

Case WORK

TRANSNATIONAL REPORT

ACTIVISTS FOR SOLIDARITY

SITUATION AND NEEDS OF THE VOLUNTEERS WORKING WITH
REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN FIVE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES



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Introduction and methodological outline

Europe struggles for adequate approaches and solutions to cope with the high numbers of refugees and asylum seekers arriving. The more people in Europe are looking for protection, the more help has been organized. Volunteers are involved in a wide range of activities with refugees and asylum seekers. The number of volunteer refugee helpers has risen sharply in the recent years. Citizens of European countries are willing to help with time, dedication and financial resources. And these people are a keystone in the necessary process of integration in order to minimize isolation from receiving communities and to provide opportunities to refugees and asylum seekers to develop their human potential and skills. For a better help on both sides it is crucial to provide these motivated volunteers with some support. Even if the number of asylum seekers in Europe has decreased after the peak in 2015, their integration is a long-term process not finished after the asylum procedures, and it needs the long-term engagement and competent support of European volunteers.

The caseWORK project aims at supporting and qualifying volunteers and enabling them to do their demanding work competently and successfully through an online training course. In order to better design the course, the project partners have carried out a research on the situation and needs of volunteers working with refugees and asylum seekers in five European countries (Austria, Germany, Greece, Italy and Slovenia). This transnational report tries to summarize the findings of the five country reports¹.

The research carried out in each country was composed by desk research and literature review work and interviews, focus groups and online survey with volunteers and key actors (mainly organizations representatives). Totally, 100 people in five countries were reached².

¹ All the country reports can be found in the annex D at the bottom of the document, to allow anyone interested in deepen the single researches and thee sources used.

² See annex C for a detailed table with numbers of people reached.

1. An overview of migration and main characteristics of volunteering “phenomenon” in five countries

1.1. An overview of migration

The European Union population – at 1st January 2016 – was composed by more than 500 million people. Just over 7% of them were foreigners (not living in their origin country), with three quarters of the foreigners coming from outside the EU. The largest foreign populations were in Germany (8,7 million people), UK (5,6 million), Italy (5 million), France and Spain (4,4 million each).

The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) annual report shows that in 2016 the international protection applications in EU countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland were nearly 1.3 million, with a 7% decline compared to the previous year.

Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and Nigeria are the main countries of origin, while Germany, Italy, France, Greece and Austria are the main host countries.

The main characteristics of migration and volunteering phenomena in the countries involved in the project are highlighted in the next pages.

Austria

The proportion of the foreign resident population in Austria was around 1,342 million at the beginning of 2017 – 15.3% of the total population. Most of them are not war refugees from Syria or refugees from economically weak nations. The majority of foreign nationals in Austria (as per 1st January 2107) are from Germany, followed by Serbia and Turkey.

In 2016, a total of 42,285 people applied for asylum in Austria for the first time. This means a decrease after the record figure of 88,340 applications for asylum in 2015, but the number of applications in 2016 was about twice as high as the number of applications in 2014 (28,064), and also significantly higher than in previous years.

The Federal Office for Asylum and Asylum (BFA) is the first instance to conduct asylum and foreign law proceedings. During the first part of the procedure, the BFA makes a forecast decision as to whether Austria is likely to be responsible for further examination of the application or not. The interview will be conducted in a language that asylum seekers understand and translated by sworn interpreters. If Austria is not responsible for examining the application, the application is already rejected during the admission procedure. Austria is competent if the asylum seeker has not already applied for asylum in another “Dublin state”.

The BFA decides on the asylum application by means of a decision. Due to increased administrative procedures, the general decision period of the BFA was extended to 15 months. Asylum applications from “safe countries of origin” must be rejected in principle. Foreigners whose application for asylum has been positively decided and who are thus granted refugee status have full access to the labour market and the possibility of applying for a conventional passport.

Since the last amendment to the law (“temporary asylum”), asylum seekers are initially only granted a limited right of residence for a period of three years. Subsidiary protection is granted to persons whose application for asylum has been rejected for lack of persecution but whose life or integrity is otherwise threatened in their country of origin. They are therefore not entitled to asylum but are granted temporary protection against deportation. Subsidiary protection is granted for the first time for a period

of one year. This is associated with full access to the labour market.

The BFA's decisions may be appealed to the Federal Administrative Court. As a rule, the appeal has a suspensive effect, i.e. deportation cannot be enforced until the decision of the court.

Germany

Germany has 82.4 million inhabitants. Recent numbers reveal that more than 18 million people have a migrant background. An overview from 2016 shows that the largest group is represented by people originating from Turkey (2,8 million). One third of all the people with a migrant background come from non-European countries. People who immigrate to Germany can be differentiated into two groups: those who originate from countries within the European Union and those who come from the so-called third countries. In 2016, 42% of all migrants were EU-citizens. In 2015 their percentage distribution dropped to 28% because of the sharp increase of asylum seekers applying for asylum in Germany and among the European Union as a whole.

Most asylum seekers who reached Germany in 2017 came from Syria, followed by Iraq and Afghanistan. During the first three months of 2018 the most frequently counted origin country is again Syria with 23% of all applicants, followed by Iraq (10.7%) and Nigeria (6.6%).

In order to provide equality for all asylum seekers, the system has been standardized for all European countries. The first step for all asylum seekers arriving in Germany is to register at public organizations or to report their situation to the police. They will receive a temporary document which is essential for any following asylum procedure. With the help of the German distribution and counting system called "EASY", the asylum seekers will be distributed among the federal states of Germany and sent to the corresponding reception centre. Once the asylum seeker has arrived at the reception centre in charge, they will be provided with food and first aid. The centre will inform the closest federal office. There the migrant has to claim for asylum in person. The civil servants will gather all missing personal information and inform the asylum seeker about his rights and duties within the asylum procedure.

Within the frame of a personal interview the applicant is given the opportunity to explain his or her personal situation and fate. Because this process forms the basis of any following decision, the asylum seeker is welcome to take as much time as he/she needs to illustrate his or her personal reasons for leaving his/her home country. After reconsidering the interlocution and all official documents the federal office decides whether the application will be accepted or not. Also, the Federal Office will check each individual asylum application on the basis of the German Asylum Act as to whether one of the four forms of protection – entitlement to asylum, refugee protection, subsidiary protection, or a ban on deportation – applies.

In case of rejection the asylum seeker can take court actions against the Federal Office and the forms will be checked again. The final decision of the Federal office is followed either by the right to stay or by the obligation to depart. In the former case two different varieties can be distinguished: the right of residence or the right to remain.

Greece

Greece has currently a population of 11,14 million, based on the latest United Nations estimates. Greece has traditionally been one of the most important emigration countries after the Second World War. According to the latest official census (2011) the population comprised Greek citizens (91%), Albanian citizens (4.5%), Bulgarian citizens (0.7%), Romanian citizens (0.4%), Pakistani citizens (0.3%) and

Georgian citizens (0.25%). The latest data (2016), reported by the European Migration Network, show that out of the total population in Greece (10.75 million in 2016), 11.3% were foreign and foreign-born (3.2% from other EU Member states, 8.1% from non-Member countries).

In 2017, 29,718 people arrived in Greece by sea, compared to 173,450 sea arrivals in 2016. The majority of those who arrived in 2017 originated from Syria (42%), Iraq (20%) and Afghanistan (12%). More than half of the population were women (22%) and children (37%), while 41% were adult men.

Created in 2011, the Reception and Identification Service (R.I.S) is an independent agency under the Deputy Ministry of Migration Policy General Secretariat of Reception. The mission of the Reception and Identification Service is the effective management of third country nationals who cross the Hellenic borders without legal documents and/or procedures, under conditions that respect their dignity, by placing them in first reception procedures. According to the Asylum Service, since 2013 and by the end of April 2018 there were 155,176 asylum applications (58,659 in 2017 and 18,625 by the end of April 2018). Two out of three (67.9%) applications were submitted by males, while one out of three applications was put in by Syrians.

Since mid-2015, Greece has faced large-scale arrivals of refugees. The imposition of border restrictions and the subsequent closure of the Western Balkan route in March 2016, effectively trapping about 50,000 third-country nationals in Greece, created an unprecedented burden on the Greek reception system. Since then, the number of reception places, provided by the National Centre for Social Solidarity (EKKA Greece), has increased mainly through temporary accommodation centres (camps) and the UNHCR accommodation scheme. Despite this increase, destitution and homelessness are still a significant risk to large numbers of applicants. The situation on the islands also remains critical due to overcrowding of reception facilities: “Higher numbers put a strain on already overcrowded reception centres and aggravate tension and frustration amongst asylum-seekers and refugees” (UNHCR – Fact Sheet, Aegean Islands, March 2018).

Italy

The number of foreign citizens residing in Italy in 2016 amount to 5.047.028 (Idos, 2017), just a few hundred more than the year before. It is worth recalling that, according to the consular registers, the Italians residing abroad are already over 5,383,199. Concerning nationalities of foreign citizens in Italy, they are less than 200, 30.5% of which is made of EU citizens (1,537,223, of which 1,168,552 Romanians), while 1.1 million come from other European countries. The top 5 communities of foreign origin in our country are Romanians (1,168,552), Albanians (448,407), Moroccans (420,651), Chinese (281,972) and Ukrainians (234,354).

The amount of people entering Italy due to economic or familiar issues has plummeted over the last few years, as we are currently witnessing migrations of people fleeing wars or political and religious persecutions through the Mediterranean route. Arrivals in Italy increased from 22,343 in 1997 to 181,436 in 2016, and then decreased again to 119,369 in 2017, and to the 9,070 of last April after the adoption of the bilateral agreement between Italy and Libya (and the subsequent agreements between Mali and Niger) in July 2017.

In 2017 the top nationalities declared after landing were Nigeria, Guinea, Ivory Coast and Bangladesh, while today, April 2018, they are Tunisia, Eritrea and Nigeria.

The reception system is made of diversified structures according to the number of places available, the conditions and the standards of the services provided. The core of the system is the SPRAR, the “System of Protection for Asylum-Seekers and Refugees”, coordinated by local authorities and matched, since

2014, by the CAS (Extraordinary Accommodation Centres). These latter temporary structures have been activated by local prefectures on behalf of the Ministry of the Interior and represent around 80% of all the beneficiaries of the reception system, distributed in 7,000 structures throughout the entire Italian territory.

Slovenia

In 2016, 16,623 inhabitants migrated to Slovenia, while 15,572 moved out of the country. Compared to the 2015, the number of immigrations had increased by 8% and the number of emigration by 4%. In 2016, the highest number of foreigners moved to Slovenia were from Bosnia and Herzegovina (35% of all immigrated foreign citizens), while for the rest of them the most frequent countries of former residence were Serbia, Kosovo, Croatia and Macedonia.

Slovenian citizens from Slovenia emigrated mostly to Austria, whereas foreign citizens moved mostly to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Apart from the “old” situation that is connected with the Yugoslavian war, Slovenia has also been hit to some extent by the “refugee wave” that swept over Europe in the years 2015 and 2016. In the period, between 17 October 2015 and 25 January 2016, 422,724 migrants crossed Slovenia. Till March 2016, that number grew to 477,791 migrants, most of whom were continuing their journey to Austria and other Northern and Western European countries. In Slovenia there are the following centres: 1) the first unit of the Ljubljana asylum centre, 2) the second unit of the Ljubljana asylum centre; 3) the Logatec asylum centre.

Each asylum centre consists of six departments: for families, for single men, for unaccompanied minors, for single women, for people with special needs and a restricted movement section that is currently not in use. In total they can accommodate 203 people.

There are also two integration houses, in Ljubljana and Maribor, which have been operating since 2006 and can offer accommodation to approximately 60 people with recognized international protection. The most frequent origin countries of the applicants for international protection are Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, Iran and Turkey.

Trying to summarize, the five countries present some similarities, but show different approaches to the reception of asylum seekers and refugees.

Greece, Italy and Slovenia are entry countries (especially Italy and Greece due to their geographical position) and transit countries, with little pre-existing experience in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees, and difficult socio-economic and employment conditions.

Austria and Germany were the main destination countries of asylum seekers from war-torn countries in 2015/2016. The number of first-time asylum applications has been decreasing following the restrictions of border controls, the closure of the so-called Balkan route and the EU-Turkey refugee agreement in March 2016.

1.2. Main characteristics of volunteering “phenomenon”

The importance of volunteering has long been acknowledged by the EU. The Study on volunteering in the European Union (2010) indicates that there are around 92 to 94 million adults involved in volunteering in the EU. This in turn implies that around 22% to 23% of Europeans aged over 15 years are engaged in voluntary work.

There are clear differences in the level of volunteering between Member States. Whilst certain EU

Member States have longstanding traditions in volunteering and well developed voluntary sectors, in others the voluntary sector is still emerging or poorly developed.

There is no uniform way of regulating volunteering, primarily because of the diverse nature of volunteering, together with the complexity and diversity of the voluntary sector across Member States. By way of categorizing the regulatory framework for volunteering, three key distinctions can be made between Member States:

- Member States where a legal framework specifically relating to volunteering is in place (Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania and Spain);
- Member States that do not have a legal framework but where volunteering is regulated by or implicit within other existing general laws (Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Netherlands, Slovakia, Sweden and the UK);
- Member States who are in the process of developing a legal framework for volunteering (Bulgaria and Slovenia).

The table below illustrates the definitions adopted by caseWORK country partners [source: *Volunteering in the European Union* (2010)].

Country	Legal definition	Definition
Austria	No	The Federal Ministry of Social Affairs and Consumer Protection uses the definition developed by the Austrian Council for Voluntary Work that describes volunteering (described as voluntary work) as: - voluntary, but within a strict framework; - for the benefit of the community or a third party rather than one's own or the family's or own household's benefit; - work rendered without any relevant consideration in the form of pay for a gainful activity; - of a given duration or regularity; - non-binding within regard to receiving further training, internship or work within an organization; - undertaken usually within the scope of an institutional organization, platform, initiative, or group, but falling outside the civic or military duties of a citizen; and - includes both informal (family, neighborhood) and formal (groups, associations, institutions, etc.).
Germany	No	Distinction can be made between definitions that are used to describe the following two broad types of volunteering: - traditional forms of civic engagement, exercised predominantly "for others" and connected to permanent memberships. Such civic engagement activities often take place within the framework of large-scale organizations, e.g. churches, unions, parties, welfare associations (such as voluntary fire brigades) and sport clubs;

		- volunteering activities exercised primarily for the individual him-/herself. This type of activities, which are characterized by active participation and the possibility to develop personal competences and skills, are normally undertaken as part of self-help groups, grass roots organizations, social movement organizations, citizens groups, ecological projects and non-institutionalized political campaigns.
Greece	No	There is no generally recognized or officially established national definition of volunteering and volunteers in Greece. Article 2 of the Charter of Social Responsibility of the Organizations of Civil Society in Greece, developed by the national agency for volunteering (Ergo Politon) provides an implicit definition of volunteering: "Every volunteering action serves aims of common good, is conscious and without self-interest, is made with a spirit of offering and support, always with the free will and decision of the volunteer and of the person receiving the offer of the volunteering activity. The volunteer ought to have a precise perception of the needs he is called to cover as well as of his own capacities". The voluntary organizations that have signed up to this Charter can be understood to have accepted this definition. According to the Hellenic Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations, volunteering is defined as "willing commitment of a person to work for a specific or unlimited period of time, for the greater good of society without pay".
Italy	Yes	The term "volunteerism" in Italy refers to all types of activities, whether formal or informal, full-time or part-time, at home or abroad. It is undertaken of a person's own free-will, choice and motivation, and is without concern for financial gain. It benefits the individual volunteer, communities and society as a whole. It is also a vehicle for individuals and associations to address human, social or environmental needs and concerns. Formal voluntary activities add value, but do not replace professional, paid employees. The framework law on volunteering (266/1991) named "Legge quadro sul volontariato" explicitly states that a volunteering activity must be: spontaneous, gratuitous, without intended remunerative aims and should be undertaken exclusively for solidarity purposes. A volunteer "operates in a free and gratuitous manner promoting creative and effective responses to the needs of beneficiaries of her/his own action and contributing to the realization of common goods".
Slovenia	No	There is no generally recognized definition. A definition is now proposed in the new draft law of voluntary work.

Austria

Volunteering is of great importance in Austria. In recent years, measures have been taken to promote voluntary commitment at diverse levels and in a wide variety of areas to continuously improve the framework conditions for realizing this significant commitment. The Federal Act on the Promotion of Voluntary Commitment (Federal Act on Volunteering) created a framework in 2012 for the first time to support this socially important and valuable commitment.

Some 2,3 million people work in organizations and associations without pay. Volunteering offers added value to the society, but it is not a substitute for paid work. The time spent on volunteering is considerable. The majority of the volunteers are working up to 30 days a year.

The majority of volunteers are regularly involved. Many people get involved – often additionally – in time-limited projects. Voluntary commitment not only benefits society but also the individual. Volunteering is not only an interesting balance between work and training, it is also an exciting opportunity to acquire new skills, develop one's own strengths, take on responsibility, contribute, help shape and remain active. This opens up many new perspectives. The participation rate in total volunteering is the same for women and men. Nearly half (46%) of all Austrians are volunteers.

Germany

In Germany, voluntary work can be described as a form of civic engagement which is non-profitable, charitable and – as the term already suggests – is carried out on a voluntary basis. Traditional forms of civic engagement imply a rather permanent membership and often take place within the framework of large-scale organizations, e.g. churches, unions, political parties, sport clubs or welfare organizations. This form of civic engagement is predominantly carried out in order to help others in need and must be differentiated from the so-called volunteering activities. In those cases people engage themselves in different rather short-term projects, self-help groups, ecological projects or non-institutionalized political campaigns in order to acquire certain competences and abilities.

Generally speaking, in Germany civic engagement takes a very important role. Recent numbers reveal that about 30 million people are engaged in voluntary organizations or projects, which means that 40% of the overall population is involved. There are numerous different organizations, associations and sponsors and the system is quite heterogeneous.

One of the biggest surveys about voluntary work which was carried out in 2014 revealed that civic engagement has constantly increased since 1999. The survey suggested that voluntary work differs according to the individual regions in Germany. The highest percentage of voluntary workers lives in western Germany.

There are countless different areas in which voluntary engagement takes place. In 2014 most volunteers got active in the sports sector (16.3 %) followed by education, school and preschools (9.1%) and cultural areas (9%).

Greece

Volunteering cannot be characterized as a concept widely practiced in the Greek community. Historically, the characteristics that dominated Greek civil society were: a strong intervention of the State and the Orthodox Church in the provision of social services; weak government support towards non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The Greek one is an individualist society dependent on strong family ties. Greeks have learned to rely mostly on their families and not on their community.

In Greece, voluntary organizations are understood according to the international definition in which the voluntary spirit rules, denoting that they are operated mostly by volunteers, unpaid labour. There appears to be a greater level of volunteering in urban areas. By 2010, there were 4,168 registered organizations. In Greece, culture is the most popular sector where the voluntary organizations carry out activities (37%), while in the social sector 18% of voluntary organizations are active.

Greece does not have a legal framework for volunteering. Volunteering is regulated by or implicit within other existing general law.

Italy

The 2015 CSVnet's report (National Coordination of the Service Centres for Volunteer Work) describes the average Italian volunteer through a sample survey carried out on 44,182 associations. The main findings are that most volunteers work in the field of social assistance (11,812) and healthcare (9,098): these two categories alone make 55% of the total amount of associations. Other popular sectors are that of culture, sport and recreational activities. Elders and minors are usually the main targets (25.4%), while sick and handicapped people are being taken care of by 18% of the organizations and nomads, migrants and refugees by 5.7%.

As far as the territorial distribution is concerned, more than half the associations are located in Northern and Central Italy: Lombardy, Tuscany, Lazio, Piedmont and Emilia Romagna are the regions that more than all the others embody the reality of volunteer work.

Slovenia

The survey "The size, scope and role of the private non-profit sector in Slovenia" (2006) notes that in 2004, there were between 280,000 and 350,000 active volunteers in Slovenia, which amounted to 1,179,756 hours of work, representing a workload of 7,125 full-time workers. On average, volunteers performed 149 hours a month in each organization, which is roughly 84% of an employed full-time worker.

Different results were presented by the Study on Volunteering in the European Union (2010) which states that Slovenia has a relatively low level of involvement in volunteering, since only 10-19% of adults are involved in volunteer activities. Countries with 40% of adults that participate in volunteer activities includes Austria, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

In summary we note that, although the different numbers of people involved (nearly half of all Austrians are volunteers against 10-19% in Slovenia), the volunteering "phenomenon" play a very important role in UE society. Still, the organizations and associations involved in it are quite different and heterogeneous among the five countries and inside each country.

2. The state of art of volunteers' work with Asylum seekers and refugees in five countries

As the migration flows increased over the last few years, organizations working with migrants had to develop a system to respond to their needs and questions. As one of the interviewees claimed, «the number of volunteers goes up in direct proportion to the number of immigrants».

The response of the non-governmental sector and volunteer actions has increased during the refugee crisis, especially at the beginning of the European migrant crisis. The research carried out by the project partners in five countries highlights their main features.

Firstly, volunteers have always made a significant contribution to “fill the gaps of asylum system”. High numbers of volunteers were seen in times of large humanitarian arrivals, for example in the Eastern Aegean islands, or involved in a solidarity camp like the Baobab Experience in Rome. Volunteers were mainly responsible for first aid and short-term tasks at initial reception centres, e.g. the distribution of food and clothes. Especially at the pinnacle of the European migrant crisis, voluntary helpers formed an essential support for local communities having to deal with vast numbers of refugees. In Germany many citizens identified with the moral model of “the helper” prescribed by media and government.

As the interviews with key actors and volunteers suggest, the role of volunteers varied from “search and rescue” activities to provision of food and clothing, psychological and medical support, information, legal support and interpreting services. Local activists try to help.

A second contribution concerns “care and integration of migrants”: volunteer work and civic engagement is seen as the “motor” of integration. These types of initiatives are long term tasks.

From all country reports emerge that there are many volunteer-based initiatives, often supported by local authorities that provide informal learning or leisure activities between non-migrant organizers and groups of (mostly) newcomer adults or children. Volunteers take active parts in many different areas reaching from social and educational issues to legal ones. In the means of successful integration language barriers must be eliminated or at least minimized. Therefore, language courses and tutoring is a great part of the daily work of a volunteer. Most learning activities are unidirectional, with non-migrants teaching migrants. Learning is mostly focused on informal or non-formal learning. Additionally volunteers organize social events, dinner- and tea-parties or even small trips which are carried out on a more or less regular basis and take up a lot of time. Voluntary workers also try to monitor daily activities such as making appointments, health care, making contracts, shopping and apartment hunting. Some have specialized in child care, support for elderly people or unaccompanied juveniles. Although the numbers of asylum seekers and refugees has decreased, volunteers are a keystone in the process of integration in order to minimize isolation and to provide opportunities to asylum seekers to develop their human potential and skills. For a better help on both sides it is crucial to provide these motivated volunteers with information, knowledge and emotional support.

People join the volunteer organizations in two main ways: a) in a casual way: «people go by and ask how they can be useful, through the Facebook page, the word of mouth between volunteers, each one bringing friends and relatives according to their own motivation»; «it is actually them recruiting us... we do not look for them, it's them looking for information about us on our website»; in other cases, it is the reputation of the association that draws them in: «we do not advertise recruiting campaigns

because we already receive many applications»; b) in the second way, on the contrary, recruiting process is more structured with training course for volunteers and their promotion; otherwise, the advocacy actions often reward associations by drawing in people sharing their same sensitivity to the needs and demands of migrant people.

When it comes to the volunteers' profiles we can easily divide them into two groups: one is represented by university students (including international ones) with a deep interest on migration issues or young people looking for a job, and another one is composed by retired people (have enough spare time), workers, activists and others drawn in by the word of mouth of acquaintances.

Finally, one last point of attention concerns the difficulties for engaging volunteers: first of all, the migrant sector is facing a general shift in the range of tasks. With the decrease of asylum seekers and refugees reaching the country, short-term tasks are substituted by long term ones and while it used to suffice to take care of first aid and initial help at reception centres, voluntary helpers have to provide personal attention and individual support. Therefore volunteer work is getting more challenging and time consuming so that many volunteers are not able to accomplish such demanding tasks any more. While most pensioners have enough spare time nowadays the general direction points to people having less and less time and looking for short-time tasks. Therefore many organizations and associations are already having trouble filling long-term positions. Secondly, the general acceptance of volunteers working in the migrant sector has dropped because of a more negative political and media representation of the situation.

3. Volunteers' needs in five countries

"I get satisfaction when I see a smile..."

"I want to contribute to an open society"

The following analysis is based on several personal interviews, focus groups and online surveys with volunteers (and key actors) working with refugees and asylum seekers.

3.1. Who are they? Knowing and analyzing volunteers' motivations, needs, attitudes, skills, expectations and beliefs

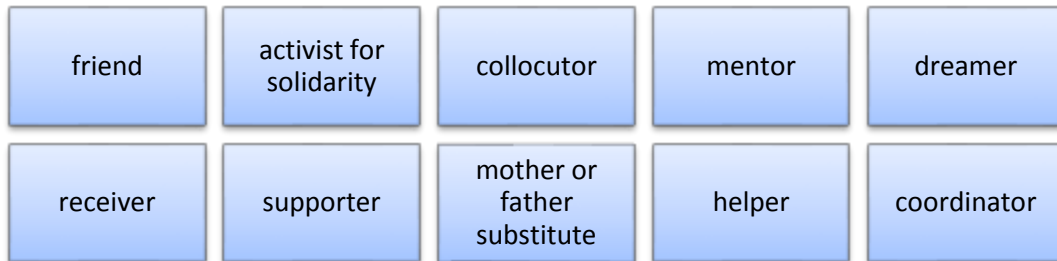
In general, volunteers define their role as serving other people and working for a better world.

The table below describes the definitions of who is "the volunteer" according to the different experiences of the participants in five countries. The strong passion and solidarity of the people involved, whose actions are strongly correlated with the emergency situation in which applicants for international protection and refugees find themselves in, emerges as a crucial aspects.

Being asked how volunteers see themselves, they reported a series of reflections and definitions we try to summarize in the two tables below which complement each other.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working as a volunteer is a life changing experience. I face the reality and get the opportunity to understand other people's issues - Creating opportunities to aggregate people who otherwise would be excluded from social contexts - For me the volunteer is a "receiver", he receives and understands the needs and the difficulties of people - A volunteer is a person, an ordinary citizen, who does not limit himself to living thinking of his own, "mere" realization and happiness but, on the contrary, he cannot really find it if not shared, thinking of those in difficulty in finding it - For me, the volunteer is someone who wants to be useful to improve a daily reality. Person, professional or citizen who offers his skills, experience, emotions at the service of a community in search of fun memberships - The volunteer is a person who helps the foreigner/migrant to integrate into the new society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A person who engages in connection with others, making available his time and skills - The volunteer is the one who identifies himself both materially and psychologically with the reality he faces, empowers and acquires skills - Someone who chooses freely to dedicate time and energy to support individuals and groups in state of need - Listens without prejudices and judgements, proposes solutions with the individual and for the individual (not for himself) - A person who fights all prejudices and values human relationships. A dreamer - Activist for solidarity - An activity of continuous learning and awareness. Empathy work - I feel that I'm doing something small but really important - The volunteer is (or should be) a person driven by the desire to improve the living conditions of the people to whom he turns his help, often he finds himself suffering
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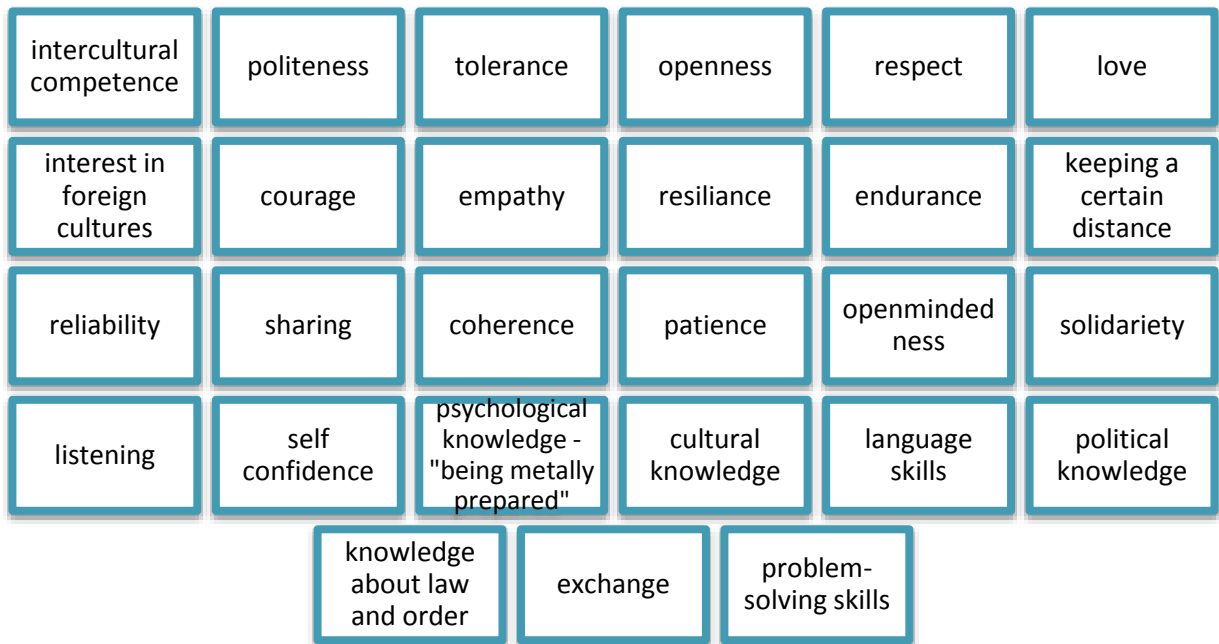
<p>- Those in need/desire to integrate concretely to make the world a more welcoming place by practicing reciprocity and exchange. Who seeks and places the meaning of his life beyond himself. Often a "comfortable" substitute for absent institutions</p>	<p>from institutional deficiencies, triggering a perverse mechanism - Intention, as a logical act, to work for a better result than present reality</p>
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This shows that volunteers do not consider themselves as distant or impartial supporters but on the contrary as emotionally involved helpers with personal bonds to the beneficiaries. Although most volunteers stated that they feel generally satisfied, inspired and appreciated working with asylum seekers and refugees, some also explained that they are having problems with keeping a healthy distance between themselves and the beneficiaries, as reported by a participant: «when you get to know them, you do not have a migrant in front of you but Mohammed that comes from a given country, with a given history: he becomes a person that if he has a problem it becomes your problem, you can't sleep or focus on your job. I, for example, work in the commercial field, I do something totally uncorrelated but that follows you. It melds entirely together, but it is also subjective. In my case I put myself at disposal, I do not bring any professional experience with me».

Accordingly, some of the interviewed organizations observed that especially beginners are having problems with setting clear boundaries. They are frustrated when, in spite of all their effort, situations cannot be improved and problems cannot be solved.

When it comes which qualities, skills and abilities a person working with refugees and asylum seekers should have, participants answered the following:

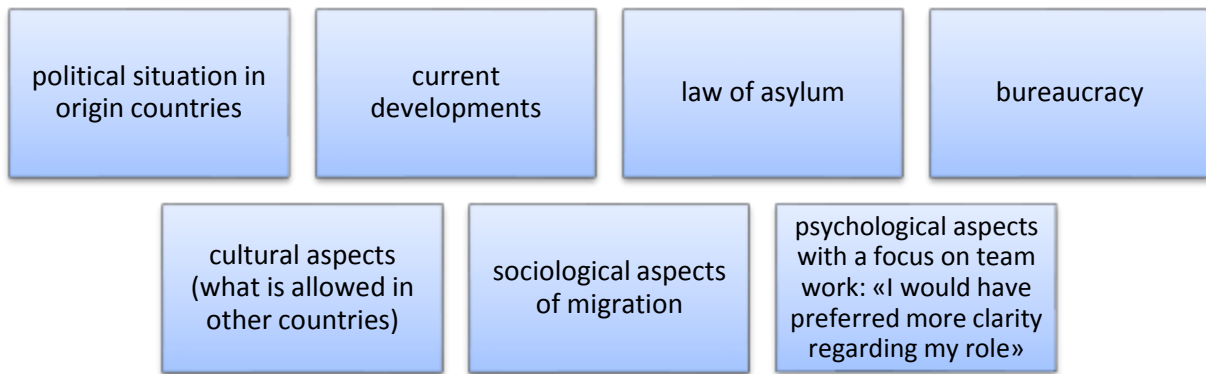


This analysis does not yield a clear picture. In the discussion during the focus group, the general opinion was that whatever technical and professional skills a person has, they might be needed depending on the type of voluntary work. There was general agreement on personal competences, especially empathy. Concerning age and gender, no clear preferences were stated. However, one issue led to a discussion, namely to which extent Muslim men accept advice and support from women. There were no preferred nationalities, but it was stated that nationals from the same country where a refugee comes from can give substantial support – provided that he or she has already roots in the host country.

The duties of volunteers depend on the time/place they are called to serve. On the frontline (for example in the Aegean Islands) there are volunteers working in “find and rescue” teams (rescuers, lifeguards), as well as those that provide psychological support and first aid. A common duty, not requiring any special skills, of volunteers working in hotspots is the provision of food and clothing to refugees. Medical and psychological support, as well as interpreting services, are also provided in hotspots. In mainland, in places where various accommodation schemes are implemented, the volunteers’ role is different. Volunteers help the migrants and refugees to establish their life in their new home by providing them with legal support and information on the asylum procedure, preparing the houses for them, organizing language lessons and cultural events.

The time that the volunteers spend in their activities varies from a couple of hours per week to few hours per day. Unemployed young adults and senior citizens seem to have more time available for volunteering.

Participants explained that many volunteers – especially beginners – are lacking knowledge concerning the asylum system in their country and the individual structures of the organization. According to the volunteers and the representatives of organizations that were interviewed, the following topics were requested by volunteers repeatedly:



Participants think that the team-spirit between employees and volunteers should be strengthened and that some of their activities should be supervised by other employees. In addition, the relationship with the beneficiaries is not simple, often the latter do not distinguish the roles of operators from that of volunteers and, especially in the beginning, they are wary.

Difficulties can often arise, and these do not pertain to the voluntary activity itself, but the way it works, how to coordinate and organize internally and externally. In particular, the ability to collaborate and network with other subjects, since often the commitment to others absorbs most of the energies and «each one pursues their own goal without looking around».

3.2. What are the key factors to meet successfully volunteer’s needs? Strengths and weaknesses to consider for the training

Volunteers working for large-scale international organizations often have some sort of official training/certificate regarding their duties. The need of training was mentioned by volunteers in order to improve their intercultural competencies. Knowing the legal framework of the country is also important in order to guide volunteers to where legal support and advice is available.

Supervision is definitely the most urgently wanted activity that the employing organization should provide. The most frequently mentioned training method consists of peer tutoring, i.e. new volunteers accompany older volunteers in the first days or weeks and learn by doing. Regular supervision was reported only by few experiences. Given the fact that the participants had not received substantial training, only “introduction” into their activities by peer learning, from the interviews, focus group and online survey emerged that a great majority would prefer to have a substantial training, also and foremost about psychological background, and that they would need more support such as regular supervision.

The interviews suggested to put more emphasis on social inclusion of the volunteers. Volunteers should work alongside staff rather than in a strict hierarchy. They should be involved at all organizational levels, not just in front-line work but also in supporting managers and directors. The interaction between staff and volunteers should be more flexible, whereby staff members mentor volunteers, but volunteers also play a mentoring role, sharing expertise with staff.

Another important aspect arose in the question how to actively encourage and support former “clients”, i.e. refugees who want to volunteer. As reported by volunteers, engaging refugees as volunteers in the process as well as migrants is a key factor for successful integration. Giving active roles to refugees (instead of “waiting to be helped”) can help to process things faster.

This aspect is especially important because of the low number of people speaking the language of the refugees' countries. In fact in Austria, during the height of the refugee influx in autumn 2015, a great number of migrants were involved, especially at the Wien central station in the "Train of Hope". This approach should be followed and further developed, but it will be necessary to keep in mind that when "clients" become volunteers, their relationship to the organization changes significantly. As "clients", they came to the organization for help and services. As volunteers, they now come to the organization to get and give help and develop a sense of pride through their participation. It will be necessary to provide extra support to those volunteers.

From national reports emerged two very basic factors of successful integration: language skills and cultural understanding. Explaining cultural differences helps refugees and asylum seekers to understand the foreign environment. Most importantly, language barriers must be eliminated. Without a common level of communication, misunderstandings will evolve and a successful integration will be almost impossible. Representatives of local organizations explain that it does not only depend on the kind of input asylum seekers receive but also on the way it is provided for them. It was stated that personal bonding and friendships between beneficiaries and volunteers are both a very successful measure of integration and a critical point. Integration often happened to be a success if volunteers cared for the beneficiaries individually and on a personal basis. Visiting asylum seekers at home, offering trips and other leisure-time activities or supporting them during their daily challenges provide a highly prolific basis for integration. On the other hand, as mentioned above, many volunteers are struggling with such close relationships because they feel extremely responsible for other people's problems and are unable to set clear boundaries.

As a consequence thereof volunteers are keystones for successful integration themselves. Although full-time employees are able to handle the basic conditions such as legal or organizational aspects, they cannot afford the amount of time to deal with asylum seekers individually and most importantly on a personal level. It is the volunteers who are able to provide such flexible, active and individual support promising the best results.

4. Conclusion and suggestions

Despite the differences between the migratory phenomenon and the asylum systems, as well as the different definitions of volunteering, in the five countries, it emerges the strong commitment of volunteers working with refugees and asylum seekers, even though in different contexts. We can call these volunteers “activists for solidarity”, as they are often pushed by their will to change the situation refugees and asylum seekers deal with, and not only to provide services. From this perspective some common characteristics relevant for the project can be highlighted.

Volunteers report five challenges: not replacing public bodies, properly funded according to the law and focused on guaranteeing welfare services (that should be provided anyway, even when voluntary work is missing); ensure a proficiency commensurate to the nature of the actions taken; avoid any overlap with professional actions; promote the process of integration, through flexible and personal support they are able to minimize isolation and to offer opportunities to asylum seekers to develop their human potential and skills; finally, contributing to improve the standards of protection of the most vulnerable groups.

As was shown in the foregoing chapters, an online training course providing general information, psychological support and intercultural competences meets the volunteers’ needs, especially if provided within a flexible and easily accessible learning environment. The online training course will be the main output of the caseWORK project, and its design and production will take into account the findings of the present report.

With regard to the topics and contents of the training, the training needs to appear very coherent with the peculiarities of the organizations. On a basic skills level, the volunteers call into question the reinforcement of the organizational and managerial ones. In the case of technical-specialist skills, the needs are concentrated on the psychological front, on the network, and on the knowledge of the migratory phenomenon with an interdisciplinary approach. There is a general need for information about political and legal issues, law and order or administrative procedures in Europe and national context. Regarding the transversal competences, they are mainly focused on the area of intercultural communication and skills, useful for a more functional management of stress and conflicts. Volunteers mentioned intercultural competences and skills which are closely related to it, e.g. tolerance, openness, empathy or cultural knowledge. This suggests that volunteers feel the need to strengthen their ability to handle cultural barriers such as political and religious beliefs, different mindsets and lifestyles.

It became clear that volunteers as one key factor within the integration process should be supported all the more. As they already have time consuming tasks they should be provided with useful information and helpful training courses on a flexible and voluntary basis. The training courses should not be compulsory or demanding but they should function as an easily accessible source for support. Useful information and support should therefore be accessible at any time and place.

In addition, number of young, working volunteers is increasing due to the ongoing digitalization among organizations which supports the project’s idea of providing an online training seminar for volunteers. At the same time a learning environment has to be user friendly, self-explicable and easy to access in order to meet the needs of elderly helpers who might not have much experience with digital devices.

Besides the offer should not be time consuming or too demanding because, as was explained above, volunteers are increasingly getting involved in long term tasks.

The smoothness of situations and of the specific context, require a continuous effort to update and ability to solve problems, for this reason the training activities must not be based on an abstract or generalizing approach, but must be adapted to the context. In this sense, it may be important to use more formative practices as: action research, action learning, storytelling and autobiographies, as well as the organization and enhancement of those processes of interpersonal relationships between less expert and more expert people that are common in the volunteering work environments and not only (the so-called learning by networking).

Annex A – Sources

EASO (2016), *Annual Report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union 2016*, available at: <https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Annual-Report-2016.pdf>, latest access 4th July 2018.

European Commission (2010), *Volunteering in the European Union*, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/doc1018_en.pdf, latest access 4th July 2018.

Remark: a complete list of the sources used can be found in the different country reports in the annex D.

Annex B – Interviews and focus groups guidelines

Key actors interviews guidelines

http://casework.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Key-actors-interviews-guidelines_final.pdf

Volunteers focus groups guidelines

http://casework.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Volunteers-focus-groups-guidelines_final.pdf

Annex C – People reached in the research activities

Country	N. of key actors	N. of volunteers	Tot.
Austria	6 (via interviews)	11 (via focus groups)	17
Germany	5 (via interviews)	30 (via online surveys)	35
Greece	6 (via interviews)	9 (via focus groups, both face to face and online)	15
Italy	6 (via interviews)	18 (via focus groups)	24
Slovenia	2 (via interviews)	7 (via interviews)	9
Tot.			100

Annex D – Country reports

Austria

http://casework.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/country-report_Austria_caseWORK.pdf

Germany

http://casework.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/country-report_Germany_caseWORK.pdf

Greece

http://casework.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/country-report_Greece_caseWORK.pdf

Italy

http://casework.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/country-report_Italy_caseWORK.pdf

Slovenia

http://casework.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/country-report_Slovenia_caseWORK.pdf