mentioned when local children's parents raised money to cover the excursion expenses for a refugee child (which was not the case every time there was a field trip, and refugee children missed out because of the longevity of the process of Red Cross covering their expenses).

Peščenica neighbourhood in the City of Zagreb

Building on the tradition of being a part of town with already existing tradition of immigration, from rural parts of Croatia, from former parts of the former Yugoslavia, from Roma settlements around town and the country, it has a po-

tential to be more accepting of refugee families finding housing and making homes for themselves here, and as such become a “trademark” of good practice of co-existence of people with different ethnic, class, and other backgrounds. Few good practices already exist when it comes to inter-ethnic relations, such as the fact local Roma live in harmony with Bosnian Croats settled during and after the war in the 1990s. Several times the FG interview participants highlighted the fact of the neighbourhood’s history and way of life as a better guarantee for lower xenophobic incidents and similar. Several civic associations started by the Roma or Bosnian Croats exist in the neighbourhood.

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day dinner and lunch

Event organized by the Jesuit Refugee Service, Croatia, connecting local Zagreb families with refugees. Despite the Christian background of the organization which came through with this idea, it is not envisioned as connecting practising Christians who are local with Christian refugees, but because Christmas is a cultural, and not necessarily a religious event for many Croatian families, so it is an opportunity to bring people together for one of the most special events in an average Croatian family, during time of the year when it is, according to many studies, more difficult to be on one’s own than otherwise. Hopefully it will be repeated for Christmas 2018, and further on.

Football Club Zagreb 041

The football club was started in 2014 when, disappointed with the situation in their football club, and the general state of Croatian football, a part of White Angels football supporters (of FC Zagreb) decided to start a new football club. With time, the number of people involved grew, and soon the whole group stood behind the project. The club wants to bring football back to common people and supporters, bring supporters back to football, and become the first genuine local community football club in Croatia, governed by supporters and sympathizers with a clear stance against modern football, and with a direct-democratic organizational model. The club aims to fight corruption and clientelism on all levels, as well as all kinds of discrimination. The club’s message is that football is a sport of solidarity, sound competition, respect for the opponent. Throughout the last three years it has been extremely committed to including refugees, asylum seekers, people granted asylum, and other migrants into playing games, helping organizing events, to feel better accepted

by the mainstream Croatian society and as a perfect, straight-forward, relaxed way of inclusion, and subsequently, integration into the social fibre of Zagreb's neighbourhoods and the network of sports lovers and recreational players - regardless of age, gender, race, and ethnicity.



Empowering Communities in Europe (ECE) project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

