

E-BOOKLET. REFUGEES: EUROPE'S (MISSED) OPPORTUNITY



Erasmus+



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This e-booklet is a product of Erasmus+ Key Action 1 (KA1) project “Refugee’s: Europe’s (Missed) Opportunity” (REMO). The project consisted of a youth exchange that took place 21-28 February. The contents of the project’s e-booklet were solely created by the training course’s participants and does not reflect the opinion of either its hosts or that of the European Commission.

Introduction

The current European refugee crisis is one of the biggest threats to the European Project according to the German chancellor Angela Merkel. But it is not only her words that indicate that. The media is full of scenes with thousands of people flocking to Europe from the war zones looking for better life and opportunities. However, more often than not they end up in the place that does not want to use their potential, let alone welcome them. Is Europe going to keep these refugees in internment camps or integrate them within the societies? In the first instance it would be a huge burden, in the second - an opportunity to growth, development and advancement both culturally and economically.

REMO project was carried out in order to address the issues related to refugee crisis, which matter the most.

ABOUT

Project title: Refugees: Europe’s (Missed) Opportunity

Website: <http://refugees.lt/refugees-europes-missed-opportunity/>

Framework: Erasmus+ youth exchange

Participating countries: Lithuania, Poland, Greece, Turkey, Spain, Italy.

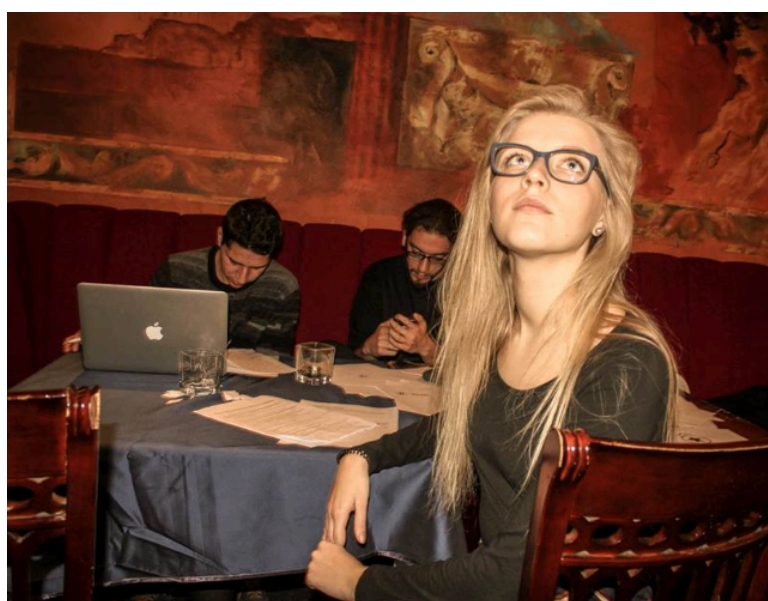
Number of participants: 36 (6 per country)

Venue: 4* Hotel “Sfinksas”, Kaunas, Lithuania

Date (duration): 21-28 February, 2016



LOGO OF THE PROJECT



Framework

The goal of this youth exchange was to make sure that young people are aware of the issue and know their ability to make a change not only in their own lives but also among the community they live in. In order to reach this goal, the following **objectives** have been set:

- 1) introduce the youth with existing problems caused by keeping the incoming refugees on the fringes of the society (usually in the processing centers or internment camps);
- 2) exchange good practices and knowledge (from the leading countries) on alternative ways of handling refugees - integration and life within the local communities;
- 3) generate new ideas on how to be even faster and more efficient in that;
- 4) teach the youth the necessary skills to apply the gained knowledge; and then
- 5) spread it to their community and social circles (by stating that every person could be the part of the change).

The youth exchange was organized for curious youth, who is full of ideas on how to best use the potential of refugees, however needs a push (and like-minded people) to put those in practice.

At the beginning of the youth exchange, the participants were asked to evaluate their current knowledge on the refugee crisis. The average self grade for current knowledge was evaluated at **4.5/10**, which indicated that there is plenty of room for improvement on this topic. It is important to emphasize that there also were people present in the youth exchange that had direct work experience with the refugees. These people were working in refugee camps in Greece and Africa, working in Amnesty International and United Nations agencies and really enriched the project and contributed a lot to the learning process on the issue of refugee integration. In addition, approximately **30%** of the participants indicated that they have previously participated in at least one initiative related to refugees.

METHODOLOGY

E-booklet was filled by 36 participants of Erasmus+ Project “Refugees: Europe’s (Missed) Opportunity”, which took place in Kaunas, Lithuania on 21-28 February, 2016. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 30, with median age being **22,5**.

The booklet was filled in the last days of the actions during specially designed activities. This allowed the participants to use all their previous experience, as well as things learned throughout the workshops. The setting of the activity was as following:

- Participants were randomly divided into 6 groups with gender and nationality balance;
- They were given up to 1.5 hours for the task. It has asked each team to fill-in a pre-made form;
- The organisers did not interfere with the work of the participants and only collected the completed forms.
- The forms did not use any names and also were shuffled after the collection. This was done to keep the anonymity of the authors of certain ideas.

Action Groups

The participants were divided into 6 action groups by their interests, maintaining the adequate gender balance. They were asked to choose one of the problems below (or to come up with their own one) related to refugee integration:

- i. Slow refugee integration
- ii. Xenophobia towards refugees
- iii. No work opportunities for refugees
- iv. Cultural clashes
- v. Lack of housing for refugees
- vi. Another problem (thought by yourselves)

After that, they were asked to think what **grand strategy/initiative** would help reduce the chosen problem. They had to present their solution on a big sheet of paper, not limiting their creativity by any other means. The initiatives that the participants proposed can be summarized in the following section.



Initiatives Proposed

The participants elaborated on problems and the most effective solutions/social initiatives for refugee integration. They agreed that it is very important to put emphasis on young people (i.e. children and students), but at the same time not forgetting the adults. Therefore, the following initiatives were proposed:

- Free courses for children
- Scholarships for students
- Free language courses
- End war in Syria (nothing else will help)
- Involving refugees in local events
- Helping refugees to squat empty flats

In addition, the participants agreed that there are a lot of other socio-cultural factors that need to be taken into consideration when talking about effective integration. The participants have emphasized:

1. Language
2. Social help/assistance
3. Psychological help
4. Welcoming society
5. Knowing, understanding and obeying local laws & culture



Putting Further Into Practice

In order to test their gained knowledge and nourish it with hands-on experience, the participants were introduced to various practical activities.

PITCH CHALLENGE

One of the best evaluated actions during the youth exchange was the pitch-challenge, where participants had to come up with a social business idea that would directly impact refugees and present it in front of the the special jury. The business ideas included:

- 1) **Eritrean Bar.** The franchise-model bar, which would serve national Eritrean food using ingredients that are grown internally.
- 2) **Eco Farming.** Employing refugees in farms and at the same time educating them on the most common local farming practices.
- 3) **Squatting.** Taking government-abandoned buildings and making them suitable for accommodating the refugees.
- 4) **Refugee Employment Centre.** A governmental institution, which would take care of refugees seeking for job in particular. Responsible for their training and preparation for the labor-market.
- 5) **Mobile Application for Refugee Jobs.** Here, the job openings for asylum-seekers would be gathered and it would serve as a unified platform in order to be informed about job-opportunities easier.



VISIT TO A REFUGEE DAY CENTER

In addition, the participants visited Kaunas Red Cross Refugee Day Center, where they discussed about the challenges of refugee integration that the employees of the day center face. The main activities of the day center that were introduced to the participants are:

- Provision of psychological and legal consultations;
- Assistance in job-seeking;
- Provision of access to the Internet;
- Various integration activities for children;
- Lithuanian and English language courses;
- IT, sewing and other lessons.

The biggest outside **challenge identified** by the Day Center was the negative public opinion on the refugees. Therefore, on their behalf, the youngsters of the youth exchange prepared a list of suggestions and improvements that the Refugee Day Center could implement in order to overcome this challenge and make their day-to-day work more efficient. These can be summarized as:

- 1) Prepare a photo album of the refugees of the day center with their own unique stories and how they ended up in Lithuania, what's their plan for the future, what's their job etc.
- 2) Constantly write press releases about the everyday activities of the day center, focusing on the improving integration processes of the refugees. This would help to create a more favorable public opinion on the refugees;
- 3) Organize events for the refugees where guest speakers that are former refugees or in any other ways related to the migrants could share their success stories;
- 4) Create a viral video about the refugees showing random acts of friendliness towards the locals and vice-versa.



VIDEO MAKING

The participants of the project were given a comprehensive session on creativity: how to awaken and exploit it fully. Also, a quick tutorial on how to use video-making software was presented by a creative professional Mr. Alvydas Opulski.

Afterwards, the random groups of 5-6 people were created and they were asked to create a short video by choosing one of the topics below:

- 1) refugees in Europe/your country;
- 2) how to help a refugee?;
- 3) potential of refugees;
- 4) would you employ a refugee?;
- 6) biggest stereotypes about refugees;
- 7) refugee myths/facts;
- 8) any other topic-related idea;

This further helped to form stronger bonds between the participants, reveal their creative potential and, last but not least, plug into the roles of refugees.

You can find the links to the videos at the end of this e-booklet.



Results, Inspiration and Further Work

Even though the youth exchange of the project has ended, the result dissemination continues. The press-release both in Lithuanian and English have been already sent to numerous sources, some of which have already shared it:

- <http://www.alfa.lt/straipsnis/49989682/pabegeliu-integracijos-projektas-kaune-atvyko-jaunuoliu-is-ivairiu-europos-saliu>
- <http://refugees.lt/2016/03/02/projektas-kaip-integruoti-pabegelius/>

Various videos and other material on Refugee Integration, related issues & viable solutions to those, produced during the youth exchange will be continuously posted on the website of the project:

<http://www.refugees.lt/refugees-europes-missed-opportunity>

However, the biggest impact of the project is felt on the participants and partner organisations: 1) Project [photos](#) created are shared or used as their profile pictures on social networks (some using the official hashtags of the project: **#REMO** or **#RefugeesEuropesMissedOpportunity**); 2) blog posts and testimonials on their experience are being made by the participants; 3) Facebook chat and [group](#) created during the action is still alive and full of ideas for further work. To show that the project was inspirational and incentivised the youth to work for its goals, selected quotes of the participants are provided below:

"This project was one of the most eye-opening experiences in my life. We will not run away from the refugees. And we shouldn't. Instead, we should try to do our best for them to feel safe and welcome here. You can find bad people everywhere, but you cannot cure evil with evil. Only by showing love and unity regarding the issue of refugee integration, we will turn this problem into opportunity not only in Lithuania, but entire Europe"

"I had a great time in this project. I especially loved the business ideas pitch challenge, which revealed that I am capable of coming up with entrepreneurial ideas that have potential to make change in the world"

"Personally, it was an amazing and unforgettable experience of sharing and understanding the underprivileged ones"

"The debates on the issues of refugee integration were very beneficial, since I focus my career on the involvement of minorities. I also met new friends and expanded my network, which is also going to be very beneficial in the future"

Project Evaluation

The increase of participating youngsters' knowledge on the topic was a key objective of the meeting. To assess that in numbers, we have provided a knowledge assessment on the first day, where the participants were asked anonymously to self-grade (from 1 to 10, where 10 means absolute) their initial knowledge on the refugee issue. On the last day, they were similarly asked to give a grade to their then knowledge. These assessments have shown **an increase of +3.03 grade points** (from 4.5 to 7.53) on average in the knowledge of refugee integration, its goals, problems, etc.

Additionally, the last day's assessment asked to evaluate the project, when considering the gained knowledge, fun, interest, etc. A **final grade of 8.43** (scale from 1 to 10) were given (34 anonymous votes). Such evaluation was achieved with the help of experienced trainers, clear concept and effective and coherent activities of the project.



Useful Links

1. Official website with some of the works done by participants: <http://refugees.lt/refugees-europes-missed-opportunity/>
2. Social Actions/Initiatives for Pitch Challenge: <http://refugees.lt/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/4xSocial-action-REMO-upd.pdf>
3. Pitch Challenge Task: <http://refugees.lt/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/6xpitch-upd.pdf>
4. Plan for Social Enterprise: <http://refugees.lt/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/4xPLAN-SE-REMO.pdf>
5. Refugees Potential: Field Research: <http://refugees.lt/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/6xfieldresearch-strategy-REMO.pdf>
6. World Café Discussion Topics: <http://refugees.lt/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/1xWorld-cafe-REMO.docx>
7. Country Workshops: <http://refugees.lt/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Country-Workshops-REMO.pdf>
8. Quiz About Refugees: http://refugees.lt/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/LT-Quiz_refugees.pdf
9. Refugee Employment Center presentation: <http://refugees.lt/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Refugee-Employment-Center.pptx>
10. Pub Quiz: <http://refugees.lt/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Protmusis-REMO-2015.pptx>
11. Refugee Myth Breaking: <http://refugees.lt/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Myth-breaking-REMO.pptx>

VIDEOS AND PHOTOS

ERASMUS+ “Refugees: Europe’s (Missed) Opportunity” Official Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ReXHGTNzL0A>

1. Eliminating Stereotypes Towards Refugees: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwxOFGlNu4I>
2. Are We Any Different?: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYSb_vPf52Y
3. Refugees Journey to Germany: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHA4FncwP74>
4. Refugees: Europe’s (Missed) Opportunity: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZXsw7_I_VU
5. What Would the World Be Without Refugees?: <https://youtu.be/VghlMSKYFoQ>
6. Photos from the project:
<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.440653096132549.1073741830.394039027460623&type=3>
7. Photo wall from the project:
<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.494368787414131.1073741857.236634919854187&type=3>