

# Moving forward together



Red Cross approach  
to the social inclusion  
of migrants

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Cover photo:  
Finnish Red Cross  
volunteers provide  
support to migrants  
from Myanmar in  
the city of Seinäjoki,  
Finland, 2010.

© Petri Olli /  
Finnish Red Cross

# Moving towards rights-based social inclusion policies

**Michael O’Flaherty, Director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)**

In 2015, the European Union (EU) saw over one million people reach its shores in search of safety and security. Many of these people will stay in the EU, and contribute to the diversity of European society.

There are no hierarchies among rights holders: everyone must receive and afford respect. However, our research shows that in many cases, the rights of migrants living in the EU are not fully respected. This can be the result of inadequate implementation of legislation, and limited knowledge of fundamental rights. It is often also closely linked to discriminatory laws and practices, as well as to deeply rooted attitudes of prejudice and xenophobia. Many migrants see some of their most fundamental rights violated, including the right to education, or the right to health. The barriers impeding migrants from fully enjoying their fundamental rights contribute to increasing the risk of them being socially excluded. It is therefore crucial to move toward rights-based social inclusion policies that promote the full societal, economic, cultural, and political participation of migrants.

In 2009, the results of the first edition of the EU Minorities and Discrimination Survey<sup>1</sup> (EU MIDIS I) established that as a minority group, migrants regularly experience discrimination. Worryingly, six years later, the second edition of this survey<sup>2</sup> – the main results of which were published on 6 December 2017 – only reaffirms this observation. Expressions of racism and xenophobia, and related intolerance and hate crime, still represent critical barriers to migrants’ social inclusion. Continued efforts to invest in the full potential of migrants, while simultaneously tackling discrimination and combating intolerance, are desperately needed. In 2017, we published a new report on migrant integration in the Union: “Together in the EU: Promoting the participation of migrants and their descendants”<sup>3</sup>, which identifies some of the key challenges faced across Member States. Importantly, the report recalls that migrants living in the EU should be considered core members of European society. This requires narratives that

<sup>1</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey - Main results, December 2009.

<sup>2</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey - Main results, December 2017.

<sup>3</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Together in the EU - Promoting the participation of migrants and their descendants, April 2017.

stress the benefits that migrants and their children can bring to our societies, both now and in the future.

At FRA, we are convinced that promoting migrants' participation in local communities at both political and societal levels is instrumental to the social inclusion of migrants. FRA calls for sustained awareness-raising efforts, and well-coordinated housing and education policies to avoid residential segregation, enhance opportunities for social interaction, and contribute to breaking down barriers between communities. FRA also stresses the positive impact of migrants and their descendants participating in the decision-making procedures that affect their lives.

Migrant integration is primarily about the enjoyment of rights. In the EU, entitlements vary according to the person's legal status. However, having a right under the law is not sufficient. It must be effective in practice. The innovative approaches to social inclusion presented in this Red Cross EU Office publication provide useful ideas on how to translate legal entitlements into practices that promote integration in host societies. Importantly, the booklet also highlights the remarkable contributions that civil society organisations make to this process.

In June 2016, the European Commission adopted an Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals. It underlines that failure to realise the potential of third-country nationals in the EU “*would represent a massive waste of resources, both for the individuals concerned themselves and more generally for our economy and society*”. It is therefore essential that we all come together to ensure this potential is realised. While the integration of migrants will remain a challenging feat, by doing this together – involving local communities, national governments, civil society organisations, and EU institutions – we can achieve a prosperous society in which everyone is valued and welcomed. Building on their local knowledge and expertise, as well as their ability to reach out to communities, Red Cross actors in Europe can provide the appropriate support where it's needed.

# Making Europe a more inclusive continent

Strengthening the social inclusion of vulnerable people and communities lies at the heart of the work carried out by National Red Cross Societies across the EU. Support is provided in different ways, depending on the specific needs of each person. Activities can range from basic material assistance such as food, or clothing, to advice regarding family, health, or legal issues, and support to access employment, housing, or social services. Often, people benefit from a combination of different services. These services are available to all, without discrimination.

When it comes to the social inclusion of migrants in the EU, most of the challenges faced are not only legal, but also societal. Indeed, migrants often encounter numerous obstacles that prevent them from participating fully in society. They also regularly experience difficulties in accessing services like education or healthcare, making them more likely to be living in poverty and social exclusion than non-migrants. In response, the Red Cross runs an array of programmes aimed at overcoming any barriers to inclusion, and addressing the specific needs of migrants in the EU. Following the 2015 surge in arrivals, National Red Cross Societies enhanced their activities with and for migrants; reconfirming their commitment to supporting their governments in upholding the dignity and rights of those who have turned to Europe for safety and better prospects.

As this booklet displays, the Red Cross has long-standing and recognised expertise in supporting the social inclusion of migrants. Like with many other vulnerable groups, the services delivered to migrants by National Red Cross Societies are needs-oriented. Some of these activities address individuals, others target specific groups, and yet others constitute standard support offered to all people in situations of need. Certain migrants, such as victims of torture, unaccompanied minors, or migrants with disabilities, can face distinctive situations of vulnerability and insecurity which hamper their chances of finding their place in society. Migrants' needs should therefore be the starting point of any programme, and should be regularly and individually assessed.

Going further than integration programmes that expect migrants to fit into pre-existing societal patterns and structures, the Red Cross seeks to create environments where migrants can actively participate in all aspects of life, including civic, social, and economic activities. Some of the key obstacles to migrant inclusion are discriminatory attitudes, stereotypes, and xenophobia, so establishing links at the community level is a crucial aspect of National Red Cross Societies' overall engagement in this field. In this context, their activities also target the local population with the objective of changing attitudes among host societies. By strengthening participation and the recognition

of contributions made by migrants, the Red Cross works towards reinforcing social cohesion.

Although National Red Cross Societies may provide support to people who have lived in Europe for decades, or are second or third generation descendants of migrants, their experience shows how a good start in the early days following arrival is an important investment for the future. Yet the Red Cross considers that social inclusion interventions for migrants remain relevant well beyond the arrival phase. Civil society organisations like the Red Cross are in tune with concrete needs at the local level. Sometimes acting as service providers themselves, they are also instrumental in adjusting services to adequately meet the needs of the migrants who access them.

The EU's support is key to enabling civil society activities that directly respond to the needs of migrants, including at the local level where most social inclusion efforts take place. Through its wider financial and legislative influence, as well as the values of tolerance and unity it promotes, the EU also has a major role to play in making Europe a more inclusive continent.



# CHAPTER 1



Survivors of torture participate in yoga classes provided by a Swedish Red Cross physiotherapist.

© Ola Torkelsson / Swedish Red Cross



# Migrants: different profiles, diverse needs

The needs of migrants vary greatly. This is largely due to their personal migration history, but also to factors such as their legal status in their country of residence, their age, or their gender. It is therefore important to individually assess the actual needs of each migrant when considering which type of social inclusion support to offer. This is an essential first step to enhancing the success of social inclusion measures.

In the Red Cross' experience, social inclusion measures should prioritise targeted assistance based on the specific vulnerabilities of individuals. While access to healthcare is key for all migrants, some will require adapted psychosocial support. This is often the case with the increasing number of children and young migrants arriving in the EU. As they are one of the most vulnerable groups in Europe, National Red Cross Societies place particular emphasis on providing them with specialised support. Having found that uncertainty about the whereabouts of family members has a negative impact on migrants' ability to engage in the social inclusion process, the Red Cross seeks to ensure that separated families can reunite.

## Healing the body and mind

As in other European countries, many of the migrants coming to Sweden have been through harrowing events such as armed conflict, imprisonment, torture, and sexual violence. The experience of fleeing and life in exile can also be sources of trauma. While everyone reacts differently, these types of traumatic incidents tend to cause psychological symptoms like flashbacks, fear, anxiety, sadness, and anger. Sometimes these symptoms persist, leading to great suffering and hardship in coping with everyday life, as well as creating barriers to social inclusion for those directly concerned and their families. In these cases, the person may need specialised mental health treatment and psychosocial support.

Since 1985, the Swedish Red Cross runs treatment centres for people who have been affected by war and torture. They are accessible to migrants suffering from severe trauma linked to torture, armed conflict, or migration, irrespective of their legal status in Sweden. These centres are located in Malmö, Göteborg, Skövde, Uppsala, Skellefteå, and Stockholm. In 2016, more than 1,800 patients received assistance, and requests are on the rise.

In these centres, dedicated teams of professionals – psychologists, psychotherapists, physiotherapists, medical doctors, social workers, and interpreters – work together to alleviate the suffering of traumatised people. Individual treatment plans are devised for

each person, considering their specific needs, situation, and abilities. The connection between the body and the mind is essential. Thus, treatment usually includes a combination of psychotherapy, physiotherapy, and social counselling. During treatment, focus is placed on empowering patients by helping them to identify their own ways of overcoming mental distress and dealing with the trauma they suffer. *"You will never forget the trauma, but you will receive tools to help you learn to live with it"*, underlines a physiotherapist from one of the Swedish Red Cross centres.

Trust is essential for all work with vulnerable people. Torture and other man-made trauma can make people highly suspicious of strangers. Clinicians must therefore often spend long

periods of time trying to gain a patient's trust before being able to start a conversation about what she/he has experienced. Physiotherapy is one way to build trust. *"Working with the body can be a gateway to further discussions, and in some cases, to psychotherapy"*, explains a Red Cross psychologist.

Patients are usually referred to the treatment centres by other health facilities, including primary healthcare providers. *"It is quite common for us to welcome patients several years after the traumatic event occurred"*, she underlines. Indeed, sometimes trauma symptoms are dormant for years. For this reason, it is crucial to remain vigilant for signs of trauma among all migrant populations, not only those who have recently arrived. ■



Italian Red Cross volunteer provides legal help to a migrant in Bresso, Milan, 2016.

© Emiliano Albeni/  
Italian Red Cross

## Reuniting families

Often, families are separated during the journey. The absence of their usual family support network, coupled with worrying about the whereabouts of family members, is a major obstacle to migrants' social inclusion. Like other National Societies, the French Red Cross supports family unity by tracing, restoring, and maintaining contact between family members that were separated along their migratory routes. In some instances, it is possible to trace movements and locate the missing person. If the person consents, the French Red Cross assists separated family members to re-establish contact. In cases where contact cannot be restored, efforts are continued to clarify the fate of the missing person.

Sometimes, a positive tracing request leads to an application for family reunification. Indeed, refugees and migrants that legally reside in France and meet certain criteria have the right to be joined by their family members. However, family reunification procedures are often long and complex. This is why the French Red Cross helps migrants to navigate the process, providing guidance on the documentation requested.

In 2012, the French Red Cross set up a free legal assistance unit made up of a pool of

lawyers and an expert in migration legislation. It supports migrants during the whole family reunification procedure by providing information, and legal and administrative support. When the public authorities reject a request, the unit's lawyers can accompany the claimant throughout the appeal procedure. If needed, people are referred to other civil society actors and public services.

When the procedure comes to an end and family members have received their visas, the French Red Cross facilitates their arrival by covering the costs of travel, liaising with relevant national authorities, and guaranteeing that volunteers are present to welcome them.

Once settled, reunited families receive the support of social workers that help them adjust to their new environment and understand the administrative procedures necessary to start their new lives in France. Local French Red Cross branches offer various follow-up services, such as French language courses. *"Immediately after they have been reunited with their loved ones, we see a clear change in their behaviour. They are more stable. They are ready to move forward and engage fully in the integration process"*, underlines a member of the French Red Cross legal assistance unit. ■

## Children first and foremost

Despite the increasing attention paid to children on the move, they often face restrictions on their human rights, including meaningful access to education, housing, or healthcare. The authorities focus principally on responding to migrants' basic needs. At times, the procedures implemented do not treat migrant children first and foremost, as children.

When arriving in Bulgaria, children and teenagers who file an asylum request are accommodated in reception centres, where the availability of dedicated facilities is not guaranteed. The lack of child-friendly spaces, or of opportunities to engage in stimulating activities throughout the day, can create a lot of frustration and anger. It can also put great strain on parents and caregivers, who have to juggle between managing daily life and keeping children entertained because they cannot attend school due to their limited knowledge of Bulgarian language.

With the objective of helping asylum seeking children to overcome the psychological and social stress resulting from the migration process and life in reception centres, teams of Bulgarian Red Cross volunteers offer psychosocial support across the country. Activities range from interactive games, sports, and arts and crafts workshops, to festivals and celebrations.

By organising engaging and inspiring activities, Red Cross volunteers provide children with a safe space in which they can participate, learn, play, and make new friends: being able to express themselves freely also gradually helps children to overcome traumatic memories and experiences. Most importantly, these activities can bolster the coping mechanisms that will help them overcome the stress that settling into a new country can create. ■

Migrant children play with Bulgarian Red Cross Youth volunteers, Sofia, 2014.

© Jacob Zocherman / IFRC



# CHAPTER 2



Migrants learn German language at a class delivered by an Austrian Red Cross volunteer, Vienna, 2015.

© John Engedal Nissen / IFRC



# Moving from reception towards inclusion

Once migrants file an asylum request in an EU Member State, most are accommodated in dedicated reception centres. There, their basic needs should be met, and social, legal, medical and psychological support ought to be available. Although their stay in reception centres can last between a couple of months and several years, it is not intended to be a permanent solution. The level and quality of services accessible to asylum seekers in reception centres are therefore key in determining their ease of transition. The right type of support can give them the necessary tools to facilitate their long-term inclusion in the host society.

In the EU, several National Red Cross Societies are key actors in the reception of asylum seekers as managers of accommodation centres. In this context, the Red Cross conducts a wide range of activities to foster the social inclusion of migrants after they leave the reception centres. These include language courses, assistance in accessing the housing market, and activities to initiate contact and interactions within the local community to break down possible prejudices and barriers.

## Increasing exchanges between asylum seekers and their neighbours

The presence of an asylum reception centre can bring significant changes to local communities. While opening a new facility creates employment opportunities, the population may at times have concerns about the arrival of newcomers. Organising activities that encourage interactions within the community by sharing experiences is an important step towards countering possible prejudice and nurturing social cohesion.

After the increase in the number of asylum seekers arriving in Belgium in 2015, the Belgian Red Cross established 11 new reception centres across the country. Before opening a centre in Arlon, the Belgian Red Cross organised several informative meetings where the questions and fears of local residents were addressed. If at the beginning the centre's

opening had created some tension, just two years later the centre is deeply embedded in the local landscape.

Part of its success is attributed to mobilisation of the community to conduct activities with and for asylum seekers residing in the centre, through the local Red Cross branch. Volunteers started by managing donations, running the second-hand shop, and doing the school-run with kids living in the centre. Nurses from Arlon also volunteered to provide basic health care in the medical office. Nowadays, the centre counts on the support of hundreds of registered volunteers who offer French and Dutch language courses. Cultural activities such as music and sewing workshops are also organised. Specific activities for children, including a

kindergarten, homework support, and a toy library have also been set up to guarantee the younger residents' well-being and make their stay in the centre as enjoyable as possible.

Local politicians recognise the positive impact that the reception centre has had in Arlon, and see it as an opportunity. *"The centre is a great source of intercultural enrichment, diversity and prospects for our city"*, stresses the mayor. Local officials have also praised the engagement of Arlon's inhabitants, who are the primary ambassadors of the centre

in the community, and can transmit accurate information on the realities of forced migration. In turn, this supports increased understanding and better acceptance by the local population. They act as go-betweens with the community, which is instrumental to better integrating the centre. In recent years, asylum seekers, and Red Cross staff and volunteers have also welcomed around 900 school children to the centre, sensitising younger generations to the realities of life as an asylum seeker. ■



A Danish Red Cross volunteer trains a football team of young asylum seekers, Sandholm, 2017.

© Thomas Orthmann-Brask / Danish Red Cross



## Preparing for the job market

Often, the lengthy process of recognising skills and qualifications keeps migrants away from the labour market and the possibility to earn a living. In Denmark, the Red Cross has set up the “Fast track to employment” programme to overcome the difficulties asylum seekers face when trying to find a job. The project is carried out in partnership with asylum reception centres, municipalities, and immigration authorities across the country. It is an early effort to kick-start labour market integration for people engaged in an asylum procedure. The project focuses on assessing, recognising, and valuing migrants’ soft skills, such as intercultural competences, multilingualism, and informal work experience.

The fast track approach aims to shorten the time between the asylum seeker’s arrival and the moment she/he can find a work placement. Inactivity can negatively impact the social inclusion process, while enrolling in training offers many opportunities to learn valuable skills. More importantly, it also helps to develop a network. It is therefore essential to give newly arrived asylum seekers a chance to make good use of the waiting time imposed by the asylum procedure to build their capacities.

Upon arrival in the reception centre, Danish Red Cross staff review and map the asylum seeker’s academic and/or professional qualifications and experience. Then, local authorities are invited to identify companies that could offer three to six-month internships, or hire asylum seekers who match their needs. These companies are most commonly in sectors like facility management, retail, care, or the food industry. If the asylum seeker accepts the offer, she/he enrolls in a 7-week introductory course on the specificities of the local labour market. The course covers practical Danish language training, along with an introduction to the formal and informal rules

of employment. Asylum seekers are also supported in writing their curriculum vitae and looking for jobs. Weekly visits to the companies taking part provide participants with insight on the type of work offered through the internships.

By accessing professional training at an early stage, all asylum seekers - even those who will see their application rejected and return to their countries of origin - acquire new skills and are empowered to make use of them, which will be valuable wherever they are. In the Red Cross’ experience, taking active control over their lives helps asylum seekers overcome the mental distress linked to the uncertainty of the asylum procedure.

Asylum seekers enrolled in the programme are also given the possibility to meet a volunteer “buddy” from the host community. Volunteer buddies provide practical guidance, cultural and linguistic interpretation, and open doors to networking within the local community, helping ease the way into Danish society.

Once asylum seekers are granted a protection status, they move to their assigned municipality and pursue the internship they started during the asylum phase. They still receive counselling until they get into ordinary employment, and maintain their relationship with their volunteer buddy while settling into their new community. *“I just received refugee status in the municipality of Vejle. I am now doing an internship at a local hotel, where I will be employed later this month. This programme also enabled me to learn a lot about Danish society and culture”,* says a participant who was enrolled in the programme in 2016. It has been an extremely successful programme so far, with 85 % of the participants in 2017 either in employment or an internship. ■

## A new place to call “home”

Following assessment of their claim, asylum seekers need to leave the reception centre to prepare for possible return or to start their new life in their host country. This next step can create anxiety as it means leaving an institutionalised life, and facing the challenges of transitioning into life in the community. Indeed, leaving the reception centre may imply changing city, building new networks, and developing different reference points. The support that refugees receive at this stage is crucial to easing their transition.

Having a place to live, a place to call “home”, brings a sense of safety and stability. For many newly recognised refugees, accessing secure lodgings can prove problematic. To support their access to the housing market, the Viennese branch of the Austrian Red Cross runs the “IWORA” (Integrationswohnraum) project, which offers refugee families assistance with finding accommodation.

After leaving the reception centre, in which they have typically lived for one to three years, many families face difficulties in finding themselves a place to live. They often encounter discriminatory attitudes from landlords and letting agencies that can make their access to housing challenging. Their limited knowledge of the local language can also be an obstacle to interacting with landlords. In addition, the lack of a stable income often puts refugees in an unfavourable position on the real estate market. Through IWORA, families can benefit

from temporary accommodation in Vienna for up to two years. *“My family and I are very grateful for the opportunity to live in this accommodation temporarily. Now my main objective is to stabilise our situation so that we can secure a flat of our own”*, says a refugee whose family is engaged in the project.

Finding a stable living solution is a challenge for many refugees, so the Austrian Red Cross actively scans the housing market, reaching out to owners, internet platforms, real estate offices, property management agencies, and construction firms. The Red Cross then acts as a go-between for refugees and the property-owners who are willing to rent out their apartments. In some cases, the Red Cross is the official contractor, eventually transferring the contract to the refugee family. The apartments on offer through the programme are visited and inspected to ensure that dignified standards are maintained. Red Cross case workers are also available to talk to potential tenants about their rights and duties. On request, refugees receive assistance with the preparation and conclusion of their rental agreements.

Case workers accompany the new tenants after the move to facilitate their integration into their new neighbourhood. All tenants receive assistance with registration and administrative procedures, German language courses, and looking for a job, as well as regular visits to discuss any questions or concerns that arise. ■



© Paulo Siqueira

# Umanità

[dal latino **humanitas -atis**, derivazione di **humanus** «umano»]  
 Sentimento di **solidarietà umana**, di comprensione e di **indulgenza**  
 verso gli altri uomini. Atto di cortese **comprensione** verso un altro.



Poster from the Italian Red Cross' collaboration with the Treccani Encyclopaedia on an awareness-raising campaign promoting humanitarian values through the Italian language, 2016.

© Paulo Siqueira / Italian Red Cross

#ProtectHumanity  
 #LeParoleValgono

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# Tackling discourse to foster alternative perceptions

In recent years, European societies have witnessed heightened intolerance towards migrants, including an increase in physical and verbal attacks<sup>4</sup>. Against a policy background that criminalises irregular migration, coupled with a number of high-profile criminal cases involving migrants, public perceptions have been adversely affected. Increasing levels of discrimination, racism and xenophobia impact migrants' access to basic services and undermine social cohesion within the EU.

In contrast, multiple local initiatives have been launched by host communities with the aim of welcoming migrants, and building a more tolerant and inclusive European society together. National Red Cross Societies in the EU strongly emphasise exchanges and dialogue between EU citizens and migrants from all over the world, as well as engaging with future generations. This helps to frame more positive narratives around diversity that promote respect for fundamental rights, and build on mutual respect between different cultures and traditions.

## From words to understanding

As a key determinant of public opinion, the media has a big impact on people's attitudes and their perceptions of migrants. In today's newspapers and public narratives, migration, reception, and asylum are among the words most frequently used to refer to population movements. However, for many people the real meaning of these terms remains unclear.

To address the fear and potential stigma that can arise from the unknown, in 2016 the Italian Red Cross collaborated with the Treccani Encyclopaedia on an awareness-raising campaign promoting humanitarian values through the Italian language. With five definitions - Reception, Migration, Asylum,

Dialogue, Humanity – the campaign highlighted concepts that are often misinterpreted in the media, and as a result contribute to increasing the scope for misunderstanding and confusion.

As the xenophobic and racist attitudes faced by migrants are often based on ignorance, bias or prejudice, one counteraction strategy is to develop capacities among individuals and communities to engage with differences; to respect and appreciate diversity, rather than to reject it. With this campaign, citizens were invited to increase their knowledge and understanding by focussing on the real meaning of words used in relation to migration. ■

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, In search of dignity: report on the human rights of migrants at Europe's borders, 2017 ; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Current migration situation in the EU: hate crime, November 2016.

## Get the story straight

In many contexts, migrants are labelled as “illegal” and assigned responsibility for many of the societal and economic challenges faced in the EU – a phenomenon that has been exacerbated in recent years. One of the driving forces behind this trend is the way that migrants are depicted in the media. Committed to tackling stigma against all migrants, the British Red Cross provides current information about migration and the reasons behind it. It supplies regular commentary on the issues that migrants face, often acting as a neutral, yet authoritative spokesperson vis-à-vis the British media.

To challenge inaccurate reporting on migration-related issues, in 2015 the British Red Cross launched “Get the Story Straight”. Developed to tackle discrimination and challenge misinformed news by debunking stereotypes, the campaign published content

that put the statistics into context. The British Red Cross used social media and its blog to present thought-provoking facts, along with in-depth analysis of distorted news headlines, and an indication as to their effects on public perceptions.

The Red Cross also called on the public to help ‘Get the Story Straight’ and promote a more tolerant and responsible society in the UK. Citizens were invited to submit news articles that referred to migrants, either in a positive or negative light. Journalistic guidelines were applied, and correct statistics were used to fact-check the articles and ensure they were fair and accurate. The British Red Cross encouraged journalists and editors to use correct terminology in their migration reporting, asking for articles to be amended where necessary. ■

## Promoting tolerance among young people

European Red Cross Societies believe that children and adolescents should be given an opportunity to play an active role in efforts aimed at countering xenophobic and racist attitudes. However, they need support to develop the knowledge that is conducive to positive cultural mindsets. It is important for them to learn how to navigate the messages around racism and cultural diversity they hear from friends, family, and traditional and social media, as well as politicians.

The social sector, especially civil society organisations, plays a key role in supporting the social inclusion of migrants by countering the discriminatory behaviours that they could face among their peers. Reaching out directly to youngsters, people who work or volunteer in the field of youth, such as youth workers, youth leaders, or trainers, is key to creating more welcoming environments for young migrants. It is thus strategic to collaborate with young people to promote tools that influence this group’s attitudes and values.

The Zupanja branch of the Croatian Red Cross has developed a training manual on migration for youth workers, which presents ideas for engaging with young people around the topics of migration and social inclusion. More specifically, it focuses on raising awareness about the numerous challenges faced by migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers throughout the integration process.

The manual promotes different informal learning methodologies, such as role-plays, "icebreakers", or outdoor games. As

migration is sometimes a challenging topic to broach, these techniques can help youth workers to start a conversation, for instance by encouraging young people to reflect on the meaning of social inclusion and how it differentiates from assimilation.

The Croatian Red Cross therefore trained youth workers from 12 European countries to put these tools into practice. *"The handbook provides an excellent toolbox of activities that we can implement to overcome negative narratives around migration in an informal setting"*, stressed a youth worker. ■



Youth workers practice the new methodologies promoted in the Croatian Red Cross training manual on migration, 2016.

© Zupanja branch of the Croatian Red Cross

## Celebrating diversity

The EU is home to people of many different racial, ethnic, religious, and national backgrounds – a melting-pot which contributes to the richness of European society. Indeed, people from diverse cultures often bring additional language skills and new ways of thinking. Learning about other cultures increases understanding of the different perspectives which make up a society, and helps dissipate negative stereotypes and personal biases.

Building bridges among different communities lies at the heart of the Lithuanian Red Cross' work to promote social inclusion and cohesion by creating opportunities for

exchange and dialogue. Every year since 2014, the Red Cross celebrates diversity by bringing people together for a festival in the capital, Vilnius, on World Refugee Day. Gathered around traditional dishes and music from several countries, this convivial initiative invites people with diverse ethnic heritage to exchange and get to know each other better.

Lithuanian Red Cross staff and volunteers also sensitise festival participants to the plight of asylum seekers and refugees around the world, and in Lithuania specifically. Photo exhibitions portray the life of migrants in reception centres or in camps, alongside personal testimonies. ■



# CHAPTER 4



Migrants develop their woodwork skills as part of the “Step by Step” project for people that have experienced trauma, Germany, 2017.

© Brigitte Hiss / German Red Cross

# Belonging through participating

The social inclusion of migrants is a dynamic, two-way process of adaptation by both migrants and the societies who receive them. Migrants should be supported throughout the social inclusion process, but they must also be given the opportunities and means to participate and contribute. Networks – be they social, familial, professional or community based – contribute to creating an empowering environment in which migrants are able to assert their rights and potential.

National Red Cross Societies in the EU believe that enhancing migrants' access to and participation in the daily life of the communities in which they live can help them become active contributors. The Red Cross therefore seeks to enable migrants to develop social ties that will contribute to their inclusion, and increase their chances of finding a job, or making friends. The extensive network and local outreach capacities of Red Cross volunteers are instrumental to this process, especially as they can facilitate the early participation of migrants following their arrival.

## First steps towards economic participation

Rapidly after they have settled, most migrants express the need to be active, to work, and to become independent. In fact, having a job is a critical factor which favours the long-term social inclusion of migrants, as it allows for personal fulfilment, and economic and social participation. Effective and sustainable integration into the labour market also increases migrants' chances of achieving and maintaining decent living conditions. However, entering employment can prove particularly difficult for migrants when they have limited knowledge of the national language. In addition, their qualifications and skills may not match the needs of the local labour market, and they are also often confronted with discrimination.

The German Red Cross has been implementing labour-market integration measures with asylum seekers and refugees in the cities of Bremen and Bremerhaven since 2008. Red Cross social workers have found that migrants' needs vary depending on their age and profile, so the services provided have been adapted accordingly.

For asylum seekers and refugees below the age of 25, focus is placed on access to vocational training that will increase their chances of acquiring the skills sought by employers. Following a preliminary interview to assess their skills and interests, they are also offered German language classes, and individual follow up, which includes coaching, as well as social and educational monitoring.

*"In August 2017, I started a vocational training*

*course to become a professional housekeeper. I am currently working in a hospital in Bremen”, explains a 22-year-old woman who joined the programme in 2016.*

For participants over the age of 25, emphasis is given to reinforcing existing skills and building a strong network that will increase their chances of finding employment. If needed, participants can enrol in training to acquire new qualifications, or to ensure that previous qualifications and skills are recognised.

The relevance of these services is guaranteed through collaboration with several

stakeholders, such as local employment services, public authorities, chambers of commerce, and private companies. Regular meetings are organised with the different actors to ensure that the training being offered accurately reflects the needs of the local economy. In addition, employers from various sectors are invited to share the list of profiles that they are struggling to recruit among the current workforce. In the past three years, asylum seekers and refugees have found employment in healthcare, transport and logistics, new technologies, cleaning, and trade. ■

## Planting roots in the community

Adolescence is a critical stage in life that tends to bring a lot of changes and insecurities. This transition can be even more challenging for young migrants and unaccompanied children, as they grow outside traditional family structures and may have few people that they can trust or rely on.

The Spanish Red Cross works towards providing young migrants with tools that can enable them to fulfil their personal aspirations and learn about their rights and responsibilities. On average, the people involved in these activities are under 16 years old, and have been out of child protection systems for several years before arriving in Spain. Some of them come from war-torn countries, or have fled conflicts, and suffer from significant psychological trauma. They are also inclined to unrealistic expectations and inaccurate perceptions of life in the EU.

*“We set up an individualised plan for each person. They receive personalised psychosocial, labour-related, educational, and legal guidance”, explains the Red Cross programme manager. In addition, to support their agency and create a stable environment, emphasis is placed on increasing young migrants’ knowledge about their local community. Whenever possible, they are referred to existing social and educational services, and are encouraged to handle their own administrative processes to incite autonomy and independence. “We help them to navigate Spanish society and explain the possibilities that are accessible to them”, she adds. Finally, many programme activities aimed at developing their soft skills take place in a group setting to help build relationships and ensure they are included in their peer groups. ■*

## Building bridges by volunteering

“*Salama*” means safety and peace in Arabic. In Finnish, it refers to sudden light and energy in the darkness. This is how the multicultural group of Finnish Red Cross volunteers, “*Salama-Tiimi*” (“*Tiimi*” meaning “*team*” in Finnish), sees itself: a group of people willing to use their energy to assist people in need.

The team is composed of people from different nationalities and backgrounds who reside in the region of Oulu; from asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants, to exchange students, and Finnish citizens. Founded in August 2015 by local volunteers and Osama Al-Ogaili, an asylum seeker and engineer from Iraq, the group is now composed of 130 members that receive guidance and supervision from Red Cross coordinators.

*Salama-Tiimi* aims to increase mutual respect and understanding in local communities across Finland through a broad range of volunteering activities. “*We do our best to respond to the*

*needs of the local population. They contact us, and we explore what is feasible together*”, explains Mr Al-Ogaili. “*Our activities have ranged from shovelling snow, conducting outdoor maintenance work, and organising events for elderly people, to giving a helping hand to families that were moving house*”. Volunteers also intervene in schools and community events, where they share their personal experiences as migrants living in Finland.

By creating opportunities for migrants to meaningfully engage in various activities, *Salama-Tiimi* has managed to facilitate social interaction with local inhabitants in the Oulu region and promote active citizenship. Moreover, the initiative has increased the visibility and recognition of migrants’ contributions to their host city, and has shown the positive impact that volunteering can have in building trust. Not only does it serve to establish a dynamic social life, but it also contributes to developing skills and experiences that will be useful to the migrants’ future endeavours, whatever they may be. ■

Mamadu, originally from Senegal, came to Sicily as a migrant. Now he volunteers as a cultural mediator for the Italian Red Cross in Catania, 2015.

© Carlos Spottorno / Panos



# CHAPTER 5



A migrant is accompanied during grocery shopping by a member of the British Red Cross refugee orientation service.

© Simon Rawles / British Red Cross



# Harnessing local networks

While national programmes for social inclusion are important and necessary, it is essential to remember that the process of social inclusion primarily happens at the local level. Promoting dialogue and developing partnerships with local communities and authorities helps to cultivate a climate of mutual understanding, trust, and cooperation.

Rooted in the communities they serve, Red Cross branches are well placed to identify and respond to the needs of all local inhabitants, including those who are most isolated. Migrants can choose from a wide variety of activities based on their wishes, experiences and every-day needs. Through its long-term commitment, the Red Cross builds programmes that nurture durable, cross-cultural acceptance, dialogue, and ties.

## Creating ties and developing confidence

Women represent a substantial proportion of the migrant population in Europe. The reasons behind their decision to migrate are varied; some travelled alone to find work, or safety, while others came to reunite with family members already living in Europe. Though migrant women are a diverse group, many share common challenges when it comes to their social inclusion. These obstacles are often linked to their legal status, their limited access to the labour market, or their family situation.

In Oslo, the Norwegian Red Cross runs several programmes for women with a migrant background who face difficulties in adjusting to their new country of residence. One is the Stella women's centre, where women can find resources and support to enter the job market. Its location in the very city centre of Oslo makes it easily accessible via public transport. The Stella centre is an information and counselling unit for women that originate from countries such as Iraq, Poland, Russia, Somalia or the Ukraine.

Often, these women have non-recognised higher education degrees, but are isolated and constrained to domestic activities in Norway. Daily courses such as language training, cultural understanding, practical help for job seekers, and basic computer lessons are available free of charge. Participants can also take part in workshops where they receive professional guidance and acquire new skills, such as learning how to deliver a public presentation. *"These activities aim to empower women to participate in economic life to improve their quality of life and that of their families",* says the manager of the Stella centre.

The centre uses its strong local presence to connect migrant women with local and regional businesses through a mentorship programme. This helps widen participants' networks and increases opportunities for them to take their first steps into the Norwegian labour market.

Participants are encouraged to take an active role in deciding on the activities

provided at the centre. They can also volunteer to become part of the team running the centre. In fact, the Stella centre is almost entirely run by volunteers with a migrant background. They

find their volunteering experience empowering, as it allows them to extend their expertise, while participating in a meaningful activity. ■

## All hands on deck!

In September 2015, EU Member States agreed to relocate some asylum seekers out of Greece and Italy. This relocation scheme was adopted to relieve pressure on the two countries, and guarantee better reception conditions for asylum seekers. Portugal welcomed its first group of asylum seekers later that year. Since the first group arrived, the Portuguese Red Cross and four other organisations have been overseeing the implementation of reception and social inclusion measures.

The challenges posed by the social inclusion of migrants cannot be met by any single actor. Many different local stakeholders, including the private sector, non-governmental organisations, local authorities, and schools have been invited to join forces. Participating local Red Cross branches work with these actors to implement the individual integration plan designed for and with each asylum seeker.

In the framework of the EU relocation scheme, the Portuguese Red Cross matches asylum seekers with cities and the corresponding Red Cross branch, according to criteria that will enhance their long-term prospects, such as the availability of housing, schooling, job opportunities, or structures for people with disabilities. In addition, strong cooperation with local public services aims to guarantee that

the specific needs of newly relocated asylum seekers are identified, and duly addressed. Coordination meetings are frequently held to follow up on ongoing programmes and activities. By September 2017, a total of 124 asylum seekers, mainly from Eritrea and Syria, had been relocated to 20 municipalities and benefited from this scheme.

One of the main challenges faced by the Portuguese Red Cross lies with simultaneously managing everybody's expectations – those of asylum seekers, host communities, and the different actors supporting the process. *"It is crucial for the success of this initiative that everyone is aware of what is realistically feasible. They need to know that the process of social inclusion is a long-lasting one that requires patience and constant efforts"*, stresses the Red Cross programme coordinator.

Sensitising the local population to the plight of recently arrived asylum seekers, and creating opportunities for community interaction, are key elements for a successful social inclusion programme. *"We invite asylum seekers to proactively engage with the local population by becoming Red Cross volunteers and getting involved in the activities of local branches"*, she underlines. ■



Senior migrants learn how to make Swiss pasta, 2012.

© Martin Volken / Swiss Red Cross



## Social inclusion at all ages

Upon retirement, many migrants decide to stay in their host countries. Often, when people retire they lose the daily contact with other people that came from their work. Growing older can also mean reduced mobility. As social interactions tend to become less frequent, it is increasingly critical that people can rely on strong social support and neighbourhood networks. Elderly migrants may face multiple difficulties in accessing appropriate information, programmes, and services due to factors like linguistic, or cultural barriers.

The Swiss Red Cross believes that the challenges faced by elderly migrants should be approached through a multi-dimensional lens that enhances their full participation and

contribution in communities. In partnership with the ProSenectute foundation and several social actors of the city, the Geneva Red Cross branch offers diverse activities for elderly migrants that promote active ageing and social inclusion.

Isolation or limited economic resources might prevent senior migrants from taking part in regular physical activities. The Swiss Red Cross therefore provides a range of activities that contribute to improving the mental and physical well-being of participants, such as gymnastics, swimming classes, memory games, and laughter yoga. As ageing in a foreign country can be particularly challenging, a psychologist is available to provide comfort. *“Elderly migrants may not*

*always be comfortable in opening up and asking the questions that they have about their life and future in Switzerland”,* explains a Red Cross psychologist. A workshop for elderly migrants to exchange on any concerns has been set up so that they can get the answers they need. They often discuss topics like general well-being, money management, and recycling.

Limited language proficiency can be another factor hampering elderly migrants' efforts to socialise. Twice a week, they can join French classes to work towards feeling more comfortable in their everyday interactions. They can also get together for

cooking classes, and learn about new dishes and sustainable food practices. The most praised activities are the visits to museums, and the arts and crafts workshops – both enhance communication beyond cultural and linguistic barriers.

Finally, to encourage social interaction with younger people and provide opportunities to enlarge their networks, the Swiss Red Cross organises excursions to the countryside with volunteers from several local companies. These opportunities not only benefit senior migrants, but the whole community. ■

# Helping migrants: our commitment will not fade

**Dr Werner Kerschbaum, Secretary  
General of the Austrian Red Cross**

Migration is not a new phenomenon for the EU. Indeed, since 1990, EU population growth is largely a consequence of the arrival of new populations who have contributed to increasing the diversity of the Union. Partly triggered by cuts in its international aid to third countries, the EU has been confronted with a major increase in the number of asylum seekers arriving from the Middle East, or countries like Afghanistan. This phenomenon started in 2014, and reached its peak during the following two years, with around 1.3 million asylum requests registered in 2015 and 2016.

In light of these important population movements, some of the main legislative measures taken in the field of asylum and migration across Europe did not stand up to the challenge. This resulted in a handful of EU countries managing most of the Union's reception efforts. In fact, this critical situation was only mastered with massive support from civil society organisations, such as European Red Cross Societies, or the many emerging grassroots movements backed by legions of volunteers. They all stepped in and lived up to their humanitarian responsibilities. Countless asylum seekers were registered, hosted in provisional shelters, medically examined, and provided with food and clothes in the early stages of their arrival.

As the examples in this booklet show, the Red Cross did not limit its efforts to meeting the basic needs of migrants. All over Europe, we witnessed the rapid development of new initiatives aimed at facilitating the social inclusion of migrants into their new environments. These ongoing programmes cover a wide range of needs – from psychosocial support, family reunification, and children-friendly activities, to access to the labour market and housing, as well as vocational training and language courses. All of them have been designed to build ties between people at the local level.

The approaches featured in this publication underpin the positive spirit in which the Red Cross translates its fundamental principles into concrete action, tailored to the needs of all people who require assistance, not just migrants. Our Movement does not neglect the magnitude of current and future challenges related to the social inclusion of migrants. Through our network, we are dedicated to maintaining our humanitarian standards and support for initiatives that will guarantee that migrants are given the possibility to contribute fully to European society.

As National Red Cross Societies, our role is to act as auxiliaries to European governments. While our commitment to helping migrants will not fade, we call on the EU and its Member States to be bold in their efforts to support the social inclusion of migrants, and to help us assist them in this process. We remain faithful to our mission statement, “Changing minds, saving lives”, and stand ready to continue making a major contribution in this field. By defending the humanitarian space and humanising migration in our respective societies, we can make a difference to building more tolerant narratives that put respect for all at their centre.

The EU is based on the principles of solidarity and unity. Now, we look to our EU leaders to defend and promote these principles, and continue efforts to build more cohesion between the Union’s inhabitants.

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# The Fundamental Principles the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

## **Humanity**

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

## **Impartiality**

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

## **Neutrality**

In order to continue to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

## **Independence**

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

## **Voluntary service**

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

## **Unity**

There can be only one Red Cross or one Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

## **Universality**

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all Societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.



# Moving forward together

## Red Cross approach to the social inclusion of migrants

This Red Cross EU Office booklet “Moving forward together - Red Cross approach to the social inclusion of migrants” looks at the importance of supporting the active participation of migrants, irrespective of their legal status, with a view to building a more tolerant European society that puts respect at its centre. Each chapter showcases concrete examples of activities implemented with and for migrants at the local level across the EU. These cases illustrate the Red Cross’ approach to the social inclusion of migrants from a variety of angles, including healthcare, family unity, and access to employment.

This Red Cross EU Office booklet features the following chapters:

- Migrants: different profiles, diverse needs
- Moving from reception towards inclusion
- Tackling discourse to foster alternative perceptions
- Belonging through participating
- Harnessing local networks

The migration work of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is guided by the IFRC Migration Policy, which asserts that migrants’ skills, experience, and resilience can be valuable contributions to their host communities. The policy also reaffirms the importance attributed by the entire International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement to supporting the aspirations of migrants, as well as their social inclusion. Through its community-based global network, the Movement is in a unique position to help establish links between different actors at the local level, be they migrants, local inhabitants, public authorities, or private companies. This publication aims to encourage public authorities to enhance their support for high-quality initiatives that are conducive to the social inclusion of all migrants, irrespective of their legal status.

### The Red Cross EU Office

National Red Cross Societies in the EU and the Norwegian Red Cross form part of the world’s largest humanitarian network, providing assistance without discrimination as to nationality, race, religious belief, class or political opinion. Together, they gather well over 250,000 employees, one million volunteers, and eight million members. The Red Cross EU Office represents their interests, as well as those of the IFRC, towards the EU and its institutions. Based on our members’ practical insights and technical experience, we promote the dignity and well-being of vulnerable people by facilitating and voicing common positions and recommendations towards the EU and its Member States. We also scrutinise European developments that could impact the implementation of our members’ work, as well as supporting them to elaborate and coordinate joint proposals to access EU funding.

### Asylum and Migration

Asylum, migration and displacement are high-priority matters for European Red Cross Societies, as many play a key role in receiving migrants and providing counselling, healthcare and social assistance, as well as supporting their social inclusion and participation in community life. The Red Cross EU Office helps National Red Cross Societies to better understand the EU policy framework on migration and asylum, and advocate for policies that safeguard humanitarian principles and respect the dignity of all migrants.

For more information, please visit [www.redcross.eu](http://www.redcross.eu)