

Refugees and Erasmus+ Youth

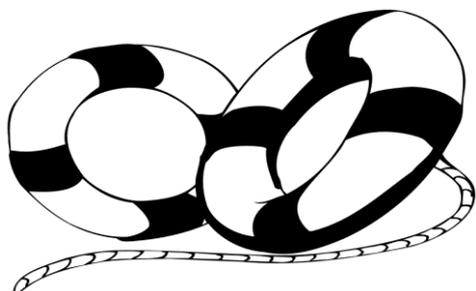
*An update by SALTO Inclusion
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In 2015, over one million people applied for asylum in the European Union. And still today, thousands risk their lives to reach Europe. Whether they are escaping conflict or searching better economic prospects, we are confronted with many newcomers in our countries. So it's **time to go beyond the fear of the unknown** and set up projects to turn this crisis situation into positive opportunities for all.

The most urgent needs...

People who apply for asylum in Europe all have a different story. Some are 'economic migrants' trying their luck, others flee from horrendous situations and will be granted 'refugee status'. So it is difficult to compare. But more often than not, they have the **following urgent needs in common**, when they arrive in a 'strange' country.

- **Legal status:** paperwork, procedures, temporary papers, possible rejection,...
- **Financial security:** find a job, pay back debts, send money home, survive,...
- **Language skills:** the door to the new country, the system, the people, a job,...
- **Psychological support:** digest trauma, being lost in the system, start from zero,...
- **Intercultural learning:** finding out how the host culture works, do's and don'ts,...
- **Social connections:** build up social network, make new friends, leisure time,...



Creating a welcoming environment

Erasmus+ will not solve all the problems in the world, but it can help. **International youth projects can help** to equip organisations working with asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. Need extra hands and hearts?

Why not **host some international volunteers** with the European Voluntary Service (or the new European Solidarity Corps)?

There are also plenty of international opportunities within Erasmus+ youth to get **trained to work with young asylum seekers (refugees or migrants)**. Get inspired by colleagues from other countries to enrich your work with refugees and migrants at international seminars and courses. Some examples:

- **Course about Erasmus+ for Refugees and Migrants.** 21-26 May 2017, Turkey.
Application deadline: 26 March 2017.
- **Strategic seminar to involve Refugees and Migrants in Erasmus+.** 15-17 May 2017, Italy.
Application deadline: 25 March 2017.
- More youth work training at www.salto-youth.net/training/

8 Erasmus+ National Agencies met in Rome together with SALTO Inclusion to analyse **how the Erasmus+ programme can be beneficial** for asylum seekers and refugees. They will actively reach out to refugee organisations and asylum centres to show the possibilities of the programme.

- Find the report of the Inclusion Colleague Support group on refugees online

Building bridges between communities

Erasmus+ is a mobility programme. But (young) people who just arrived in Europe **after a traumatic trip maybe are not immediately interested in hitting the road again**, as long as their (legal) situation is not cleared out. But it is always best to ask them instead of assuming! Mina is a good example of this.

- Discover Mina's story at www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Pu2C8WTY8A

However, an Erasmus+ project (or youth work) can be a good occasion to **build bridges between refugee youth and people of their new country**. If traveling is not possible (because of papers), hosting a youth project in your country is an option. This will create social connections and a better understanding of how 'the locals' do things (intercultural understanding).

Language connects people. So newcomers often desperately want to learn the language of their host country.



Erasmus+ opens its **Online Linguistic Support courses to refugees**. About 100.000 newcomers can benefit from this just like the European volunteers and students. E+ National Agencies work together with refugee organisations to distribute the licenses.

The power of youth work

Asylum seekers have to go through quite a paper mill. State structures need to check if they indeed qualify for **refugee status** (they would be killed or locked up when going back to their country) or if they are **economic migrants** (who have to present another set of papers to stay legally in the country).

Youth work can make a difference for young people in their asylum procedure and for refugees and migrants. Many projects exist to make the waiting time more bearable. Some focus more on practical help (food, clothing, translation,...) but youth organisations also help with the **integration into their new host society**:

- **Wereldspelers.be** (Global) is a Flemish-Belgian consortium of youth organisations that organises leisure time activities in asylum centres.
- The Turkish E+ National Agency funded the **Reach-Out project** to empower youth workers to reach out to young migrants and refugees.

'Becoming part of Europe' is a project of 9 Erasmus+ National Agencies. They will collect such good practices about how youth work can help the integration of young migrants and refugees in their host country. Based on this inspiration, the consortium will design innovative models and practices to skill up youth workers to make the work with refugees and migrants even more efficient.

- SALTO Inclusion will spread **these good practices and the training opportunities** via its **Inclusion Newsletter**. So register if you didn't do so yet.
- SALTO EuroMed wrote a publication on 'ICL competences to work with refugees' (pdf). **Do you have what it takes?** If not, take part in one of our training courses.

We also need to work with the hosting communities. Youth work has a role to play to create awareness about refugees and migrants. A consortium of 13 National Agencies is currently organising a 3 year project to **make young people 'Aware and Active'** Different **idea labs and training courses** will equip youth workers to make young people look beyond media and prejudice.

- **TheRefugeeProject.org** is a **good awareness raiser**. The interactive map shows how many people fled and arrived per country each year. It nicely puts the European refugee 'crisis' in perspective.

Creating opportunities

No matter how welcoming we are, the newcomers are eager to **build up their new life and work on financial stability**. Anything that can help refugees find a job is welcome. Volunteering can be a way to learn new competences (and show work experience in their CV).

In Brussels, for instance, **Tandem Volunteering** provides asylum seekers with volunteer placements to start their integration path in their host country, while they wait for the final decision. Yuva is a Turkish organisation that works near the Syrian border to help stranded Syrians to **improve their self-sufficiency and develop professional skills**.

- More **case studies and analytical papers** about (youth) work with refugees were presented at the Youth Partnership seminar 'Journeys to a new life'. Get inspired by the documentation online.

Also other European players want to contribute. The **European Youth Card Association**, for instance, is planning a Summer University about how the European youth cards can be used to help young refugees. All bits help!

Get to know more!

Are you **confused** about the difference between asylum seekers and refugees? And what rights and obligations do they have?

Amnesty International is running a **self-paced online course about Refugee Rights** on EDX.org (in English, French or Spanish) with video clips, background reading and especially 'clear answers'. And the best of all, **it is free!** It runs till November 2017.

Good luck with your endeavours!