SOCIAL INNOVATION FOR REFUGEE INCLUSION
SEMINAR REPORT

SOCIAL INNOVATION FOR REFUGEE INCLUSION

Event organized by ECRE, the United States Mission to the EU, the Council of Europe, the Mission of Canada to the EU and the EESC.

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European Council on Refugees and Exiles

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Canada

European Economic and Social Committee

12 - 13|09|2016
EESC - JDE 62 | 6th floor
Jacques Delors Building | Rue Belliard 99 | 1040 Brussels

INTRODUCTION

The Seminar on Social Innovation for Refugee Inclusion took place in Brussels on 12 and 13 September 2016. During one day and a half, over 250 participants and speakers from all over Europe and beyond gathered in Brussels to discuss strategies for refugee inclusion and propose innovative and collaborative solutions.

Through plenary sessions and workshops, participants had the chance to hear and discuss what innovations are required for a truly welcoming culture, the role of technology in refugee integration and the role of the private sector in facilitating access to the labour market. A series of workshops focused on refugee participation, citizens' initiatives, housing, higher education and the Boldness Project, a special session led by Eric Young, founder of the Social Projects Studio.

Speakers at the Seminar included among others YouTube star Firas Alshater, Mayor of Grande-Synthe Damien Careme, Director of the Greek Forum of Refugees Yonous Mohammadi, Techfugees' COO Josephine Goube and Corinne Prince-St-Amand from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

The pitching session counted with the presentation of 17 new or existing initiatives aimed at facilitating refugees' integration into host societies. Highlights included Kiron Open Higher Education, a blended-learning organisation providing access to higher education to refugees and asylum seekers; Bureaucrazy, an upcoming app developed by refugees in Berlin to help newcomers deal with the cumbersome paperwork on arrival; Ideas Box from Bibliotheques sans Frontieres and Solomon, a Greek magazine in Athens prepared, managed and edited by locals, migrants and refugees together. The municipalities of Botkyrka in Sweden, Zarqa and Sahab in Jordan and Montreal in Canada also presented their work with refugees.

The Seminar was organised by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), funded by the U.S. Mission to the European Union, and in cooperation with the Council of Europe (CoE), the Mission of Canada to the European Union and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC).

This report aims at providing an overview of the debates and discussions during the Seminar, without pretending to be a comprehensive and detailed document.

- Other material from the Seminar:

A Storify of the event was published by ECRE.

Articles on the Seminar have been published by ECRE, the Council of Europe and the European Commission.

Material from the Seminar, including pictures and speakers presentations, is or will be available on the EESC website.

DAY 1

WELCOMING REMARKS

During the opening plenary, Mr. **Adam Shub** from the U.S. Mission to the European Union, Ms. **Catherine Woollard** from ECRE, Ms. **Irena Guidikova** from the Council of Europe and Mr. **Cristian Pirvulescu** from the European Economic and Social Committee briefly addressed the audience with welcoming remarks and marked the official start of the event.

BOLDNESS VS. STUCKNESS – Eric Young

Eric Young, founder of The Social Projects Studio and Distinguished Visiting Professor of Social Innovation at Ryerson University, one of Canada's leading practitioners and thinkers in the field of social change, addressed the plenary room as an 'outsider' of the refugee field, but as one of the key players in the field of social innovation.

"We must create a community that is safe, stable, hopeful, healthy and inclusive. Headlines are made only by the 'upstream' dimension of the crisis, and not the 'downstream', the one where people are trying to settle in the new societies." He reminded how everything depends on inclusion, not just the future of refugees, but also

the future of Europe. "The so-called 'refugee crisis", he stated, "is an integration crisis, not a border security crisis".

Eric Young invited innovators to rise to the challenge and to experiment in communities, to create a collaborative innovative network, to give birth to a new movement.

He gave the audience an overview of the concept of social innovation: it is a possibility to change society's stability to work effectively on social challenges and provide social change, with an impact on a meaningful scale.

To prove the possibility to achieve social change, he recounted the example of the city of Medellin, in Colombia, which went from being considered the most dangerous city in the world to a 'miracle' in inclusion and collaboration, with crime rates dropping by 80%. This change did not come about easily, it took vision, commitment and resources. It was not about setting a minimum standard, it was about a bold, grandiose vision.

Irena Guidikova
@diversitypower
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in the "a risky voyage with a weird crew to an unknown destination" visonary leadership and right priorities are game changers.Eric Young.
2:47 PM - 12 Sep 2016

2

"To make the inclusion project a success, we need to make sure that we are as bold and collaborative as possible. It gives me great hope to see the variety of participants gathered at this Seminar."

To conclude his speech, Ric invited those who have access to funds to not only fund frontline projects. Those on the frontline are constantly dealing with immediate needs and solving pressing issues and do not have the time to devise strategies and set up new ideas. Innovation happens a step back, and that is why it is so important to make sure that all parts of the process are adequately funded.

FIGHTING FEAR WITH COMEDY

Firas Alshater, Syrian video producer who became famous in Germany with his YouTube channel ZUKAR, addressed the plenary next.

Using humour as way to talk about deeply uncomfortable topics, he invited the audience to not demonise xenophobia, but to rather talk about it. "Having fear is normal and people should not be shamed for having fear", Firas said, "is the abuse of fear by populists which we need to address. Demonising and criticising people who have fear will only make their fear grow bigger."

When responding to fear, information and statistics are often used, but these rarely manage to address people's fears. What is needed is contact between those having this fear and those to whom it is addressed. A video from the ZUKAR series was shown to illustrate how the artist has approached this issue in Germany.

Humour was stressed as an important means of addressing fears such as xenophobia. A second video was shown, drawing on Germans' initial hesitation towards refugees, but which ultimately leads to active engagement.

INNOVATION FOR A WELCOMING CULTURE

The first plenary session dealt with a very challenging issue: if a welcoming environment is the prerequisite for any successful social inclusion, what is being done and what has to be done in order to prepare host communities for inclusiveness?

Lynda Ford, Director of iGen Foundation and co-leader of the Australian chapter of Techfugees moderated the panel and presented a number of initiatives from the state of Victoria in Australia

which are making a difference for the employment and self-employment of refugees and asylum seekers.

Recruit Smarter is a governmental initiative to reduce the barriers to public sector employment for migrants and refugees. Getting Down to Business is a programme targeting young entrepreneurs, created and linked in with existing entrepreneurship eco-systems so that young entrepreneurs can become their own bosses and also employ others. Cultv8 is born out of one of the hackatons organised with the Techfugees network, and is a free, 10 week incubator to support as many teams as possible to make their product a reality.

> Using new ways of thinking, new processes and co-designing solutions, social innovation solves recurring problems by the better use of resources and knowledge to increase impact and sustainability.
>
> Social innovation leads to better life outcomes for individuals, families, communities and, therefore, for a society.
>
> Copyright iGen Foundation 2016

"Social innovation", Lynda said, "requires people to think differently about the way they design and manage responses to social issues. Innovation needs to be creative and needs to bring about new partnerships."

Marta Siciarek, Director of the Immigrants Support Centre and Coordinator of policy on the Immigrants Integration Model of the city of Gdansk in Poland shared her experiences with the audience.

The Gdansk mayor created a team of 150 people from institutions and immigrant communities to work together on migrant inclusion, with meetings every month. The process started with an analysis of the situation, which included assessing if the services available were adequate enough, and if they were responding to actual needs.

A vision was then developed and a policy document voted by the city council. The process is now in the implementation phase. The city wanted to be the ultimate responsible for refugee and migrant inclusion, and to not leave everything to NGOs.

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Mayors & cities are our chance. We need to convince & support mayors to become leading voices on diversity-@martasiciarek #InclusiveSocieties

3:46 PM - 12 Sep 2016

↩ ⇄ 8 ♥ 3

Yonous Muhammadi, Director of the Greek Forum of Refugees, spoke about his personal experience as an asylum seeker and refugee in Greece and shared his ideas on inclusion and participation within society.

The Greek Forum of Refugees operates as a bridge between refugees and migrants communities and other stakeholders, such as the government, NGOs and host society, representing and giving voice to the many migrant and refugees communities present in Greece.

Yonous provided the example of a recent meeting which was organised by the Forum with members of Golden Dawn, the Greek far-right party. The aim of the meeting was simply that of creating a dialogue between the communities, and it worked.

Damien Carême, mayor of Grande-Synthe, shared his experience of opening a proper refugee camp in France, considering the increase in refugees in Grande-Synthe and the dreadful situations they were living. The camp was built with the help of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) on a land owned by the municipality, as the French State did not want to get involved.

The municipality is in charge of the camp, and the population of the city is kept well informed about the developments, through monthly email updates. There were no complaints nor demonstrations in the city against the building of the camp, and there is even no necessity to involve the police.

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Only solution is #integration. Barriers & walls have never stopped refugees, they just encourage traffickers-@DamienCAREME #InclusiveSocieties

4:22 PM - 12 Sep 2016

↩ ⇄ 15 ♥ 2

The camp has now been running for 6 months and no incidents or criminal acts were reported in the

area. The only problem is that people in the camp do not want to stay in France, they are trying to reach the UK. "But we try our best to make them enjoy the city as much as possible in any case", stated Damien.

Dr. **Alison Strang**, Chair of the New Scots Strategy Core Group and Senior Research Fellow at Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh concluded the panel with her presentation of the New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities programme.

The programme is born out of a set of indicators for integration: employment, housing, education, health, social bridges, social bonds, social links, language & cultural knowledge, safety and stability, rights and citizenship.

A framework linking four key domains of integration was presented as a tool to foster debate and definition regarding normative conceptions of integration in resettlement settings and became the basis for the New Scots programmes.

She identified as current challenges to the success of the programme a policy shift for it to have a nationwide application and effect, and the forging of truly meaningful and sustainable community engagement practices.

REFUGEE? I HATE THAT WORD

Dawit Friew explained in a powerful speech his reasons for hating the label 'refugee'. Recounting his story from Sudan, to Libya, to Malta, facing unspeakable horrors and abuses, he said how being labelled as 'refugee' made him feel removed from society.

"I never dreamt to be a refugee," Dawit said. "Being a refugee took all my dreams away from me." Labels are imposed upon people to make them feel different and not welcome, he stated

"Whenever a refugee does something bad, I have to defend myself because I am put in the same 'refugee' category. I hate this".

Inclusion needs to be based upon dignity and respect for all people. Showing humanity is not always enough, Dawit concluded.

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As a refugee I not only lost my family; I lost my confidence. When I was told I could work, I regained it - Dawit Friew #InclusiveSocieties

5:26 PM - 12 Sep 2016

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PITCH PRESENTATIONS

The session, moderated by Irini Pari, member of the Permanent Study Group on Immigration and Integration at the EESC, counted with 17 new or existing projects who each had 5 minutes to present their initiative.

1. **Kiron Open Higher Education** is a social start-up that facilitates access to higher education for displaced people. Its study model combines online and offline elements, is offered free of charge and its students may access from everywhere in the world. Kiron's model allows displaced people to start studying regardless of their legal status.

2. The **Ideas Box**, conceived by **Libraries without Borders**, is a portable media center designed as a kit that fits on two pallets and can be installed in less than 20 minutes. The box creates a cultural space covering 330 sq ft and includes a satellite internet connection, laptops and tablets, a library with both paper books and e-readers and a built-in cinema.

3. The **City of Senigallia** (Italy) strongly believes that successful integration can come about through and by enhancing skills. For this reason, particular attention has been paid to scholastic integration for minors, to adult education, as well as to the creation of job training and professional re-qualification programmes.

4. **Solomon** encourages refugees & im/migrants to join the co-shaping of society through the free expression of their views, ideas & skills. Solomon magazine, a digital publication, is the first action and consists of an editorial team of talented people from Afghanistan, Belarus, Ethiopia, Greece, Pakistan, Russia and Somalia.

5. **City of Botkyrka** - "Connect, create, communicate – Art as a language to make new voices visible" : with art as a tool, the art studio at the Multicultural centre focuses on reaching participants within our local community. The studio has also been able to work more as a mobile art studio. During 2015, a number of visits have been undertaken to different refugee centers where the staff started artistic processes.

6. Members of **City of Zarqa Youth Council** received training on human rights and good governance and learnt how this requires fair laws, participation and inclusion of everyone in planning for equal opportunities, as well as better services that cater for everyone. That's why the youth in Zarqa, with the support of LDU & Actionaid, established a Youth Council which includes refugees so that they can identify everyone's needs, develop plans and advocate for the inclusion of every person in the cities decisions, as well as get to know each other.

7. **Bureaucrazy** will be a mobile and web-based application, that is being created by a group of Syrian refugees and few mentors from ReDi School for Digital Integration. All the forms a newcomer might encounter during the stay in Germany will be entered into a database and translated into multiple languages starting with English, Arabic and German. The app will give newcomers the ability to fill out all of these forms in their own language, through simple questions and answers.

Dani de Torres
@DanideTorres

🐦 Follow

Listening inspiring presentations at #SI4RI such as @bureaucrazyapp to help solve the problem of German paperwork made by refugees...great!

6:14 PM - 12 Sep 2016

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8. **Refugee Text** is a tool for trusted organisations to make information available, on-demand to any refugee with a phone, available online and over SMS. Refugee Text can be used to deliver camp-specific information, details on applying for asylum or family reunification, or any number of other uses. It also gives refugees a channel back to

organisations, allowing them to better meet the needs of refugees.

9. Solentra is an abbreviation for "Solidarity & Trauma". The organisation provides diagnostic and therapeutic support to refugee & migrant children, as well as to their families. One of the main instruments is PACCT® (Psychiatry Assisting the Cultural diverse Community in creating healing Ties): a methodology specifically designed to meet the (psychological) needs of the target group.

10. British Red Cross - **Integration through restoring family links**: by helping with travel costs, our travel assistance programme provides a vital route for separated families to find protection in the UK. The programme has helped over 7,000 family members since the 1990s and it enables opportunities to plan integration activities in advance of the family's arrival, preventing destitution, mitigating integration crisis and supporting families through the ordeal of forced separation.

11. The **City of Sahab** is one of the most important industrial cities in Jordan with a population which has grown from 43,000 in 2004 to 150,000 in 2016. The Social Development Unit has been initiated to face the challenges posed by this increment, implementing so far nearly 150 social projects. It has also pioneered a change in culture within the municipality and a transformation of its relationship with the community by opening up important decisions to public consultation and influence. Regarding the refugee population, most of Sahab refugees lack official papers and work permits, but found employment due to Sahab's high economic activity and need for labor force in industrial city and, especially, the fact that the Sahab Municipality has silently supported their economic activity.

12. Since 2008, the huge former "House of Statistics" in Berlin-Alexanderplatz is empty. Artists, architects and big parts of the civil society want to turn the 40.000sqm into a social housing project with shared residence for refugees, students, families, elderly, etc. as well as working and meeting spaces for artists, cultural organisations and educational activities.

13. Homefull is a project funded by Lazio Region (Italy), started in January 2015 and lasting 11 months, meant to build an innovative model of cohousing, matching the needs of elderly people and their feeling of loneliness with the needs of refugees and their will to leave the reception centres. It was an experimental project that foresaw a period of communication, dissemination and several meeting with migrants and elderly people to allow them to get to know and choose each other.

14. **City of Montreal**: the International Observatory of Mayors on Living Together is an

international collaborative initiative based on a unique partnership between cities and universities whose aim is to document best practices and produce case studies and original analyses concerning new forms of diversity in cities across the globe. It is composed of an international network of cities and a web-based interactive platform for the exchange of experiences, knowledge and innovative practices related to social cohesion, inclusion and community safety in cities.

15. **Mindspring** is a group programme for and with refugees and migrants. The MindSpring method empowers participants via new knowledge, reflections and competences about issues related to living in exile. MindSpring can furthermore create the basis for a social network. The themes of a MindSpring programme are, among others, stress, identity, trauma and general challenges related to living in exile. The MindSpring method is unique in the sense that the group programme is facilitated by a volunteer with a similar background and language as the participants – a MindSpring trainer.

16. **L&D Support** Amsterdam: Providing a quick start in the guidance and counseling of refugees and asylees on vocational, educational, and training opportunities, L&D Support offers the first measurement method specifically for refugees – **InCheck**. The multilingual measurement method of L&D Support focuses on the individual in terms of competencies, education level, profession/job, and personal balance. Over time the measurement has been translated into several languages.

17. **SINGA** is an international community connecting refugees and local citizens in the host society through passions and projects. The organisation creates tools and spaces to meet, interact and build a successful society together. **KIWANDA** is a co-working and event space for inter-preneurs, people connecting people, a direct innovation from the refugee field to mainstream society.

THE ADDED VALUE OF TECHNOLOGY FOR REFUGEE INCLUSION

Tech innovation is probably the area that best illustrates how innovation has entered the asylum field in Europe. Tech solutions and visions are flourishing for both initial front-line humanitarian reception needs (e.g. food, clothing, shelter before entering the reception phase), and for the inclusion of refugees (access to information, work, services, social network, etc.).

This creative effervescence attracts as much as it brings questions: beyond the numerous Apps that bloom every week, can technology be used as a tool in structural change for refugees?

The plenary session was opened by **Kilian Kleinschmidt**, founder and Chairman of the start-up Innovation and Planning Agency (IPA), which aims at connecting the millions of poor and disadvantaged with relevant resources and modern technologies.

"We have to thank refugees" Kilian stated "because they taught us lessons about our societies not being inclusive enough". He invited the audience to realise that the aid system is not only broke, but also broken, and that there is a strong need to reinvent and replace a system which has clearly failed to include billions of people into a global system which thrives on connectivity.

He explained how there is enough technology to connect everybody to what the world can do and to include everybody. "There is knowledge and a solution to almost everything out there and the real challenge is to make that information available, to include everyone in a global mobile community," he concluded,

Francesca Lionetti
@FrLionetti

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"Freedom of movement is our goal, but nobody should be forced to move because of the lack of access to basic resources"
@KilianK #SI4RI

9:26 AM - 13 Sep 2016

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Josephine Goube, Chief Operating Officer of Techfugees, explained how the organisation came into being. In 2015, when the public opinion was shocked by the images of refugees on European shores, over 2,500 people showed an interest in 'doing something', through a simple internet call. Hackatons (48hours meetings of tech people who are willing to work on a specific issue) were organised, and the movement soon became global, reaching out to many more people and in many countries all over the world.

Josephine continued to explain how after a while this global community realised its ignorance about the issue at stake, and therefore decided to change format. "We started to talk with refugees and ask them to share their experiences, and we also started to talk with NGOs to understand how they need to be assisted," she said.

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We understood that doing technology for refugees without involving refugees themselves wouldn't work -
@josephinegoube @Techfugees #SI4RI

9:35 AM - 13 Sep 2016

7   3

There was still however a lot of duplication and detachment from the real problems, so it was decided to go 'on the ground'. One early discovery was that the tech that worked is low-tech, not the very advanced one. "We created a database to capture all the knowledge generated through a year of events, Basefugees," Josephine concluded.

Ahmad Al-Rashid, Syrian refugee currently living in the UK, reminded the audience how technology can also be used for all the wrong reasons, such as the smart weapons and drones that kill civilians everyday in Syria and other countries. "It is very important", he stated, "that people who want to help understand the context of the crises they want to deal with."

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"I'm here today because of technology. It saved my life during journey from Syria to Europe @jackahmed12 #SI4RI

9:48 AM - 13 Sep 2016

"Technology saved my life during the journey from Syria to Europe" Ahmad said. He used Google Maps to find his way, he used the phone to call for help from a perilous dinghy in the Mediterranean, and he used Google Translate to communicate with the Greek volunteers.

He expressed his appreciation for all the work that is being done with a real willingness to help and to be useful, but he also reiterated the importance of being critical and to understand the context and the causes of the crises, as it will not be apps which will solve the real issues at stake.

"This crisis is a golden opportunity: if we invest even only in 10% of the one million people who

arrived, they will be able to take the lead themselves in the inclusion process." Ahmad concluded expressing his hope that one day a conference like this could be held in his hometown Aleppo.

Ben Mason, Captain of International Projects at Betterplace lab, gave an overview of the many projects which were born out of the crisis, focusing especially on Germany. He highlighted how many projects were very well-meaning but lacked an appropriate knowledge of the group they wanted to help, or did not give enough attention to outreach activities, thinking that creating an app was enough.
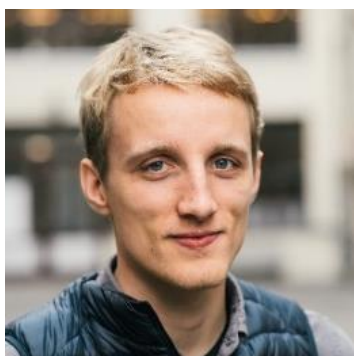
Another very sensitive issue, as he pointed out, is data privacy: many of the newborn initiatives collect a lot of personal information, and not always the actors dealing with it are competent enough to guarantee a safe handling of it.

In addition, he saw a lot of duplication of projects, in Germany in particular. Ben continued to highlight the good news in the field, which is the realisation of these issues and the willingness to work towards improving them.

"It is very important to always assess whether it makes sense to create something separate for refugees, or whether the focus should be on technology for everybody," he concluded.

Intercultural Cities
@ICCities

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@betterplacelab "Offline infrastructure and creating places to bring people together is always complementary to the online app" #SI4RI

10:24 AM - 13 Sep 2016

ROUNDTABLE WITH PRIVATE SECTOR

Civil society organisations supporting refugees had previously been wondering how to approach the private sector, the key actor for labour inclusion, but now some professional sectors have openly expressed the willingness to step into this debate and have committed to take action.

Corinne Prince-St-Amand, Director General of the Foreign Credentials Referral Office of Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada moderated this session. She provided an overview of a number of programmes started by Canadian employers to facilitate the inclusion of refugees into the labour market.

"In addition, the government of Canada then realised that it needed to also 'walk the talk' and not only preach to private employers," she continued, "so we developed a specific internship programme and have been able to help 400 refugees to find an employment in the country."

Ove Munch Ovesen, Senior Advisor at Novo Nordisk recounted how he has been dealing with refugees since 2007, when together with other human resources professional he started to develop a programme for the mentoring of refugees.

The programme was run again in 2016, from January to May : with 50 colleagues and through workshops, the aim was to equip refugees to be able to find a position in Denmark. 7 mentees now have full-time jobs, 21 others are in traineeships and many more have at least a very clear idea of what they need and want to do. Ove concluded by saying that the Novo Nordisk model has now been exported to other major Danish companies.

The programme has been very successful also for the mentors themselves, who have come to realise how hard it is for refugees to find a job, and understood all the existing barriers.

Trine Lundgaard Hoffmann is project manager for Erhvervsmentorkorpset, a mentoring programme which trains and matches around 1,000 volunteer professionals with highly skilled expats or international students looking for employment in the Copenhagen area.

She explained that through the programme, they match 'talents' (this is the name they use: not 'refugees' neither 'migrants') to local people who are working in the same area.

"If we put together a Danish civic engineer and a Syrian civic engineer they have so much in common. They speak the same language". The programme is trying to reconnect with their field people who in most cases have not worked in that field for a while. That is why, as an NGO, they work very closely with corporate partners, to help identify good mentors candidates.

Nynke Jansen explained the Refugee Talent Hub, a digital platform matching refugee talents to employers' needs in the Netherlands.

The matching process also indicates the skills gap for each person to successfully enter the labour market, and provides indications of what kind of education or training could help fill the gap – what is called by the Hub 'Meaningful Waiting'. A video was shown to explain the Refugee Talent Hub.

Among the challenges to a good outcome of the project, Nynke identified language learning as well as the fact that the longer people are in a country without being able to enter any job placements or trainings, the less motivated they become.

Marco Cilento, from the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), explained how refugees are not a traditional part of the organisation's work, but how at the same time ETUC felt compelled to act on the topic realising that Europe was derogating from its human rights commitments.

The organisation advocates for a stronger common policy on asylum and migration and welcomes efforts by certain countries to open safe and legal channels.

Regarding inclusion into the labour market, trade unions are working to bridge the gap between employers' needs and refugees' skills, with a special attention to the recognition of different work permits.

ECRE ✓
@ecre

Some trade unions in Europe already have structures in place, such as info points,offering assistance to migrants &refugees @etuc_ces #SI4RI

3:20 PM - 13 Sep 2016

↩ ⟲ 3 ♥ 1

Séverine Féraud, Deputy Head of Brussels Office of the BDA Confederation of German Employers' Associations, commended the event for having employers represented, and highlighted how it is of paramoount importance that everyone who is involved with integration sits around the same table.

Representing the whole German business sector, Severine stated their support for Merkel's policy aimed at offering protection to all those in need. She higlighted however a series of challenges in integration, for example the fact that 6 out of 10 refugees do not have any formal qualifications and need therefore to be brought into the formal vocational training system.

With the new integration law, employment should become more flexible, but there are still many challenges, such as labour market tests which are still allowed in regions with high rates of unemployement, or the ban on temporary work.

As regards the educational system, she put forward the employers' demand that the obligation to attend school should be raised to 21 or 25 years for refugees.

Lynda Ford
@communityep

#refugee #inclusion occurs when business, unions, governments and NGO's work together to create an environment for #employment. @ecre #SI4RI

3:32 PM - 13 Sep 2016

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WORKSHOP A – WITH US, NOT ABOUT US – MAKING REFUGEE PARTICIPATION REAL

The workshop aimed at exploring one specific forms of participation called either peer education or cultural mediation. While in most countries, nationals are service-providers to asylum seekers and refugees, some organisations increasingly include asylum seekers and refugees in their daily work.

The discussion focused on several aspects, one of which is the inclusion of refugees in local policy making, with **Annasophia Heintze** bringing forward the example of the city of Erlangen (Germany).

With a top-down approach and reaching out to communities of concern, the service administration and communities entered into a dialogue. At the moment the programme is focused only on refugees, but it can be used as a model to reach out to other communities.

The example of Bergamo (Italy), explained by **Rita Finco,** is about mediation between service providers and refugees, and it is all about creating trust to be able to live together.

Elodie Mignard talked about access to healthcare in Glasgow (UK), where representatives of the local refugee communities are trained as peer leaders to become mediators between the health sector and the wider community.

Rita Carvalho
@RitaRCarvalho

Important perspective from @scotrefcouncil: recognise that refugees are an expert by experience #InclusiveSocieties

11:45 AM - 13 Sep 2016

↩ ⟲ 7 ♥ 2

Elodie highlighted the difficulty of finding donors who are willing to finance a project based on soft indicators, such as enhancing community engagement and rising levels of trust between communities.

WORKSHOP B – FROM SOLIDARITY TO POLITICAL CHANGE

The workshop aimed at discussing the potential of citizens' initiatives and how the traditional stakeholders in the field of asylum and migration can open up to citizens' initiatives in order to create structural solutions to attain refugee inclusion.

Thomas Huddleston explained that Migration Policy Group will publish the first comprehensive analysis of citizens' initiatives, examining their differences compared to previous initiatives and the way in which they match the needs of refugees.

Most integration policies fail to incorporate volunteers, as States do not expect to be working with volunteers, but rather with professional staff. This is also due to the fact that the importance of volunteers in refugees' integration is not properly understood. "This meant a huge missed opportunity last year, because integrating people's time into policy is difficult," he concluded.

Francesca Pierigh
@frpierigh
🐦 Follow

Local governments role is crucial in mapping initiatives. It requires commitment and resources. @DanideTorres #InclusiveSocieties

11:33 AM - 13 Sep 2016

↩ ⟲ 1 ♥ 2

Barbara Day, from the USA Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migrants, brought an overseas perspective to the debate describing her experience as Domestic Resettlement Section Chief.

"True transformation starts with the individual, and culture is created by community. The methods and tools we use change with time but still involve responsibility, education, inclusion, access, and sharing power. Sharing power is the most difficult challenge but this is where political change actually occurs."

Sophie Mirow explained Refugees Welcome, an initiative providing housing to refugees in Germany and across Europe. The initiative started in late 2014 from Berlin and quickly developed into a transnational platform. The idea behind is for refugees to share accommodation with locals, who are not required to give their room for free: their flatmate is a tenant. In this sense Refugees Welcome is not a charity, but a facilitator.

"Citizens' initiatives can generate innovative projects and fast mobilisation of public interest at local and national level," stated **Denise Renson** from CIRE. "Direct meetings between citizens and refugees are the best way to raise awareness."

The biggest challenge that emerged from the workshop is how to make the most of citizens' synergies. Volunteer citizens' initiative offer great help in filling the gaps and raising awareness, but state structures are not for the moment able to work with volunteers.

WORKSHOP C – HOUSING CRISIS VS. "REFUGEE CRISIS"

The workshop aimed at providing a space of exchange between stakeholders working and advocating in the field on asylum and those working and advocating in the field of housing. The absence of proper housing policies for refugees can have dramatic consequences, as people often only have a few days or weeks to leave the reception center, and possibilities to find proper accommodation are very limited.

Huibert Haccou, from the International Federation for Housing and Planning (IFHP)

explained why refugee housing was included as one of the main objectives of the organisation.

Sorcha Edwards from Housing Europe explained how they support the IFHP findings that there is a missing housing policy framework at the EU level. Housing Europe is an umbrella organisation of housing associations in different countries which enables stakeholders to access funds.

Sam Healy from U.S. Embassy in Belgrade reiterated how housing *per se* is not enough, but it needs to be matched by other aspects of life so that a house can turn into a home. It is very important to empower municipalities' capacities to handle housing and migrants' issues.

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Conclusions from the workshop included the fact that integration cannot be complete without a proper housing. The issues of housing and integration should not be treated separately, as they are complementary to each other.

WORKSHOP D – BOLDNESS PROJECT

The purpose of this workshop was to understand how the different players present in the room can work together, and what kind of social change can be achieved.

Eric Young conducted this workshop as a very open-ended conversation which ultimately dealt with three different kind of themes:

- Refugees need to be seen as an opportunity and not as 'in need'.

- There needs to be an institutional change, as current national and pan-national systems are not properly equipped to deal with the scale of the problem. There needs to be a shift to a network rather than organizations, in order to not simply deliver services, but to be able to respond to needs and opportunities.

- There is a need to recognise the historical pivotal moment that Europe and the whole world are facing. There is a serious risk of a race to the bottom, driven by racism and xenophobia. There is a need to steer all the creativity and energy into a positive direction and to change the current storytelling about refugee inclusion in societies.

Technology can help achieve a new form of self-organisation, which could be a network with a body in charge of holding it together. Most importantly, there is a need to always remember that technology, in order to be meaningful, needs to be human-centred.

WORKSHOP E – FROM NEEDS TO SKILLS – THE ROAD TO HIGHER EDUCATION

The workshop aimed at discussing the potential of recent initiatives (private, citizen, start-up, institutional) in the field of higher education, and the growing importance of information and communications technologies (ICT) for supporting refugees and asylum seekers.

Presentations from Kiron Open Higher Education, UAF – Foundation for Refugee Students and RESOME provided some practical examples of

engaged and professional organisations which are working in this direction.

"Tech is not the only solution, it needs to be combined with knowledge and content, and it needs to include systems that have been existing before," stated **Nora Hauptmann** from Kiron Open Higher Education.

Jules Roussel explained RESOME as an initiative born out of a solidarity movement in the Parisian streets in mid-2015. "We decided with teachers, students and activists to open a University, whose objectives are to promote integration programmes and to promote the French higher education system, sharing information between associations," he continued.

Some of the obstacles identified in the workshop are the lack of knowledge about the educational systems in host countries, the recognition of qualifications and the costs involved.

Solutions proposed were the institution of a mechanism/institution which could provide funds for people to travel to other countries to undergo training and courses, a centralised national educational application system which does not take into account nationalities of applicants, and the provision of scholarships not only by the educational institutions, but also by governments.

There was a positive feeling at the end of the workshops as participants and speakers agreed that this is an achievable result.

LESSONS LEARNT

For societies to become really inclusive we need innovation at all levels (political, administrative and grass-roots). Innovation is not only an idea leading to a "project", but most and foremost a vision of how people and institutions should collaborate in order to put in place processes that can lead to real, systemic change.

Some of the social innovation initiatives that were presented during the seminar, if scaled up with the support of institutions, could become **a tool for systemic change**. For example, the concept of 'blended education', as developed by Kiron Open Higher Education, could represent a breakthrough in higher education for everyone by addressing social justice issues, including income inequality or geographical isolation. Again, the experience of cities like Erlangen, Gdansk and Sahab showed how the arrival of refugees opened up participation spaces for all citizens by challenging the overall manner in which a city works and engages citizens.

To provoke this sort of transformational social change innovators should aim at a **meaningful scale** of innovation and at a **paradigm shift**. But such a shift will occur only if supported by **leaders' willingness to break out of institutional and ideological inertia and routine, meeting creativity, enthusiasm and organisational skills on the ground.** The transformation of Medellin from the "Murder capital" to the "Most innovative city" in the world, for example, happened through a massive reprioritisation of public funds to develop infrastructures, transport, schools, libraries and homes and through a commitment to reach standards of excellence, dignity and beauty. The "Miracle of Medellin" was made possible by **collaborating outside the usual silos**, by bringing together politicians, entrepreneurs and activists from the social edge.

Furthermore, a key success factor for refugee inclusion is the **takeover of activities by refugees themselves**. They know best what their needs are and they can effectively spread information within their respective communities. When traumatised and destitute people arrive, it is normal to care for them and help them, but in this situation it is easy to forget that they also have skills, resources and desire to shape their own destiny. Therefore systems of support more often than not deprive them of agency. On the other hand, innovation, especially through technology, can significantly reduce the threshold for refugees taking part in society in terms of previous contacts, social history, intermediaries, power and language skills. Innovative initiatives which rely on refugees as key actors and promoters have demonstrated the diversity advantage and shown the win-win within power sharing, reciprocity and cultural/social symmetry within the community.

The model of refugee inclusion should, then, be based as much as possible on **co-design**: design with the users, and not for them. The experience of Techfugees can offer helpful insights on this regard. After six first months of gathering tech solutions which were focused on creating "The App" which would solve all the problems, Techfugees understood the importance of going on the ground and gathering information from NGOs to better understand the actual context-specific problems. They also recognised the imperative of gathering more people with refugee background during hackathons in order for them not only to tell their story, but also to co-create technology in a way that was meaningful and relevant.

Another crucial lesson which emerged during the Seminar is that in order to achieve real change **innovators need to be bold** and focus on what the various players can do together in the medium-long run. When dealing with refugee inclusion we should also focus on how the world can become a better place if we use technology and connectivity to make the global knowledge accessible to all in a more equal and fair way.

As a matter of fact, the bold thinking when it comes to integration is not just about inclusion, is the recognition that the quality of the places we live in defines how long and how well we live. Therefore, the places that figure out how to draw on the power of their diverse social capital will be the places that thrive. These are the places that not only welcome newcomers and protect them, but also make them agents of success.

For these reasons, we have to **pool together** our efforts, resources and movements to address the system and not only the different challenges: inclusion of newcomers also requires a rethinking of the current system. Rather than pushing newcomers into the dysfunctional labour market, we need to lobby for the recognition of "soft occupations" that today do not have the necessary recognition within society (teachers, nurses, etc.), as well as favour the quick insertion of refugees in skills trainings combined with on the job-language training.

Finally, consideration should be given to the **role of institutions**. As a matter of fact one of the main consequences of the "refugee crisis" was the mobilisation of civil society and a change in the social contract, with private citizens realising they are part of the system too, and therefore, that they should not only delegate to institutions, but act within their own capacities. The story of the current refugee arrivals is not only a story of tension, fear, desperation and pain, it is also a story of fabulous solidarity, hope and creativity.

It is somehow clear that institutions might not be the actor which spontaneously innovate, but it is also clear that they **can and should be the first one to join in and support the innovators.** Let's take the example of Bureaucrazy: this app is aiming at simplifying and making accessible bureaucratic forms to all newcomers (and potentially Germans as well) by using simple questions and answers in their own languages. It follows naturally that initiatives like this should be acquired and used by governments.

Another important role of institutions is to **promote a narrative shift**, inspiring people by sharing examples of success, like the Intercultural Cities Network has being doing for the last 10 years, harnessing the Diversity Advantage and Integration as a win-win across Europe and the globe.

Sometimes citizens just need to know that institutions are there and that they are **in control** of the situation. In Grande-Synthe (North of France), for example, once the border with the UK in Calais was blocked, the refugee population increased from 60 to more than 1,000 people in a month. Damien Carême, the Mayor of this town inhabited by 22,000 people, understood from the beginning the need to address the local community as an actor of inclusion. Over 10,000 citizens-volunteers came to the camp in just one month and no complaints nor protests were registered, nor any criminal act in the first six months of activity.

Finally, big institutions should learn from the business world and **walk the talk**: the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Department of the Canadian Government, for example, managed to go over legal hurdles to create internships for newcomers, and has now helped 400 refugees in finding employment.

Another example comes from the State of Victoria (Australia), which developed the project "Recruit smarter", based on the acceptance that unconscious bias exist in government recruiting. The project is being tested by three government departments, including treasury and finance. It works through a "blind recruitment process" whereby personal data about the candidate is removed at the time of application.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Need to raise awareness in the innovation community about effective targeting of the whole population**

  Currently, the majority of initiatives exclusively targets refugees' needs, disregarding those of the host societies. Effective initiatives should also include awareness raising among host communities by directly bringing them in touch with newcomers, to identify common needs, priorities and desires. This avoids tensions between both categories and creates the ground to fully develop the diversity advantage.

- **Need to create a transformation hub**

  Being at the front-line often means that daily emergencies obfuscate long-term perspective and make it impossible to step back and take radical decisions. Therefore, there is a need for a deliberate and participatory space/body within institutions and cities to focus on pattern shifting possibilities, as well as prototyping and testing the possible solutions. There is also a need for more curated forms of organising, in order to evaluate what is relevant and share it with the network and the critical decision-makers.

- **Need to avoid fragmentation**

  Social innovation which has the potential to provoke transformational change is the one that addresses the system and concentrates on how to draw on the power of diverse social capital.