CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATING REFUGEES INTO CROATIAN SOCIETY: ATTITUDES OF CITIZENS AND THE READINESS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

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Office for Human Rights and
Rights of National Minorities

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FOREWORD

The integration of third-country nationals has become a key topic in the discourse which evolved following the outbreak of the migrant crisis in 2015, when more than one million people left their homes in war-torn regions. At the level of the European Union, as well as that of its individual member states, new solutions had to be found to adequately respond to the newly emergent situation and facilitate sustainable integration of third-country nationals as full members of the societies in their host countries.

In this context, the notion of integration does not refer to the unidirectional adaptation of third-country nationals, but also includes efforts focused on strengthening the capacity for their reception. Specifically, integration is understood as a process of change which is dynamic and two-way, in that it places demands on both third-country nationals and host countries; long-term, since it implies the process of becoming a full, active member of society; and multidimensional, since it pertains to participation in economic, social, cultural, civil and political life, as well as the perception by persons of migrant origin that they belong to that society.

This dynamic two-way process of integration constitutes not only the expectation that third-country nationals will be "integrated" into their host countries, but also the presentation of opportunities for their participation in the life of the country in which they are integrated. Therefore, the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, which coordinates the efforts of all ministries, non-governmental organisations and other bodies involved in the process of integration of third-country nationals granted international protection into society, takes an active part in the process of building Croatia's integration capacity.

One of the key, but often neglected, stakeholders in the integration process are local and regional self-government units. Third-country nationals who have been granted international protection are accommodated and reside in local communities, specifically, in towns. Accordingly, it is clear that integration takes place not at the national level, but indeed in each street, neighbourhood, municipality, town and county. It takes place in neighbourly conversations, in schools, in contacts with civil servants in charge of helping people exercise their rights, at work and through social activities. Therefore, it is exceptionally important to assess integration needs and challenges at the local level.

The purpose of this research, developed as part of the project "Supporting the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in Need of International Protection", co-financed under the National Programme of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, is to support units of local and regional self-government in identifying integration challenges and opportunities. The ultimate goal and success indicator for integration policies is full involvement and participation by third-country nationals in the social life of their communities, while also preserving their own identity and culture. This goal is important not only for our new fellow citizens, but also contributes to the efforts to build inclusive, sustainable, and thriving communities.

Alen Tahiri, univ. spec. pol. sci.
Director, Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia

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CREATIVE CONCEPT: I TO NIJE SVE!, CREATIVE AGENCY   PHOTOGRAPHY: MARIO TOPIĆ

LIST OF AGENCIES, INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR ACRONYMS USED IN THIS REPORT

Education and Teacher Training Agency (ETTA)

Social-Welfare Centre (SWC)

Croatian Employment Service (CES)

Croatian Health Insurance Fund (CHIF)

Local Self-Government Unit (LSGU)

Regional Self-Government Unit (RSGU)

Ministry of Science and Education (MSE)

Ministry of the Interior (MoI)

Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy (MDFYSP)

Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing (CSORH)

Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the RoC Govt. (OHRRNM)

Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)

Are You Syrious (AYS)

Centre for Peace Studies (CPS)

Croatian Red Cross (CRC)

International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

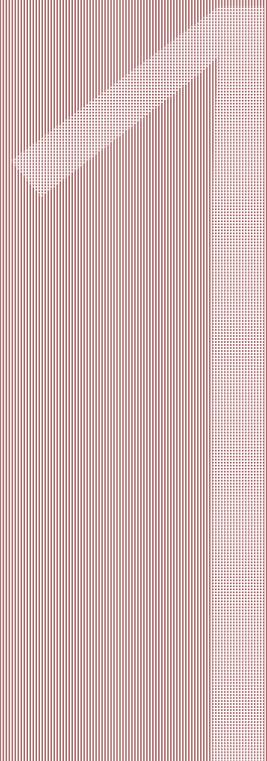Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)

Civil-society organisations (CSO)

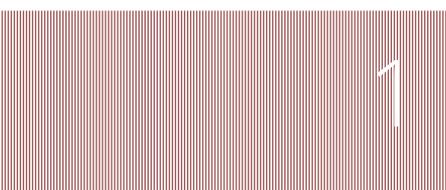Stress and Trauma Rehabilitation Centre (STRC)

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

RESEARCH SUMMARY

1 RESEARCH SUMMARY

The integration and inclusion of persons under international protection (i.e. persons granted asylum and refugees) into society proceeds through their contacts and interactions with institutions and residents in local communities where their reception and accommodation have been organised. In this process, the achievement of social, economic, cultural and all other dimensions of integration in local communities is facilitated by the activities of different national and local stakeholders in the integration system. Creating the conditions for Croatian citizens to familiarize themselves with refugees requires joint efforts by all system stakeholders and engagement to inform citizens and raise their awareness about the presence, rights and obligations of persons under protection, with a view to preventing and mitigating any negative manifestations of discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation, and to ensuring that persons under international protection become accepted and integrated members of local communities and society as a whole. With this in mind, this research has analysed capacities and challenges, and assessed the resources and needs of local and regional self-government units given their past or future experience with the reception and integration of persons under protection. Furthermore, this research has also identified the attitudes of Croatian citizens towards persons under protection and their readiness for the reception and integration of persons granted asylum in their local communities.

The general purpose of the project is to support units of local (cities, towns and municipalities) and regional (counties) self-government in identifying the needs and challenges of integrating third-country nationals in need of international protection. To achieve the purpose of this research, both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies have been used. As a result, it was conducted as mixed-method research, that is, as two correlated studies. The quantitative segment of the research pertains to its first goal, which was *to identify the attitudes of Croatian citizens and their readiness for the acceptance and integration of third-country nationals granted international protection in the Republic of Croatia,* while its qualitative segment refers to the second research goal, *to identify the needs of local and regional self-government units in the process of integrating third-country nationals granted international protection in the Republic of Croatia as well as the challenges they encounter or will encounter when it comes to the integration of persons granted asylum into Croatian society.* The third research goal, to prepare *checklists for assessment of needs and challenges of integration for local and regional self-government units and for persons granted international protection*, has been achieved by synthesising the findings reached under the previous two goals and by preparing two checklists. One is intended for heads and staff of LSGUs and RGSUs so that they can assess the existing needs, resources and capacities of their communities in terms of planning and implementation of integration activities. The other is designed for persons granted asylum and serves for the self-assessment of their needs and the extent to which they are met. Accordingly, the starting point for tool selection and elaboration is the multidimensional concept of integration of aliens into the host society, which is focused on the processes and dimensions of integration of persons under international protection (either with full asylum or subsidiary protection status) into Croatian society as a whole, but also into individual local communities in Croatian regions covered by this research.

Due to the specific character of the quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches, the report describes methodological aspects and results separately, first for the quantitative study conducted by a survey of citizen's attitudes towards the integration of persons under national protection, and then for the qualitative study of needs and challenges faced by local communities in the integration process.

The target group of survey participants covered by the research was defined so as to include citizens living in selected counties (regional self-government units) and towns and municipalities (local self-government units). In order to form a sample of participants for the purposes of this research, Croatia was broken down into four regions: Eastern, Central and North-Western, Littoral and Istrian, and Dalmatian regions. In each region, the sample came to include between two and five counties (a total of 12) and between three and five towns (a total of 15). The Eastern Region encompassed the counties of Osijek-Baranja, Vukovar-Srijem and Požega-Slavonski Brod. The Central and North-Western Region included the City of Zagreb as well as the countries of Zagreb, Sisak-Moslavina, Bjelovar-Bilogora and Varaždin. The Littoral and Istrian Region covered Primorje-Gorski Kotar and Istria counties. The Region of Dalmatia consisted of Zadar and Split-Dalmatia counties.

In the selected towns, the size of the sample was proportionate to the size of the town within its region, with the participants in each town selected by probability sampling. The sample of citizens aged 18 to 65 included 318 persons in each region, and probability sampling – together with the use of two levels of purposively selected clusters (region and town) – ensured that the sample structure, in terms of its socio-demographic profile, reflects the characteristics of the region's population, according to publicly available statistics. The sample formed in this manner and its size (N = 1,272) allowed inter-regional comparisons with regard to the relevant characteristics of the participants and measured constructs. Data were gathered using the CAPI (Computer Aided Personal Interviewing) method, in the period from 14 May to 10 June 2018. The response rate was 57%, which is quite high given the type of research in question.

The survey questionnaire contained 67 items forming the following constructs and scales: (1) Attitude towards persons granted asylum; (2) Perception of realistic threat; (3) Perception of symbolic threat; (4) Support for the rights of persons granted asylum; (5) Perception of negative changes in the community; (6) Readiness to assist persons granted asylum; (7) Frequency of contacts with persons granted asylum; (8) Quality of contacts with persons granted asylum; (9) Sources of information about persons granted asylum; (10) Media portrayal of persons granted asylum; (11) Social proximity to persons granted asylum; (12) Attitude towards

forms of acculturation; (13) Estimated number of persons granted asylum; (14) Change in the number of persons granted asylum; (15) Socio-demographic profile of participants. The scales used in this questionnaire show very good metric characteristics: a Cronbach's alpha internal reliability coefficient ranging from 0.77 to 0.93 and a clear construct validity and single-factor structure.

The collected data were subject to a series of statistical analyses, including descriptive calculation of statistics (range, frequency, median measures, variability measures) at the levels of the aggregate sample and each region as well as inter-regional comparisons of the results derived from the measured constructs (variance analyses, t-tests, chi-squared tests). Also, by using regression analysis, a model was set to predict two forms of behavioural intentions among host populations: (1) readiness for social relations with asylum beneficiaries at different levels of proximity; and (2) readiness to help persons granted asylum in their integration. These two forms of behavioural intentions served as criterion variables, which were predicted on the basis of a set of predictors that included the participants' individual attributes (socio-demographic variables and regional affiliation), their religious and political orientation, their opinion about the number of asylum beneficiaries to be received by the country in future and about their social adjustment strategies (i.e. about acculturation strategies), their frequency of contacts with persons granted asylum and their perception of threats and expected changes in the community caused by the arrival of persons granted asylum (i.e. perceptions of realistic and symbolic threats, and expectations of negative changes in the community).

The average results obtained on the aggregate sample show that, when it comes to *attitudes towards persons granted asylum*, the respondents express attitudes that are, on average, neutral. However, when assessing their *perception of threat*, they seem to feel a slight realistic threat, and a somewhat stronger symbolic threat. The participants also express what is, on average, a neutral attitude regarding the *expected negative changes in the community*. As for their *readiness to help asylum beneficiaries personally*, the participants are also neutral, stating they are not sure of their readiness in this regard, but showing a slight *support for the rights of asylum beneficiaries.* Concerning the *frequency of contacts*

with persons granted asylum, slightly more than half of the participants (52.1%) reported that they had such contacts, describing them, on average, neutrally – as neither positive nor negative. Among those who reported such contacts, the majority stated that they were rare.

The data collected clearly show that the mass media (print and online news outlets, television and radio) are *the most common source of information for Croatian citizens* – more than 90% of citizens receive information about persons granted asylum in this way. These are followed by social media, which are used as a source of information about asylum beneficiaries by nearly half of the participants (45.8%). It has been established that citizens deem the media portrayal of asylum beneficiaries slightly negative.

As for *social proximity*, the participants are, on average, ready to accept persons granted asylum as their fellow workers or neighbours, where it is obvious that the citizens are, for the time being, not ready for the closest relations with asylum beneficiaries, although nearly 61% would be ready for friendly relations.

The participants were also asked about acceptable *acculturation strategies*, that is, about how persons granted asylum should approach the Croatian culture and maintenance of their own culture. The majority of participants (70.7%) chose integration as the preferred acculturation strategy (both maintaining their own culture and accepting the culture of the host country). About one fifth of the participants champion assimilation as the preferred acculturation strategy; i.e. they expect persons granted asylum to relinquish their specific culture and accept only that of their host country. Separation, that it, the opinion that persons granted asylum should maintain only their own culture without accepting Croatian culture, is upheld by 3.7% of the participants. Looking at acculturation strategies as a continuum (from assimilation, through integration, to separation, or vice versa), the participants on average tend to support cultural integration of persons granted asylum.

When it comes to estimating the number of persons granted asylum at the time of survey, only one fifth of the participants made a more or less accurate estimate. Somewhat more than a fourth of participants underestimated the actual number of asylum beneficiaries, whereas almost half of them overestimated the number of cases of granted asylum. These results are consistent with the replies regarding preferred projections of the number of asylum beneficiaries in the future. Specifically, the majority of participants (45.8%) feel that their number should remain the same, only slightly fewer are those who would reduce it (45.6%), while less than a tenth holds that the future number of asylum beneficiaries in Croatia should go up.

The analysis of regional differences demonstrates that the least positive attitudes towards persons granted asylum, the highest perception of both realistic and symbolic threats, the lowest support for the rights of asylum beneficiaries, the highest expectations of negative changes, and the lowest readiness to assist are present among participants in the Dalmatian Region. It is followed by the Eastern Region, and then the Littoral and Central Regions, where these attitudes are more positive. The frequency of contacts with persons granted asylum is low in all the regions, with the lowest levels reported in the Eastern and Dalmatian regions. However, there are no regional differences in the quality of contacts, as it is everywhere seen as neutral. Readiness for close contacts is the lowest in Dalmatia, followed by the Eastern Region, with its highest levels reported in the Littoral and Central regions. The citizens of all regions choose integration as their preferred acculturation strategy, while participants in Dalmatia divided their preferences between assimilation and integration. The number of asylum beneficiaries is mistakenly estimated in all regions. Indeed, it is overestimated everywhere except the Eastern Region, where the figure is underestimated. Furthermore, while the citizens of the Central and Littoral regions would prefer to keep the future number of asylum beneficiaries at the same level, those in the Eastern and Dalmatian regions are keener to reduce it.

When predicting the readiness for social proximity with asylum beneficiaries, the key predictors include the attitude towards the number of asylum beneficiaries in the future and acculturation strategies. The readiness for a higher level of proximity is demonstrated by those citizens who feel that the future number of asylum beneficiaries should be increased, as well as those who champion integration. The predictors of marginal importance include practising religion, where the participants who do not declare themselves as practicing believers tend to be ready for a higher level of proximity with persons granted asylum, as well as the perception of symbolic threat and the fear of negative changes in the community, where those who perceive a higher symbolic threat from asylum beneficiaries and expect more negative changes in the community due to the arrival of persons granted asylum tend to be ready for a lower level of proximity with them. These results generally apply to all of the four regions.

When it comes to predicting the readiness to assist asylum beneficiaries personally, it can also be said that – allowing for minor regional particularities – the key factors include the participants' opinion that the number of asylum beneficiaries should increase in the future and, again, the perception of a higher symbolic and realistic threat. Those participants who feel that the future number of asylum beneficiaries should increase are readier to help, whereas those whose perception of threat from asylum beneficiaries is higher are also less prepared to assist them personally. Another highly significant predictor is the frequency of contacts with persons granted asylum. Those participants who reported more frequent contacts with asylum beneficiaries are also more prepared to assist them. Finally, the variables of marginal significance include gender and political orientation, where women and those on the left side of the political spectrum would be readier to help asylum beneficiaries.

The conducted regression analyses show that the most frequent predictors for both criteria (social proximity and readiness for personal assistance) include the perception of symbolic and realistic threat, expectation of negative changes in the community due to the arrival of asylum beneficiaries, opinion that the future number of asylum beneficiaries in Croatia should be increased and the choice of integration as the preferred acculturation strategy. It follows that a more favourable attitude of Croatian citizens can be expected if they feel less threatened by persons

granted asylum, that is, if they understand that their arrival does not pose a threat to the existing identity and culture nor jeopardise the resources of local communities, if they expect less negative changes in their communities due to the arrival of asylum beneficiaries, if they think that the number of asylum beneficiaries in Croatia needs to be increased in the future, and if they believe that integration is the acculturation strategy appropriate for Croatia.

The second part of this research deals with the assessment of needs and challenges which are or will be encountered by LSGUs and RSGUs, and also of the capacities and resources required for integration with regard to the current or anticipated accommodation and stay of asylum beneficiaries in their local communities.

This part of the research was conducted through a series of interviews and focus groups with different stakeholders in the integration system, which are in one way or another involved in or will in future be responsible for the processes of reception and integration of persons granted asylum. Stakeholders from LSGU and RSGU include representatives from county-level and town-level public authorities and various professional institutions, while the CSO stakeholders include representatives from the non-governmental sector, religious organisations and civic initiatives. The perspectives of integration processes were, whenever possible, complemented with those of asylum beneficiaries in the local communities in which they live. For sampling purposes, a list of 30 units (9 counties and 21 towns) was drawn up, taking into account the criteria of regional representation, town size, experience with the integration of asylum beneficiaries and available state-owned housing units. Along with the four regions, the City of Zagreb was taken separately as it considerably differs from other regions in terms of the number of integration stakeholders and capacities, as well as the number of asylum beneficiaries it hosts. The persons included in the sample had the attributes of schoolants based on their role and office they held, their experience and knowledge of the needs and challenges relating to the integration of asylum beneficiaries in local communities. In keeping with the principle of maximising the variability of key informants, a total of 168 interviews and four focus groups were conducted with 227 participants, including 26 interviews with persons granted asylum. Once all of the methodological requirements were met in the process of qualitative-data gathering, 158 transcripts obtained from 216 interviewees were

subjected to analysis. The other transcripts did not contain any useful information because some interviewees were totally uninformed about the topic of the research. Of the total number of analysed transcripts, 143 contain data obtained from 191 representatives of municipalities, towns and counties, state-administration offices at the county-level, professional institutions and the civil sector, while 15 transcripts of interviews and focus groups contained information obtained from 26 asylum beneficiaries. The analysis made it possible to identify some specific features of statements made by representatives of the selected local communities about their needs, challenges, opportunities and expectations. A comparison has been made among the four regions and the City of Zagreb, and similarities and differences have been analysed among statements made by stakeholders from different sectors.

The results for all regions (except the City of Zagreb) equally suggest that most of the integration-system stakeholders from LSGUs and RSGUs (towns, municipalities and counties) generally had no direct experience of contacts and work with persons granted asylum or, if they had, then they encountered asylum beneficiaries in rare, individual cases. On the other hand, interlocutors from Zagreb recounted and described experiences of direct and immediate encounters with persons granted asylum, mostly through participation in projects with SCOs and the OHRRNM, while CSOs in all the regions have very little direct experience with asylum beneficiaries. A large portion of LSGUs and RSGUs in each region state that they are not aware of the Action Plan for Integration, or are aware of it only partly, or since a short time ago. Stakeholders in various sectors and regions have not developed their own action plans and protocols for integration, independent of the Action Plan. Professional institutions do not have their own plans either, but many of them perform tasks relating to the integration of persons granted asylum as part of their daily work and remit, and some have their own internal prodecural protocols, most often based on their previous experience with marginalised groups or guidelines from relevant ministries. All stakeholders in all regions agree that the lack of funding poses a serious structural constraint and that allocations for integration activities should be increased. They stress that the entire budget is centralised and that they lack special resources earmarked for integration, noting, however, that budget allocations could be repurposed or activated if and when the need arises.

When it comes to understanding the importance and indicators of successful integration, there are no major differences between either sectors or regions. As far as the key dimension of integration is concerned, all stakeholders across all regions highlight communication, that is, learning the Croatian language, as a crucial prerequisite for all other aspects of integration, especially for the inclusion of children in the education system, participation of adults in the labour market, addressing housing issues and, generally, enabling asylum beneficiaries to get along in local communities. In the Central Region, professional institutions claim that integration could also be facilitated by the community's experience with refugees during the Croatian War, and the history of coexistence with national minorities. In the Central Region, they feel that integration would be more successful if asylum beneficiaries were accommodated within the community rather than isolated, and if they were provided with appropriate care and inclusion in community life. All stakeholders across all regions voice some sort of concern because, when it comes to the accommodation of persons granted asylum, they expect negative reactions from the host population due to cultural and religious differences, especially in smaller communities, with the general opinion being that larger towns would be readier to accept asylum beneficiaries. Interlocutors in Zagreb are the most critical of the local community as a favourable environment for integration, with professional institutions stating that negative sentiments are the greatest problem, stemming primarily from fear of the unknown among the local population. Nonetheless, almost all of the interviewed asylum beneficiaries highlight the positive experiences they had with their acceptance in local communities, noting, however, that it took a while for them to feel accepted by their neighbours. Only three out of 26 interlocutors report having negative experiences upon their arrival in the community, consisting mainly of unpleasant verbal comments.

Persons granted asylum generally do not see any major cultural barriers to their life in Croatia, but in their view the integration system is not well-organised and includes some contradictions.

At the intraregional level alone, and particularly at the interregional level, the integration stakeholders from different local communities show considerable differences when estimating the integration capacity of their communities. The majority of LSGUs believe that organising language courses falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Science and Education, expressing concerns about the duration of courses (too few lessons) and uncertainties about their funding, while RSGUs also stress their lack of human and logistic capacities to organise courses. Professional institutions shift the responsibility for organizing courses to administrative bodies – from the local, through the regional, to the national levels. Only representatives of Zagreb-based SCOs report more direct involvement in the organisation of courses – some of them offer them in a formalised manner, and others through voluntary engagement. As to the inclusion in the education system, most stakeholders stress the problem of slow-moving administration and emphasize the heavy teaching workload, suggesting that there is a need for additional teachers as well as the necessity to work additionally with asylee children. Further difficulties mentioned are related to the lack of personal documents and the issue of recognising diplomas and previously acquired qualifications. In the Littoral and Central regions, they also highlight a lack of interpreters and teaching assistants, over which they have no control, but depend on the relevant ministry.

Most of stakeholders from LSGUs and RSGUs are actually unaware of the existing accommodation capacity because they do not own any housing units or have already allocated all they had to beneficiaries from certain social categories. They see a possible solution in the conversion of the existing vacant buildings or renting of private flats, where they report problems with landlords, i.e. the unwillingness of landlords to let out their flats to accommodate persons granted asylum and the high rents they impose. Persons granted asylum are mostly concerned about their initial accommodation in reception centres, with which they were partially (dis)satisfied and, in addition to prejudice by landlords, the interlocutors also stressed high prices.

In their local communities, asylum beneficiaries have been recognised as a desirable workforce in sectors with labour shortfalls. The LSGU representatives stress the need for a skilled workforce in the construction and public works sectors and, in the Eastern Region, agriculture. In addition to feeling that employers should be informed of opportunities to hire asylum beneficiaries, LSGUs are somewhat keener to consider potential retraining and additional training schemes as well as efforts to overcome the language barrier, referring to professional services which should take over that task. Many see the opportunities to employ asylum beneficiaries primarily in low-skill and ancillary jobs, such as kitchen or warehouse assistants and so forth. While the asylum beneficiaries themselves are highly motivated to take part in the labour market, since they see employment as a key prerequisite to gaining independence, they are aware of the economic situation in Croatia and do not want to become a public charge, but rather an active and productive segment of the society.

Almost all interlocutors attach great importance to public information and awareness-raising campaigns, and most of them also recognise the role of the media in this process and believe that it is extremely important to get the local population acquainted with good practices and examples of successful efforts to integrate asylum beneficiaries, and to inform them about their culture and customs. This would prevent the development of prejudice and discrimination, where the LSGU representatives often see their role in such efforts unlike RSGUs, among which only a few recognise it. Professional institutions also leave the role of awareness raising to the media and, for the time being, carry out awareness-raising activities in the form of workshops and cultural events mainly with support from CSOs in Zagreb. The training of staff members and professionals has also been stressed as extremely important, yet largely non-existent in most institutions, offices and organisations.

Nearly all interviewees from all regions agree that asylum beneficiaries have been provided with adequate social welfare, just like all of its other beneficiaries. Some of the representatives of LSGUs and professional institutions from the Dalmatian and Eastern Regions noted that asylum beneficiaries were not supposed to be singled out, that is, afforded greater rights and priorities than domestic social-welfare beneficiaries. All local communities feel that asylum beneficiaries have been provided with adequate health-care,

but the interviewees highlight a lack of physicians and the overload of the health system, as well as communications. When it comes to providing adequate social welfare and health care, a common problem stressed in all regions is the insufficient capacity of institutions, while other aggravating circumstances include slow systems, uninformed staff members, shortcomings in the monitoring of asylum beneficiaries, uncertainties about the financing of health-care services and lack of coordination between different stakeholders. The same issues are also reported by the asylum beneficiaries themselves.

Professional institutions have, for the most part, already established cooperation with almost all stakeholders involved in the integration process. In this context, they most often point out line ministries, as well as significant cooperation with CSOs. Only the Central Region (including Zagreb) highlights the existing cooperation with LSGUs and the OHRRNM, or with international organisations. The LSGU and RSGU representatives are somewhat more likely to expect more significant engagement by and cooperation with CSOs, which they consider more capable of writing projects and mobilising funds for work with asylum beneficiaries or count on their human resources. Some professional institutions are also focused on inter-city and inter-county cooperation, for example, with other social-welfare centres, in order to compare their experiences and share good practices. The SCO stakeholders state national and local authorities make insufficient use of the capacity and experience of local SCOs.

All stakeholders criticize administration primarily because of the lack of timely and transparent exchanges of information, given that they are perceived as responsible for the entire system. Stakeholders in local communities feel that they operate without specific guidelines and decisions, everything being left to improvisation. Professional institutions hold that the measures defined in the *Action Plan* are not applicable to the realities in the field, stressing that the system is not prepared to respond to current challenges and needs such as, for instance, securing accommodation and interpreters. There is also concern about the duplication of work by different institutions and organisations, and shifting responsibilities to CSOs. It has been stressed that a protocol in needed which would contain descriptions and guidelines for the implementation of steps in the integration of persons granted asylum, which should define the

sequence of implementing integration measures, those in charge of their implementation, including their responsibilities, as well as the forms of their cooperation. Such a protocol and guidelines would enable LSGUs and RSGUs to rely on these documents in their work and to act in compliance therewith. All stakeholders emphasize the need to receive timely and reliable information about the number, structure and time of arrival of persons granted asylum in their areas because this information is crucial for them to be able to prepare themselves for different aspects of their integration. A distribution plan is a document cited by all self-government units as essential to launch preparations for the asylum beneficiaries, in accordance with the aforementioned protocol.

All stakeholders highlight interpreters and cultural mediators as a very pressing need in all regions. It has been stressed that interpreters should be professionally trained, rather than semi-skilled individuals or family members, let alone children. All stakeholders realize that securing housing is a key prerequisite for the reception and integration of persons granted asylum, and that it falls within the remit of the central government, rather than the local community. The Eastern and Dalmatian Regions place special emphasis on the need to provide adequate accommodation for unaccompanied children under international protection. Also, all integration stakeholders feel that efforts are needed to speed up administrative procedures because there is a gap between what has been set forth in legislation and what can really be implemented due to technical barriers, including children's registration in school e-registers, medical records, access to Croatian language learning, and verification of previously acquired qualifications and job competencies which is a requirement for education or employment. To achieve all this, sound intersectorial cooperation is required.

The integration stakeholders in all regions show a clear need to prepare, raise the awareness of and train the staff directly involved in the integration process for contacts with and providing services to persons granted asylum. Since professional institutions are places of direct and on-going contacts with asylum beneficiaries, there is a need for continuous training of their professional staff. The training of all integration stakeholders should include learning about the culture and customs of asylum beneficiaries and it should be based on the principles of intercultural communication. In some professional institutions whose staff are

engaged in direct and intense work with families of asylum beneficiaries, such as counselling and psychosocial support, there is an increased need for continuous mental-health care and stress prevention among staff members through supervision and professional support.

Given that they believe that the responsibility for integrating persons granted asylum rests primarily with the state, a number of LGSUs, professional institutions and some CSOs expect the state to bear the related costs. The LSGUs in the Central Region see the opportunity to secure funding by applying for EU projects and drawing money from EU funds. In the Dalmatian Region, the LSGUs expect the state to issue fewer instructions, and to focus more on direct care for asylum beneficiaries. At the LSGU level, help in meeting community needs in the integration process and their own efforts is expected from the Government of the RoC, primarily the OHRRNM as the central coordinating body. Some RSGUs believe that they will successfully carry out all tasks imposed by law and those received from the competent state authorities, and that they will tackle problems only once asylum beneficiaries arrive in their territory. LSGUs and RSGUs see their role in coordinating different integration process stakeholders, such as professional institutions and CSOs, at the town and county levels. Some LSGUs also see their role in supporting other stakeholders when they lack capacity in the integration process, and in networking with other institutions within the community. In this context, they stress their role in providing information to asylum beneficiaries and improving intersectorial cooperation because they "have a good overview of the activities of different services." Some LSGUs feel that a person should be assigned to each integration stakeholder as its key informant about how asylum beneficiaries can exercise their rights.

The LSGUs see their key contribution to integration in their efforts to raise the awareness of and inform the public about the arrival of persons granted asylum and the process of their integration, being aware there resistance to their arrival in some communities. In the Eastern Region, they warn that greater resistance to the arrival of asylum beneficiaries may be expected in communities that are traditionally more closed and host a larger number of immigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, who were forced to leave their homes due to armed conflicts with the Muslims. In the Central and Littoral regions and the City of Zagreb, they believe that the experience

they have with proven integration mechanisms for socially vulnerable groups, referring to members of the Roma national minority, will help them in the process of integrating asylum beneficiaries. The LSGUs feel they can also directly support integration efforts by providing initial financial assistance to asylum beneficiaries, helping in the process of their reception and accommodation, offering aid such as food and toiletries, facilitating children's inclusion in educational institutions, covering their kindergarten costs (Eastern and Littoral regions, Zagreb), as well as helping asylum beneficiaries to find employment. Professional institutions will address integration as part of their daily activities, by providing services for persons granted asylum as well as any other beneficiaries. The LSGUs, RSGUs and professional institutions see the important role of CSOs in complementing services provided to asylum beneficiaries by professional institutions. Most of the CSOs plan to expand their present activities to meet the specific needs of asylums beneficiaries, and represent a major integration potential for local communities, highlighting their networks of volunteers as a key asset in work with persons granted asylum. The CSOs feel that a coordination mechanism should be put in place at the LSGU level so as to bring together all the stakeholders, including the civil sector, and ensure transparent financing of services for asylum beneficiaries.

Croatia has few communities with any reception and integration experience and most of the local communities covered by this research have not considered or prepared themselves for this challenge. Yet, the integration stakeholders in all units included in this research stress that they crucially need timely and reliable information about the plans for the arrival and distribution of persons granted asylum, and that information from the relevant ministries, particularly from the OHRRNM, will enable them to launch preparations for integration activities and possible reception of asylum beneficiaries. Finally, the recommendations derived from this research will facilitate improvements in policies and practices for the integration of persons under international protection, making it easier and less painful to achieve the objectives stemming from Croatia's commitments as an EU member state, as well as its legislation and action plans of the Government of the RoC.

CONTEXTUAL AND THEORETICAL RESEARCH BACKGROUND

CONTEXTUAL AND THEORETICAL RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Integration is one of the fundamental policies and a set of measures for acieving long-term and sustainable solutions for the reception and inclusion of refugees in the society (Strang and Ager, 2010). According to the definition by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles,[1] integration is commonly understood as a dynamic, two-way, long-term and multidimensional process of mutual adjustment by aliens and the host country's citizens to ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity created as a result of immigration in the post-migration stage. Integration can also be understood as a two-way process of encounters between the host culture and the culture of persons afforded international protection in Croatia, which is multidimensional because efforts are needed to facilitate the economic, social, cultural and political participation of refugees in the receiving society and to develop a sense of acceptance by and belonging to the new environment. Penninx (2007:16) describes integration as "the process of becoming an accepted part of society," distinguishing three dimensions of integration: legal-political (which includes status achievement, family reunification and electoral rights), socio-economic (which includes housing, employment, education, health and social insurance) and cultural-religious (the autonomy of cultural and religious practices, perception and interaction by immigrants and host society); interactions in the integration process, which include immigrants and their host (receiving) society; as well as three levels of the integration process: individuals, groups/organisations and institutions.

Ever since it signed the *Stabilisation and Association Agreement* with the EU in 2001, the Republic of Croatia has set out to transpose the EU legislation and align its own legal and institutional framework for migration, asylum and integration policies with the EU's *acquis*. Until its accession to the European Union, Croatia addressed the issues of integration of aliens in keeping with its own national legislation and its rights and obligations stemming from the *Aliens Act* and the *Asylum Act* as effective at the time. The pillars of the integration policy towards aliens at the EU level rely on several directives and programmes which have also been transposed by Croatia, adjusting them to its national legal and institutional framework. Without going into an extensive listing and interpretation of these documents, it is worth mentioning the *Action Plan on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals*, including refugees, adopted by the European Commission in June 2016.[2]

Around mid-2007, Croatian Government adopted the first *Migration Policy of the Republic of Croatia for 2007/2008*, which – although there was only one case of a person granted international refugee protection (asylum) in Croatia – already contained a provision governing the issue of integration of aliens. Among the most important requirements for their integration in the society, it provided for their access to the labour market, education

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[1] http://www.refworld.org/docid/4652feff2.html.

[2] https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication_action_plan_integration_third-country_nationals_en.pdf.

system and health and social insurance as well as cooperation with countries of origin. Early in 2013, the Republic of Croatia adopted its second *Migration Policy for the Period 2013-2015*, which also covered the issues of international-protection seekers and persons granted international protection (asylum beneficiaries and persons under subsidiary protection) and their reception and integration into society, in compliance with the 2004 *Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU of the EU Council*, the 2015 *European Agenda on Migration,* and the already mentioned *Action Plan on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals*. As a related document derived from the migration policy, the *Action Plan to Eliminate Barriers to the Exercise of Specific Rights in the Field of Alien Integration for the Period 2013-2015*, adopted in July 2013, contains measures that are more specifically focused on regulating the status and integration of persons under international protection as a specially vulnerable category of aliens in the Croatian society.

Having experienced a massive transit of more than 650,000 refugees and other migrants over its territory as part of the Balkan corridor from September 2015 to April 2016, Croatia has committed itself to participate in the EU's quota scheme for the relocation and resettlement of third-country nationals or stateless persons eligible to be granted international protection. By the end of 2018, approximately 150 persons arrived in Croatia under both schemes, whereby the country met its quota undertaken for 2017 and 2018, out of a total of 1,583 persons it undertook to receive in the future. According to data supplied by the Ministry of the Interior, about 650 applications were approved by October 2018, of which 510 for full asylum status and 140 for subsidiary protection. The new situation created by the arrival of further refugees under the relocation and resettlement scheme as well as the increased number of those granted protection in Croatia under the standard asylum application procedure triggered the adoption of a new *Action Plan for Integration*. It focused solely on persons afforded international protection and was adopted in June 2017 for the period from 2017 to 2019. As stated in the *Action Plan* itself, "the reason for creating the measures in this Action Plan is precisely the particular vulnerability of persons who have been granted international protection, and the aim is to provide assistance and protection so they can more easily overcome their difficult situation during the refugee, humanitarian crisis that has affected not only EU member states, but also our country" (OHRRNM, 2017:5).

The goal of both Action Plans for Integration adopted to date (for the periods 2013-2015 and 2017-2019), which can be taken as a form of the national integration policy, was to ensure some fundamental rights guaranteed by the *Aliens Act* and, much more specifically, the *International and Temporary Protection Act*. These rights, as derived from the Acts, include: (1) residence in Croatia; (2) family reunification; (3) accommodation; (4) work; (5) healthcare; (6) education; (7) freedom of religion; (8) free legal aid; (9) social welfare; (10) assistance with integration into society; (11) acquisition of property; and (12) obtaining Croatian citizenship. The first Action Plan for Integration specified that assistance with integration also meant assistance in learning the Croatian language, history and culture. Furthermore, it stressed the importance of preventing discrimination and raising the awareness about problems encountered by vulnerable groups of aliens, and refugees are certainly among them.

What is specific to the documents adopted to date and to their adoption process is participation of representatives from the relevant ministries, central state-administration offices, Croatian Employment Service, Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs, civil-society organisations as well as national and international humanitarian organisations directly involved in work with refugees. However, representatives of local and regional self-governments have intensified their engagement and involvement only recently, after the launch of the process to relocate and resettle third-country protection seekers and refugees to Croatia in line with the quotas it assumed as a EU member state, and as a result of the need to develop, at the national level, an operational plan for a systematic, even and sustainable model for distributing this population across local communities all over Croatia.

One of the main objectives of the migration policy adopted by the Croatian Parliament as early as 2013 is that migration flows should bring benefits to the economic and social development of Croatian state and society. Therefore, to monitor and evaluate the effects of Croatian migration and integration policy, efforts are needed to grasp citizens' attitudes towards aliens, immigrants and refugees, their perception of potential threats due to the resettlement of refugees in Croatia, and their stance on different aspects of their integration. The *European Social Survey* (ESS, 2016) – a longitudinal research conducted at the EU level about attitudes towards immigration – suggests a generally neutral attitude towards immigration in

2014 as compared to 2002. Yet, there are significant differences between attitudes in northern and western Europe, where they are somewhat more positive, and southern and eastern European countries, with more negative attitudes towards immigration. There is a negative perception of the consequences of migration for crime and public services, and such perceptions saw an increase from 2002 to 2014, as did the negative perception of the impact of migration on symbolic aspects of cultural life in destination countries.[3]

In 2016, Gallup conducted its *Migrant Acceptance Index* research in 138 countries, measuring the acceptance of migrants based on degrees of personal proximity. The research showed that Croatia was among the ten countries that were least accepting of migrants (with a score of 2.39 out of a possible 9.0 and with a global average of 5.29).[4]

Furthermore, the research showed that seven of the ten countries with the lowest acceptance indices were Central and South-East European countries (apart from Israel, Latvia and Estonia, which belong to the same group), which had, to a higher or lesser extent, experienced the 2015 "migrant crisis. Previous research additionally suggests that, even before the "migrant crisis," there was a predisposition for attitudes that immigration levels should be decreased in Central and Eastern European countries (although the results were presented by continent rather than country) because most of the participants (52%) in Europe wanted lower immigration.[5]

Another similar survey by Gallup showed that the citizens of the same Eastern European countries that were generally against immigration equally strongly opposed the admission of Syrian refugees to their countries.[6] In 2016, when that research was conducted, 5% of Croatian citizens stated that all Syrian refuges seeking protection in Croatia should be accepted, 39% said that Croatia should accept only a limited number of them, while 40% stated that it should not accept any.

In Croatia, research about citizen attitudes towards asylum seekers and beneficiaries is scarce, but it consistently reveals the existence of prejudice and fear of their more massive arrival in Croatia. A research study of specific attitudes towards asylum seekers, conducted on a sample of male and female students of the University of Zagreb (Župarić-Iljić and Gregurović, 2013) showed that, on average, they mostly felt a threat to health and the economy, and – in line with contact hypothesis – friendship with asylum seekers was associated with a more positive stance and attitude towards them. A research study conducted by Gregurović, Kuti and Župarić-Iljić (2016) on a sample of adults from the countries of Vukovar-Srijem and Osijek-Baranja showed that citizens perceived migrant workers as more of a cultural threat, along with a significant degree of social distance, while asylum seekers were seen as a security and economic threat. A research study conducted on a sample of pupils, students and adults in Zagreb (Ajduković, Bakić, Stanković and Matić, 2017) revealed that the youngest and the oldest participants showed more prejudice against persons granted asylum, a higher perception of them as a threat, greater social distance and less support for their legally guaranteed rights.

Other studies of attitudes among adult citizens towards foreign workers in Croatia indicate that citizens exhibit a high level of resistance to them, perceive aliens as a socio-economic and socio-cultural threat, and exercise a high level of social distance from them. One study suggests that successful integration as a two-way process requires "thorough social action focused on increasing the sensitivity of local population to participation in that process" (Čačić-Kumpes, Gregurović and Kumpes, 2012: 305). In their ethnographic research, Petrović and Pozniak (2014) showed that asylum seekers accommodated in Zagreb's Porin reception centre were often perceived as a sort of security threat to the local community, stressing that systematic efforts were needed to inform and raise the awareness of the public. In its survey conducted on a national sample, CMS (2017) showed that a good deal of citizens had restrictive attitudes towards the immigration

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[3]   https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/findings/ESS7_toplines_issue_7_immigration.pdf.

[4]   https://news.gallup.com/poll/216377/new-index-shows-least-accepting-countries-migrants.aspx.

[5]   https://news.gallup.com/poll/186209/europeans-negative-toward-immigration.aspx.

[6]   https://news.gallup.com/poll/209828/syrian-refugees-not-welcome-eastern-europe.aspx.

of refugees and Croatia's response to that issue in the newly emergent situation and after the "migrant crisis" experience. Finally, a study by Matić, Löw and Bratko (2018), conducted in 2016 on a national sample of young people, shows moderate levels of anti-migrant prejudice associated with the respondents' personality and ideological predispositions. All these research efforts help clarify the subject-matter of this research which is specifically focused on understanding and analysing attitudes of the general public towards asylum beneficiaries in Croatian society.

Furthermore, it should be noted that there has been some research into the integration of asylum beneficiaries in Croatian society, but it is not so extensive, systematic and sustained. In particular, there is a lack of longitudinal studies and those which would be comparable to results in other countries. The studies undertaken to date have been more focused on analysing the legal framework for the integration of refugees or integration policy analysis in a national context. There are also studies which, often in the form of reports, discuss the implementation of integration measures as well as those which bring forth ethnographic descriptions of integration processes, giving voice to refugees themselves. For example, in a study which measures the Migrant Integration Policy Index (Huddleston *et al.*, 2015), Croatia scores 43/100 and ranks among Central and Eastern European countries with a barely halfway favourable conditions, i.e. policies for the integration of immigrants, mostly due to insufficient government support to such policies as well as discretionary practices in their implementation. In her National Report on Croatian Integration Policies, Kuti (2014) concludes that the scope of integration should be expanded not only to cover the currently targeted population of asylum seekers, persons granted asylum and persons under subsidiary protection, but also other different categories of immigrants in the Croatian society given a changing migration pattern and an increasing number of immigrants from other EU countries. Yet, with the adoption of the new 2017-2019 *Action Plan*, a different approach has also been taken in relation to the first *Action Plan* (for the period 2013-2015), so that integration policies and practices are now targeted only at persons under international protection.

In their report dealing directly with integration policies and practices in Croatian asylum system, Bužinkić and Kranjec (2012: 8-9) conclude, *inter alia*, that efforts are needed to make structural improvements in the integration system by encouraging "cooperation and coordination between state administration bodies and between central and local government institutions to create conditions for refugee integration, (...) cooperation between national and local institutions with civil-society organisations and citizens to support refugee integration, (...) quality long-term solutions in all integration areas including, in particular, Croatian language learning, education, employment, housing and the exercise of other social rights as well as inclusion in socio-political processes and cultural events." The ethnographic research by Jurković and Rajković Iveta (2016), conducted on asylum seekers and beneficiaries by way of participant observation at cooking workshops and food promotions in an organisation that hires refugees through the ethnic entrepreneurship model, discusses the ways in which asylum beneficiaries are recognised, accepted or excluded by Croatian citizens, but also by other asylum beneficiaries, presenting illustrative examples of readiness among Zagreb citizens for interaction, ways of achieving social proximity and assistance to asylum beneficiaries in their integration. All of the aforementioned research efforts either focus on the general national context or concentrate specifically on the City of Zagreb's area as a locale where the largest number of persons under protection reside once they are granted their status or, to some extent, Kutina as the town which hosts one of Croatia's two reception centres for asylum. Tecilazić (2018) analyses relevant public policies at the national level, focusing on the challenges of social integration of persons granted asylum and, in particular, the role of education as a tool for refugees. The research study by Župarić-Iljić and Mlinarić (2015) focuses on status issues of unaccompanied minor asylum seekers and refugees, discussing in more detail the policies and practices of Croatian language instruction and inclusion in the education system, including those implemented in the local communities hosting reception centres for asylum seekers.

Integration always takes place concurrently at the levels of individuals (members of a particular majority or minority population), organisations (those in the immigration/reception country, including civil-society organisations and minority associations) and institutions (public services and specific state bodies in charge of human and minority rights) (Penninx i Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016). As claimed by these authors, it is therefore always advisable that the analysis starts from the global and national legal frameworks and policies in order to reach concrete integration measures which are oftentimes very locally oriented and implemented through more feasible and sustainable solutions at the local level than are uniform regulations at the national level. In recent years, particular attention has also been accorded to integration models which equally appreciate the national and local, but not the transnational context (where the discussion then also comes to include the countries of origin), as well as all of their differences and particularities regarding the influence different stakeholders can have in the implementation of integration measures.

Together with their local self-government authorities, a number of Croatian local communities possess certain resources in terms of their social capital and organisational capacity required to cope with practical challenges of "crisis management," which was demonstrated not only in the 1990s, when they provided for displaced persons and refugees, but also in 2015 and 2016, during the massive transit of refugees. Yet, there is limited research and knowledge of the extent to which local communities are prepared to provide, with their resources and capacity, for a long-term accommodation and sustainable integration of refugees – individuals and families – who are expected to arrive in Croatia in the forthcoming period, be it under the resettlement scheme or though the standard international-protection approval procedure (cf. Giljević and Lalić Novak, 2018; Lopižić and Lalić Novak, 2018).

Besides the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the RoC as Croatia's main national coordinating body in charge of integration, the Ministry of the Interior is responsible for initial reception measures, approval of protection and initial integration procedures pertaining to resolving the issue of legal status for persons granted international protection. Other ministries, each within its remit, provide support for other dimensions of integration directly from the central level, but much more so in practice within local communities,

through their professional services which are highly centralised from the programming and budgeting perspective (such as social-welfare centres), as well as those which are less centralised, with significant support also coming from the civil sector or, for instance, the Croatian Red Cross. Yet, local self-government still seems to have less room for autonomy in designing and implementing integration measures. On the other hand, not even the process of devolving national policies to the local and regional levels seems smooth. Lopižić and Lalić Novak (2018) note that state administration, acting through its administrative offices in each county, has a low level of political power to make discretionary decisions and low administrative and technical capacity for coordination and cooperation with other stakeholders in the integration system. Advocating greater engagement and involvement of the county-level state administration offices in the efforts to coordinate the implementation of integration measures in local and regional self-government units, the authors hold that their support would ensure a more uniform application of refugee integration policies, including efforts to secure equal access to and quality of public services throughout Croatia.

Gregurović *et al*. (2016:9) claim that the "inefficiency of integration policies [was] partly the result of a weak intersectorial cooperation of competent institutions with local communities and civil-society organisations, the academic community and, generally, professionals dealing with integration". A problem also lay in that, until a year or two ago, representatives of local and regional self-government units were not involved in the Working Group for the Operational Implementation of Tasks Planned by the Standing Commission for the Integration of Foreigners into Croatian Society, but this practice has now been changed. Giljević and Lalić Novak (2018) recall that the implementation of integration policies must imply interaction between different public bodies, civil-society organisations and private actors, such as employers. Yet, from a critical perspective, they raise the question of how different services and institutions within public administration, including those in local and regional self-government units, can actually address the issue of a sustainable and coherent refugee integration model given their limited tasks, competencies and resources. The authors note that a step forward towards the solution comes from a systematically designed approach and mutual coordination of activities, rather

than leaving the system to the civil sector's volunteerism and enthusiasm.

Finally, a study which directly questions requirements for successful integration in the local community associates the issue of migrant and refuge integration with that of national minorities, discussing the importance and role of local self-government in this (Lalić Novak and Vukojičić Tomić, 2017). The authors suggest that the integration policy is largely concentrated at the national level and that the existing policy model for national minorities may be suitable for designing a decentralised policy model for migrant integration in local communities. Accordingly, the paper concludes as follows: "Given the experiences of specific countries, the examples of good practices, the recommendations of the international community and the particularities of Croatian local self-government and implementing problems, a successful integration of migrants and minorities requires efforts to: (1) ensure that national integration policies are developed with active involvement of local communities in order to ensure their implementation in practice; (2) raise the awareness of the role of local communities in the integration process; (3) secure the funding required for the integration of minorities (from local or central budgets); (4) strengthen the role of minority councils and representatives, not only by securing the required funding, but also by providing information/education about their importance in the integration process; (5) expand the scope of bodies obliged to hire national minority members to cover local public services so as to meet the requirement of proportional representation on one hand and, on the other, to increase their employment in public services coming into direct contact with customers of minority origin; (6) ensure a transparent process for the distribution of refugees across different local communities, taking into account the labour market situation, refugees' academic qualifications, and housing and language learning opportunities; (7) prevent any discriminatory treatment by local staff through raising their knowledge and skills, especially in local public services; and (8) encourage the development of local pilot programmes of integration" (Lalić Novak i Vukojičić Tomić, 2017: 290).

Clearly, integration and inclusion in society take place primarily through contacts and interactions of persons under protection with institutions and citizens in local communities where they are received and accommodated.

Indeed, local communities are places where the accommodation and integration of persons under international protection actually take place, starting from the initial reception of asylum seekers in reception centres, while the procedure to approve their protection status is still underway, to finding adequate accommodation once they are afforded protection, to all further steps taken to provide for them, integrate them and achieve their desired independence within local communities. While the European Union has its common *Action Plan on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals*, which was adopted in 2016 and also includes refugees, member states – acting in compliance with that plan – develop their own national integration policies, with different levels of success in their implementation. Differences between them can be explained primarily by differences in the understanding of migration and migration policies (including the integration policy as their constituent part) as well as differences in institutional capacity at the national and local levels. The *Action Plan for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection for the Period from 2017 to 2019*, which is currently in effect in Croatia, provides for a series of integration measures in the fields of accommodation and housing, social welfare and health care, language learning and education, employment, intersectorial and international cooperation, and awareness raising among the public and professional staff, whereby it defines an institutional framework for Croatian integration system. The *Action Plan* also identifies major entities responsible or co-responsible for the implementation of each of the defined integration measures, time frames set for their implementation, financial and other resources needed for their implementation, and implementation indicators, i.e. desired results. In this regard, the issue of integration of persons granted asylum in LSGUs and RSGUs should be placed in the context of the division between national policies (in particular, the integration policy) and regional and local development policies as well as more or less centralised, but also decentralised functions of particular integration-system stakeholders, both among relevant ministries and implementation stakeholders in local communities (municipal, town or county organisations, professional institutions, the civil sector, etc.). Accordingly, great importance is attached to encouraging interdepartmental and intersectorial operation and collaboration with a view to raising awareness about the existing resources and capacities, identifying needs and expectations, and integrating different vertical

and horizontal levels of decision-making and implementing integration measures in local communities.

Thus, achieving social, economic, cultural and all other dimensions of integration in local communities is facilitated by the activities of different integration system stakeholders. Therefore, it is important to discuss and analyse the national policy, as well as local, more decentralised integration models, learn from the experiences of others, adopt good practices and improve weaker ones, endeavour to work on joint, synergistic action by different stakeholders, and encourage intersectorial cooperation between local and regional self-government units, professional organisations and the civil sector. Creating conditions for familiarising Croatian citizens with refugees requires joint efforts by the aforementioned system stakeholders and their work on informing citizens and raising their awareness about the presence, rights and obligations of persons under protection, so as to prevent negative phenomena such as discrimination, exclusion or marginalisation and to make persons under protection accepted and integrated members of local communities and the society as a whole. With this imind, this research has analysed capacities and challenges, and assessed the resources and needs of local and regional self-government units with regard to their past and future experience with the reception and integration of persons under protection. Furthermore, this research has also identified the attitudes of Croatian citizens towards persons under protection and the citizens' readiness for the reception and integration of persons granted asylum in their local communities.

RESEARCH PURPOSE AND GOALS

3

RESEARCH PURPOSE AND GOALS

The general purpose of this research was to identify the needs and challenges of third-country nationals in need of international protection in local (towns and municipalities) and regional (counties) self-government units. This purpose has been accomplished via the following goals:

1. Identify the attitudes of Croatian citizens and their readiness for the acceptance and integration of third-country nationals granted international protection in the Republic of Croatia.

2. Identify the needs of local and regional self-government units in the process of integrating third-country nationals granted international protection in the Republic of Croatia as well as the challenges they encounter or will encounter when it comes to the integration of persons granted asylum into the Croatian society.

3. Based on the research conducted, prepare *Checklists for assessment of needs and challenges of integration for local and regional self-government units.*

With a view to meeting the goals of this research, both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies have been used. As a result, the research has been conducted as a mixed-method research, that is, as two correlated studies. The quantitative segment of the research pertains to its first goal, and its qualitative segment to its second goal. The third research goal has been achieved by synthesising the findings reached under the previous two goals.

Due to the specific character of survey-based (quantitative) and qualitative methodological approaches, this report will first describe the study conducted by a survey of citizens' attitudes towards the integration of persons under national protection, and then the qualitative study of needs and challenges faced by local communities in the integration process. The findings of the two studies will be integrated under *Discussion and recommendations* and *Conclusions*.

Research problems and hypotheses relating to the first goal:

1.1 Examine the attitude of Croatian citizens towards the integration of persons granted asylum in Croatian society by using the following constructs: attitudes towards persons granted asylum, perception of asylum beneficiaries as a group threat, perception of potential negative changes in the local community, support for asylum beneficiaries' legally guaranteed rights, social proximity to asylum beneficiaries, readiness to help asylum beneficiaries in their integration and support to different forms of their adjustment to Croatian society (acculturation). Since this is the first study of attitudes towards the integration of persons granted asylum into Croatian society conducted on such a large and purposively selected sample across Croatian regions, the research problem was explorative, without any hypothesis being made on the expected results.

1.2 Identify similarities and differences in the above constructs among participants living in four Croatian regions. As in the previous problem, we did not formulate a hypothesis on the expected results, the intention being to establish the situation and describe regional similarities and differences in attitudes towards integration of asylum beneficiaries and related constructs.

1.3 Examine correlations between the applied measures of attitudes towards the integration of persons granted asylum (attitude towards asylum beneficiaries, support for rights of asylum beneficiaries, perception of realistic and symbolic threats, expectation of negative changes in the community, readiness to help asylum beneficiaries and readiness for close relations with them), frequency and quality of personal contact with asylum beneficiaries, perception of the number of asylum beneficiaries today and in the future, perception of the media portrayal of asylum beneficiaries and the socio-demographic profile of the participants and their political and religious orientation.

Given the previous studies on this subject in the Croatian context (see Župarić-Iljić and Gregurović, 2013; Ajduković, Bakić, Stanković and Matić, 2017), it was expected that a more positive attitude towards the integration of asylum beneficiaries would be found among persons with a higher level of education, women, those with a higher quality of personal contacts with asylum beneficiaries, and those readier to help them in the integration process. A positive correlation was also expected between attitudes towards asylum beneficiaries, lower perception of group threat and negative changes in the local community, greater social proximity, greater readiness to help asylum beneficiaries in the integration process and support for the integrative acculturation model.

1.4 Identify the possibility of predicting the readiness of Croatian citizens for the integration of persons granted asylum.

An analytical regression model has been developed as a tool to predict readiness for the acceptance and integration of asylum beneficiaries in Croatian society based on selected characteristics of participants in the research. In that context, citizens' readiness for the integration of asylum beneficiaries has been operationalized via two clear indicators of attitude towards them: (1) readiness for different levels of social proximity to asylum beneficiaries and (2) readiness to assist asylum beneficiaries in their integration. As both indicators measure behavioural intention, i.e. the participants' expression of their intent to behave in a specific manner (to establish some sort of relationship and to engage personally in helping asylum beneficiaries), they are better indicators of actual potential behaviour in future than, for instance, the measure of attitude towards asylum beneficiaries (e.g. Kim and Hunter, 1993). Therefore, the two selected forms of behavioural intention served as criterion variables which have been predicted on the basis of the following set of predictors: the participants' individual characteristics (socio-demographic variables and regional affiliation), religiosity and political orientation, attitude towards the number of beneficiaries to be accepted by the country in the future and towards strategies for their adjustment to society (perception of the need for asylum beneficiaries in the future and attitude towards acculturation strategies), frequency of contact with asylum beneficiaries and perception of threats and changes in the community caused by their arrival (perception of realistic and symbolic threats and expectation of negative changes in the community).

Research problems and hypotheses related to the second goal:

2.1 Identify the experiences, needs, challenges and expectations of representatives from local (towns and municipalities) and regional (counties) self-government units regarding the present and future integration of asylum beneficiaries in their social environment. Since this has been the first study of its kind in Croatia and since it used a qualitative methodology and dealt with a generally little explored subject (cf. Lalić Novak and Vukojičić Tomić, 2017; Tecilazić Goršić, 2018), it would have been unreasonable to make any hypothesis about the expected results.

Research problem related to the third goal:

3.1 Prepare *Checklists for assessment of needs and challenges of local and regional self-government units regarding the integration of persons granted asylum*, which will facilitate the self-assessment of needs, challenges and potential solutions to improve the process of integration of asylum beneficiaries in local communities.

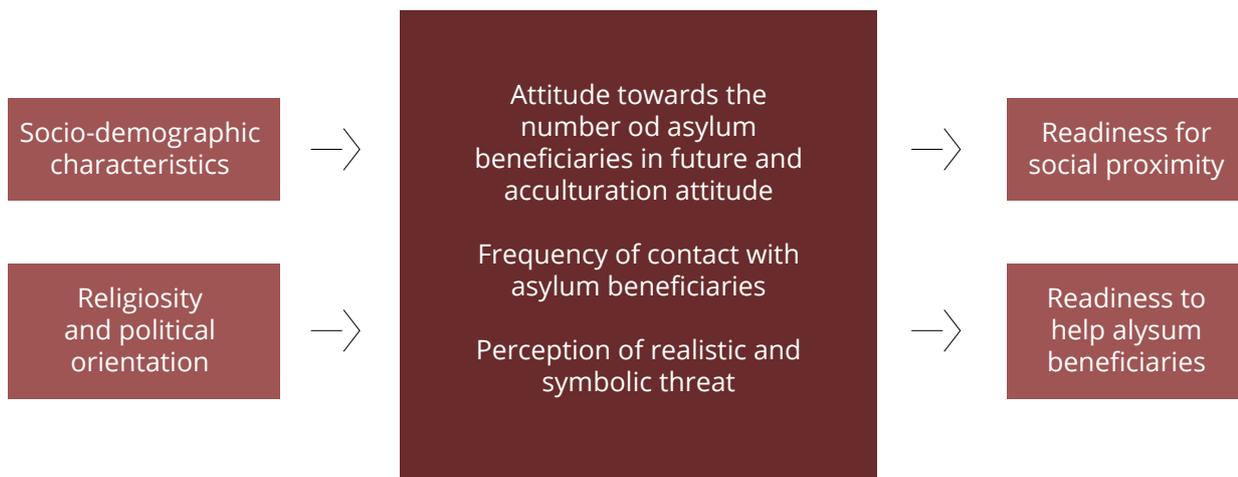| Socio-demographic characteristics | → | Attitude towards the number od asylum beneficiaries in future and acculturation attitude

Frequency of contact with asylum beneficiaries

Perception of realistic and symbolic threat | → | Readiness for social proximity |
| Religiosity and political orientation | → | | → | Readiness to help alysum beneficiaries |

Figure A. Model for predicting readiness for different levels of social proximity to asylum beneficiaries and readines to help asylum beneficiaries based on individual traits of respondents and different aspects of their attitudes towards persons granted asylum.

ETHICAL
CONCERNS

ETHICAL CONCERNS 4

In this research, data were gathered through personal contact with the participants, which required compliance with specific and precise procedures in keeping with the rules of ethical conduct in research involving human subjects, as provided in the Code of Ethics of Psychological Practice and the relevant legislation.

Due to the nature of their office, those who participated in the interviews with persons in leading positions in local and regional self-government units were not completely anonymous. This fact was clearly communicated to the participants, and data confidentiality was protected by group-level reporting. Any departure from this practice was agreed with participants in advance. The information about the participants' identity is known only to the researchers. Asylum beneficiaries' data have been fully protected: the focus group transcripts have been completely anonymised, with a careful presentation of socio-demographic data which do not reveal the identity of persons.

The invitation for participation clearly indicated that the contacted person, by giving consent to be interviewed, also gave his/her consent to participate. In addition, prior to each interview it was ensured that participation was indeed voluntary and the interviewees were once again informed in detail of the research purpose and goals.

In the interviews and focus groups with persons granted asylum, the participants were fully informed of the research purpose and goals, it was stressed that their participation was completely voluntary and anonymous, and the continuation of their participation in the focus group was considered as their consent of the research. This information was translated into the Arabic language. To maintain the researcher-participant privilege, and in view of the fact that asylum beneficiaries constitute an especially vulnerable group of participants, they were not asked to sign a declaration of informed consent, since this could have caused distrust and unwillingness for further cooperation, as demonstrated by studies involving other vulnerable groups (e.g.

Wiles, Heath, Crow and Charles, 2005; Čorkalo Biruški, 2014). Special caution in this respect is also invoked by the European Commission in its *Guidance note – Research on refugees, asylum seekers and migrants*.[7]

The researchers have ensured an unbiased presentation of the obtained data and their use in the participants' best interest, especially when it comes to persons granted international protection in Croatia. The benefits for the participants are that the interlocutors from local communities could share their concerns and doubts about the preparedness to receive and integrate persons granted asylum and that the needs of local communities will be presented to relevant authorities. The asylum beneficiaries were given an opportunity to bring forth the difficulties and challenges they encounter, and those in charge can use this information to improve policies for their protection.

The participants were not exposed to greater than minimal risk, i.e. any risk higher than that common in everyday situations.

Based on the research results, the *Checklists for Assessment of Needs of Local and Regional Self-Government Units* have been developed, as a sort of feedback to local communities on their capacities and required improvements. The research results will be made publicly available to research participants and other interested parties.

Based on a detailed draft research, the Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology of the Zagreb Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences issued its Approval to Conduct Research.

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[7] http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/hi/guide_research-refugees-migrants_en.pdf.

SURVEY OF CITIZENS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE INTEGRATION OF PERSONS UNDER INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

5

SURVEY OF CITIZENS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE INTEGRATION OF PERSONS UNDER INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

5

In order to conduct this research, it was necessary to develop tools for the quantitative (survey-based) aspect of the study of attitudes of Croatian citizens toward persons under international protection[8] and citizen readiness for their acceptance. On the other hand, it was necessary to develop a toolkit to assess needs and challenges in local and regional self-government unites regarding their capacity to receive and integrate persons under international protection into local communities. Accordingly, the starting point for tool selection and elaboration was the multidimensional concept of integration of aliens in the host society, which is focused on the processes and dimensions of integration of persons under international protection (either with full asylum or subsidiary protection status) into Croatian society as a whole, but also into individual local communities in Croatian regions covered by this research.

In order to accomplish the first research goal, steps were taken to prepare and conduct the survey.

5.1 SURVEY PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING

The target group of survey participants covered by the research was defined so as to include citizens living in selected counties (regional self-government units) and towns and municipalities (local self-government units), hereinafter referred to as *units*. In order to form a sample of participants for the purposes of this research and as agreed with the client, Croatia was broken into four regions: Eastern, Central and North-Western, Littoral and Istrian, and Dalmatian regions. They were selected because they were already accommodating or were very likely to accommodate asylum beneficiaries and their families. The Central and North-Western Region and Littoral and Istrian Region are hereinafter occasionally referred to by their shortened names, i.e. the Central Region and the Littoral Region, respectively. In each region, the sample came to include 2 to 5 counties (a total of 12) and 3 to 5 towns (a total of 15). The Eastern Region covered the countries of Osijek-Baranja, Vukovar-Srijem and Požega-Slavonski Brod. The Central

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[8] In this paper, we alternately and interchangeably use the terms "persons under (international) protection" and "refugees," which include persons granted asylum and persons under subsidiary protection, that is, persons who have been afforded protection in Croatia through the regular status approval procedure under the International and Temporary Protection Act or have received that status in Croatia under the relocation and resettlement quotas undertaken by Croatia in 2015 and 2017.

and North-Western Region included the City of Zagreb as well as the counties of Zagreb, Sisak-Moslavina, Bjelovar-Bilogora and Varaždin. The Littoral and Istrian Region covered Primorje-Gorski Kotar and Istria counties. The Dalmatian Region encompassed the counties of Zadar and Split-Dalmatia.

In the selected towns, the size of the sample was proportionate to that of the town within its region, with the participants in each town being selected by probability sampling. The first step in forming the sample consisted of two clusters (region and town/city), which were deliberately chosen through the combination of the following criteria: a similar number of inhabitants in a particular region, belonging to a particular region, whether asylum beneficiaries live in that area and whether local self-government units have experience with the integration of asylum beneficiaries, the expected arrival of asylum beneficiaries, the available state-owned housing to accommodate asylum beneficiaries in the upcoming period, the size of the town, and the diversity of geographic location within a particular region. Based on these data, a list of selected units was prepared and agreed with the client who commissioned the research. The second step was to define a minimum sample size for each region to ensure an acceptable margin of error with a significance level of 95%. In the next step, probability sampling at each location ensure that the sample structure, by its socio-demographic profile, reflects the region's population characteristics based on publicly available statistics. The sample formed in this manner and its size allowed inter-regional comparisons with regard to the relevant characteristics of the participants and measured constructs.

To form the sample, use was made of data supplied by the *Croatian Bureau of Statistics* (under the 2011 census), which were combined with Croatia's population estimates from 2015 (DZS, 2016[9]). By using figures on the total male and female population in the 18 to 65 age group for the targeted units in each region, calculations were made of the required number of participants and starting points for sampling in each unit. Thus, the percentage share of interlocutors in each unit (town) is proportionate to its size within the region, i.e. to their share in a particular region. Sample frames were obtained by means of street lists, and starting sampling points for each unit (selection of streets and house numbers) were determined by random choice.

The total size of the obtained sample was N = 1,272 citizens aged 18 to 65. The sample was evenly distributed across the four regions to ensure reasonable population estimates with an acceptable margin of error of 5% - 7% and a significance level of 95%. In each region, the sample included 318 citizens since that was a minimum sample size which could ensure population estimate for each region and, then, inter-regional comparisons, with the total sample size being specified in advance by the client.

Table 1 shows the selected units by region and the planned and actual sample structure (number of participants in each unit). It is evident that there is a minimum departure of the actual sample from the planned one: in three local units, it differs by one participant only.

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[9]   *Census of Population, Households and Dwellings 2011*, Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Zagreb, 2013, http://www.dzs.hr/; *Population Estimates of the Republic of Croatia*, 2015, Release 7.1.4, Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Zagreb, 2016, https://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2016/07-01-04_01_2016.htm.

Table 1. Planned and actual sample structure

Region	Location (town/city)	Total (M, F; 18-65)	% (M, F; 18-65)	Planned number of participants	Actual number of participants	Number of starting sampling points
Eastern Region	Osijek	71,382	57%	180	181	18
Eastern Region	Požega	16,726	13%	42	42	4
Eastern Region	Slavonski Brod	37,660	30%	95	95	10
Central Region	Zagreb	520,567	82%	262	262	26
Central Region	Velika Gorica	42,167	7%	21	21	2
Central Region	Sisak	31,225	5%	16	16	2
Central Region	Daruvar	7,579	1%	4	4	1
Central Region	Varaždin	30,613	5%	15	15	2
Littoral Region	Rijeka	86,046	60%	192	192	19
Littoral Region	Crikvenica	7,262	5%	16	16	2
Littoral Region	Pula	37,860	27%	84	**85**	8
Littoral Region	Poreč	11,426	8%	25	25	3
Dalmatian Region	Zadar	48,651	27%	86	86	9
Dalmatian Region	Solin	15,865	9%	28	28	3
Dalmatian Region	Split	116,361	64%	205	204	20

At the sample level, region, a representative socio-demographic structure was obtained in each region (the shares of participant gender and age groups in the sample were within +/- 5% of population parameters) for the areas included in the research. Three regions (Eastern, Littoral and Dalmatian) saw a somewhat higher departure (8% for the oldest group of women in the Dalmatian Regions and 6% for the same group in the Littoral Region), which can be attributed to changes in the populations structure in relation to figures supplied several years ago by the Croatian Bureau of Statistics and an increased emigration of younger persons over the past few years. These departures are within the scope expected in similar national research studies.

To make sure that departures in the sample would not cause any bias in the results, we calculated the relevant descriptive statistical indicators for all variables used on the actual sample, and then on a sample of weighted to take account of the aforementioned age and gender. Differences in means and standard deviations on data compared in this manner were minor, but the weighting exercise led to major changes in the number of participants in particular regions, increasing disproportionately their share in the Central Region, and decreasing it in the other three regions. Since this would have seriously compromised the logic of forming the sample (each region accounting for a fourth of the sample, i.e. equal number of 318 participants), increased the error in forecasting population results, and jeopardise the possibility of implementing more complex analyses sensitive to major differences in the number of participants by group, all analyses were made on the original, unweighted sample.

Is should be noted that the actual example, albeit large enough, does not allow for any generalisation of the results to Croatia's areas that were not covered by the research, nor to its small settlements whose population might, by its profile, differ from that of the towns included in the research. However, as already stressed, the clusters of counties and their towns/cites were selected purposively, in view of the existing or expected experience of contacts between the local population and asylum beneficiaries.

5.2 MEASURING TOOLS

A survey questionnaire was prepared to measure the following constructs: cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects of attitudes toward persons granted asylum, the perception of intergroup threat, support for the exercise legally guaranteed rights by asylum beneficiaries, the perception

of negative changes in the local community due to the arrival of asylum beneficiaries, readiness for personal engagement in the integration of asylum beneficiaries, the experience of contact with asylum beneficiaries, sources of information about asylum beneficiaries, the attitude toward different forms of acculturation and socio-demographic variables. The applied questionnaire contained 67 items and was based on prior studies involving diverse and large samples (Ajduković *et al.*, 2017; Župarić-Iljić and Gregurović, 2013), which ensured that the scales used within this tool had very good metric characteristics, specifically, Cronbach's alpha internal reliability coefficients ranging from 0.77 to 0.93, a clear construct validity and mainly a single-factor structure.

Table 2 shows the examined constructs and the number of items used to operationalize specific variables. Appendix 1 contains the *Survey Questionnaire.*

Table 2. Variables included in the research, with the number of items and their sequence numbers in the Questionnaire

Construct	No. of items *(k)*	Item sequence no. in the Questionnaire
1. Attitude towards asylum beneficiaries	19	1_1-19
2. Perception of realistic threat	4	1_20-23
3. Perception of symbolic threat	5	1_24-28
4. Support for rights of asylum beneficiaries	13	1_29-41
5. Perception of neg. changes in the community	5	1_42-46
6. Readiness to help asylum beneficiaries	4	2_1-4
7. Frequency of contact with asylum beneficiaries	1	3
8. Quality of contact with asylum beneficiaries	1	4
9. Sources of information on asylum beneficiaries	1	5
10. Media portrayal of asylum beneficiaries	1	6
11. Social proximity to asylum beneficiaries	1	7
12. Attitude toward forms of acculturation	1	8
13. Estimate of number of asylum beneficiaries	1	9
14. Change in number of asylum beneficiaries	1	10
15. Socio-demographic profile of respondents	9	11_1-9

▶ Description of the applied tools

The scale of attitudes toward asylum beneficiaries comprises 19 items addressing cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects of attitudes toward asylum beneficiaries and their integration. The participants expressed their agreement or disagreement with statements by selecting numbers on a 5-point Likert-type scale, where 1 means *strongly disagree* and 5 means *strongly agree*. On this scale, total individual scores may vary between 1 and 5, and constitute average scale values. Higher scores suggest more positive attitudes toward asylum beneficiaries.

The scale of perception of realistic threat comprises 4 items addressing the perception that asylum beneficiaries pose a realistic threat with regard to the fulfilment of key individual needs: employment, security and economic prosperity. The participants express their (dis)agreement with statements by circling a number on a 5-point Likert-type scale, where 1 means *strongly disagree* and 5 means *strongly agree*. Individual scores are formed as the averages of scale values and can vary between 1 and 5. Higher scores on the scale suggest higher levels of perceived realistic threat from asylum beneficiaries.

The scale of perception of symbolic threat comprises 5 statements measuring the perception of symbolic threat (i.e. that asylum beneficiaries pose a threat to the preservation of the host community's culture and way of life) which the participants may feel as a result of asylum beneficiaries' presence in the community. The participants' task is to express their agreement or disagreement with the statements by circling a corresponding number on a 5-point Likert-type scale, where 1 means *strongly disagree* and 5 means *strongly agree*. Individual scores constitute average scale values and can vary between 1 and 5. Higher scores suggest higher levels of perceived symbolic threat from asylum beneficiaries.

The scale of support for the rights of asylum beneficiaries contains 13 statements addressing the support which the participants (fail to) express for the rights of asylum beneficiaries guaranteed by law in the Republic of Croatia. The participants express their agreement or disagreement with a specific right of asylum beneficiaries by choosing a number on a 5-point Likert-type scale, where 1 means *strongly disagree* and 5 means *strongly agree*. Individual scores constitute average scale values and can vary between 1 and 5. Higher scores on the scale suggest higher levels of support to the exercise of legally guaranteed rights by asylum beneficiaries.

The scale of expectation of negative changes in the community contains 5 items describing potential negative changes which may occur in the community as a result of the arrival of asylum beneficiaries. The participants express their level of agreement with each statement on a Linker-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Total scores are formed as average scale values, which can vary between 1 and 5, where higher scores suggest higher expectations of negative changes in the community due to asylum beneficiaries' arrival.

The scale of behavioural readiness to help in the integration of asylum beneficiaries contains 4 items describing different forms of personal engagement which the participants would be ready to demonstrate so as to facilitate the integration of asylum beneficiaries. On a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*definitely not*) to 5 (*definitely yes*), the participants express whether they would be ready to engage in any of the offered behaviours. Total scores are formed as average scale values, which can which can vary between 1 and 5, with higher scorers suggesting greater readiness to help asylum beneficiaries in the integration process.

The frequency of contact with asylum beneficiaries was examined by a single item on a 5-point scale, where the participants answered how often they met asylum beneficiaries in their communities, i.e. from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very frequently*). Higher scores suggest more frequent contacts of the participants with asylum beneficiaries.

The quality of contacts with asylum beneficiaries was also measured by a single item describing the quality of contacts that the participants stated to have with asylum beneficiaries. The answers were offered on a 3-point scale, where 1 meant that contacts were *generally negative*, while 3 meant they were *generally positive*. Higher scores indicated a more positive experience of contacts with asylum beneficiaries.

Sources of information about asylum beneficiaries were examined by means of a checklist on which the participants were supposed to choose three main sources they use in order to get information about asylum beneficiaries. The offered sources of information included the mass media (printed and online editions of newspapers, television, and radio), social media, non-governmental/civil-society organisations, local or central government authorities, personal contacts or "other."

The perception of the media portrayal of asylum beneficiaries was measured by a single question with a seven-point bipolar scale. The participants task was to state whether they felt that the portrayal of asylum beneficiaries in the media was very negative (-3), neutral (0) or very positive (3). This scale was transformed to the scale from 1 to 7, where higher scores meant a more positive media portrayal of asylum beneficiaries.

The scale of readiness for social proximity was developed on the model of a standard Bogardus social distance scale, but its purpose was adjusted so as to ask the participants about their proximity to others (from the lowest readiness to accept an asylum beneficiary just as a person in transit through Croatia, to accepting an asylum beneficiary as a Croatian citizen, fellow worker, neighbour, friend, intimate partner, and finally, family member). For each proximity level, the participants responded whether or not they would be ready to accept it, and total scores were expressed as the sums of all *yes* responses, with higher scores suggesting higher levels of proximity, i.e. greater readiness to accept close relationships with asylum beneficiaries. Possible scores ranged from 0 (those who would accept none of the offered relationships) to 7 (those who would accept each of the offered relationships).

The preferred acculturation strategy was measured by a single question to which the participants were supposed to respond by choosing the statement they most agree: that asylum beneficiaries should maintain they original culture and not adopt the Croatian culture, that asylum beneficiaries should maintain their original culture and also adopt the Croatian culture, or that asylum beneficiaries should relinquish their original culture and adopt the Croatian culture.

The estimated number of asylum beneficiaries in Croatia was measured by a single question designed to find out whether the participants knew how many persons there were in Croatia with granted asylum. In case the participants did not know their (approximate) number, this question made it possible to find out whether they underestimated or overestimated that number, i.e. whether their answered (approximately) correctly or incorrectly. The offered answers included: a) less than 50, b) 51 – 100, c) 101 – 400, d) 401 – 700, e) 701 – 1000 and f) more than 1000.

The preferred number of asylum beneficiaries in Croatia was measured by a single question on the participants' preferences as to whether the number of asylum beneficiaries in Croatia should be a) much lower, b) lower, c) about the same, d) hither or e) much higher compared to their actual number in Croatia at the time the data were gathered.

5.3 SURVEY DATA GATHERING PROCEDURE

The field data collection exercise was carried out by Valicon d.o.o., an opinion poll company with a network of experienced field interviewers and a system ensuring internal supervision over the data-gathering process, all in compliance with ESOMAR. To prepare the interviewers specifically for this project, training was organized and carried out, with participation of members of the research team. The interviewers were given detailed oral and written guidelines for fieldwork conduct and data gathering methods, and were apprised as to how the quality of data collection would be controlled.

The data gathering exercise took place from 14 May to 10 June 2018. As planned, the actual sample covered 1,272 citizens at the selected locations, i.e. 318 in each region, with the planned number of participants being interviewed at each location. To achieve this level of participation, a total of 2,214 households were contacted, which means that the response rate was 57%, which is quite high given the type of research in question.

Data were gathered by interviewing citizens in their homes, using the Computer Aided Personal Interviewing (CAPI) method. Before proceeding to the interview, each citizen was required to give her/his informed consent and read the instruction. Each participant had a hard copy of the questionnaire in front of him/her and, once he/she read a question, he/she would speak out the answer which the interviewer entered in the computer (tablet). If so requested by the participant, the interviewer would read the questions and the offered answers. For each question to be answered by choosing a number on a scale, the interviewer showed the participant a card with the numbers and explanations of their meanings written above them. The interview took 15 to 20 minutes (with less educated participants).

At each of the selected locations, probability sampling was ensured through random selection of starting sampling points, households (by the random walk method), and potential participants from each household (by the "last birthday" method). Random household selection (following the rule of every third household on the right-hand side) was defined by detailed guidelines for the interviewers. To ensure additional heterogeneity in case of blocks of flats consisting of up to 4 floors, only one household was to be interviewed in each such building. In each household, the interviewers were supposed to interview one household member only, chosen by the "last birthday" method. If the person who was last to have his/her birthday refused to be interviewed or was unable to respond (due to a prolonged absence, mental or physical incapacity, lack of knowledge of the Croatian language, etc.), the interviewer would not interview another member of the same household, but would choose the next household following the household selection rules. If the person who was last to have his/her birthday was not present when the interviewer arrived or had made another appointment for the interview, the interviewer would revisit the household two more times. If the participant in question was again absent present when the interviewer came for the third time or if he/she refused to be interviewed upon the second visit, the interviewer would choose the next household. One of the three visit was to be made during the weekend, and the other two on a workday after 4 p.m.

The data-collection exercise involved 59 interviews and 6 supervisors in 6 cities/towns (Zagreb, Split, Varaždin, Sisak, Rijeka and Osijek). To ensure the on-site control (i.e. appropriate maintenance of interview logs), three on-site controllers were hired (in Zagreb, Rijeka and Split each) to monitor interview log records, but they did not report any irregularities. The supervisors reviewed interview logs on a daily basis and, as a result of their findings, four interviewers were suspended. Their interviews (a total of 30) were repeated by other interviewers.

Procedures taken to control and assure the quality of data collection and the collected data

Quality control and assurance for the collected data was achieved by the following procedures undertaken before, during and after the data collection exercise.

1. Quality assurance before data collection fieldwork

The interviewers were prepared and trained through workshops held for approximately 10 interviewers each. They were held in Zagreb and involved participation from research team members. When it was not possible to organise them, training sessions were organised via Skype meetings for a limited number of interviewers. As part of the training courses, the interviewers were given written guidelines with information about the research purpose and goals, including a detailed description of how to gather data and motivate respondents for participation, how to determine starting sampling points and routes and select households and participants, what are typical household examples, what to do in case of refusal to participate and how to choose a replacement household, how to guarantee that the participants' answers would be treated as confidential, how the interviewers' work would be controlled land what would be the consequences of their failure to adhere to the required procedures. As part of their training, the interviewers were given detailed information about the structure and logic of the survey questionnaire as well as their available support.

2. Quality assurance by using the CAPI method

Conducting interviews by using the CAPI method (i.e. a tablet with a special software package was installed) assured the quality of the interviewing process because, by programming the survey questionnaires, all filters were defined automatically and the room was minimised for errors which could be made by the interviewer when entering the participant's replies was minimised. Furthermore, since every action taken by the interviewer was automatically stored in the CAPI system which was synchronised with the company's central server, the interviewers' work could be monitored and controlled both as the interviews took place and subsequently. This method also made it possible to monitor the time and duration of interviews and identify the locations where they took place.

3. Quality assurance during data collection

The interviewers were trained specifically for this survey and were required to have at least two months of interviewing experience. They all signed statements of compliance with ESOMAR standards, data confidentiality, adherence to data collection procedures based on computer-aided interviews, and other guidelines. To avoid any influence of interviewer bias, none of the interviewers was to interview more than 5% of the sample, i.e. a maximum of 63 participants from six sampling points. To uphold the standard interviewer-participant relationship procedure, each interviewer was supposed to take a maximum of seven interviews per day.

While gathering data, the interviewers maintained "Contact Lists/Interview Logs" in which they entered the address, time and date and outcome of each attempted interview (for original and replacement households, and for each attempt in the sequence) and sent them to their field research coordinators daily. The purpose of this exercise was to monitor the response rate, understand reasons for resorting to replacement households, and control the work of each interviewer. In the data gathering process, the interviewers' work was also controlled on-site, by checking data from their "Contact Lists/Interview Logs" (i.e. whether the stated addresses existed and whether there were any households there) and by reviewing the completed survey questionnaires.

4. Quality assurance after data collection

For each interviewer, a certain number of interviews was checked through telephone contacts with the participants. If any inconsistency or fraud was identified, all interviews by the concerned interviewer were ignored. Telephone verification is a standard procedure undertaken one to three days after the interview in order to exclude any unreliable interviewer from further interviewing process. Out of the total number of participants, 84.8% agreed to give the interviewers their telephone contact details once they completed the survey questionnaire, so that they could be contacted for the purposes of control. In this way, between 15% and 30% of interviews were checked for each interviewer, i.e. a total of 293 interviews or 23%. Irregularities were found for three interviewers (a total of 12 interviews), whose interviews were disqualified and substituted with replacement interviews conducted by other interviewers, while all other

participants confirmed that they had been interviewed by means of tablets, in their own households, about their attitudes toward asylum beneficiaries.

5.4 QUANTITATIVE DATA PROCESSING PROCEDURES

A plan for a statistical data analysis was prepared to address the specific goals and the hypotheses made. The plan included a calculation of descriptive statistics (range, frequency, central tendency measures, variability measures) at the levels of the entire sample and specific regions, as presented in tables and graphs, as well as inter-regional comparisons of results for the measured constructs (variance analyses, t-tests, chi-square tests). The frequency analyses are graphically presented by bar charts, pie charts and profile charts. Aggregate scores were calculated for relevant constructs and used in further analyses. A model was set to predict personal readiness for establishing different levels of proximity with asylum beneficiaries and to help them in their integration. This was accomplished by a regression analysis based on a series of predictors: participants' individual characteristics (socio-demographic variables and regional affiliation), religiosity and political orientation, attitude about the number of asylum beneficiaries to be received by the country in future and strategies for their adjustment to the society (i.e. acculturation strategies), frequency of contact with asylum beneficiaries, and perception of threat and changes in the community caused by the arrival of asylum beneficiaries (perception of realistic and symbolic threat and expectations of negative changes in the community).

5.5 CITIZENS' SURVEY RESULTS

Presented below is a description of the socio-demographic profile of the citizens' survey sample, the metric characteristics of the applied tools, the descriptive statistics of the measured constructs, the correlations between the research variables and the inter-regional comparisons. Finally, we present the findings with regard to the possibility of predicting the citizens' readiness for social proximity with asylum beneficiaries and their readiness to help them in their integration.

5.5.1 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE SURVEY SAMPLE

As already noted, the research involved a sample of 1,272 adult Croatian citizens aged 18 to 65, with an average age of $M = 40.69$ ($SD = 13.45$), which was representative of the selected cluster of towns. In this sample, those younger than 29 accounted for 25.8%, the middle age group ranging from 30 to 49 accounted for 43.9%, while older citizens aged 50 to 65 made 30.3 % of the interlocutors.

The share of women in the sample was 55.1%, and that of men 44.9%.

52.5% of the participants lived with their partners in the same household, 9% lived separately from their partners, while singles accounted for 38.4%.

On average, the participants completed $M = 13.20$ years of education ($SD = 2.41$), which means that their average level of education was somewhat above that of completed secondary school. Unlike the conventional way of expressing the level of completed education (e.g. incomplete primary education, primary education, three-year and four-year secondary education, two-year post-secondary education, university education), this research used a more precise indicator expressed as the number of completed years of education. However, due to the common form of graphic presentation, Figure 1 shows the sample's education structure by using three education categories. Since the sample, for the aforementioned reasons, included the inhabitants of towns, their education level was also higher than it would have been had it included rural communities.
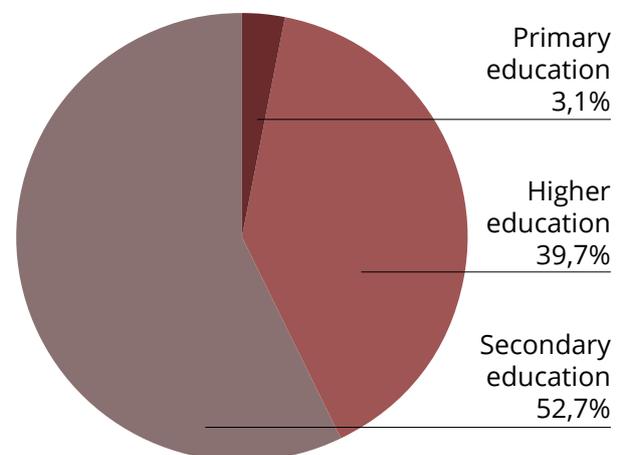

Primary education 3,1%

Higher education 39,7%

Secondary education 52,7%

Figure 1. Education structure of the sample (*N*=1,272)

Regarding their employment status, most of the participants – i.e. 66.4 % - are employed, 12.1% are unemployed, 12.3% are retired and 9.3 % are students.

When self-assessing their standard of living, a vast majority of the participants – i.e. 74.4% - see their standard of living as average, 11.8 % see it as below average, and 13.7 % deem it above average. Figure 2 shows a detailed structure of the participant's self-assessment of their standard of living.
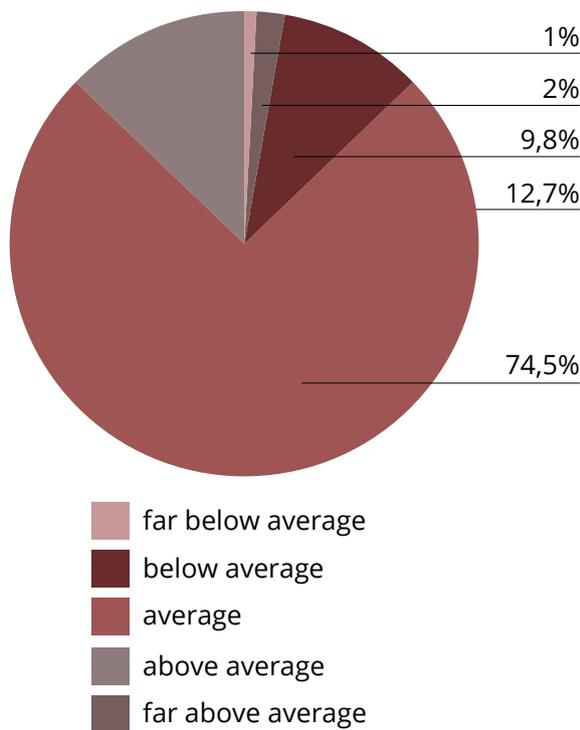

far below average
below average
average
above average
far above average

Figure 2. Participants' self-assessment of living standards (*N*=1,272)

60.1% of the sample declared themselves practicing believers (i.e. those attending worship services and living in accordance with their religious beliefs, as the question was worded), while 39.9% said they were not practicing believers. In that context, the participants – taken on average – see religion as a moderately important element of their lives (average scores for the importance of religion on a 1- to-5 scale are *M* = 3.31 (*SD* = 1.30). Figure 3 shows the structure of these answers.
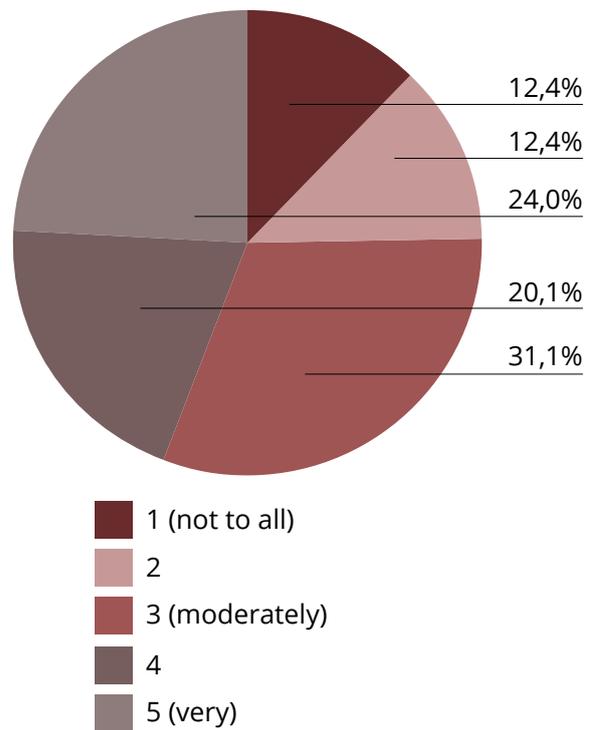

1 (not to all)
2
3 (moderately)
4
5 (very)

Figure 3. Importance of religion in the lives of participants (*N*=1,272)

In this research, the participants could express their political orientation on a five-point scale (from the far left to the far right), but were also given the option to state that they had no political orientation. We felt that such a solution was better than pushing the participants to choose an answer which would not reflect their actual view. It turned out that almost half of the participants – i.e. 46% – stated they had no political orientation, while 13.8% chose the centre as their political orientation. About one fifth or 19.8% of the participants chose the left, and 20.4% chose the right side of the political spectrum. Interestingly, the share of those politically undecided was practically identical to that among the adult participants (47%) and students (45%) in the research by Ajduković et al. (2017) in Zagreb. The structure of the participants' answers about their political orientation is shown in Figure 4.
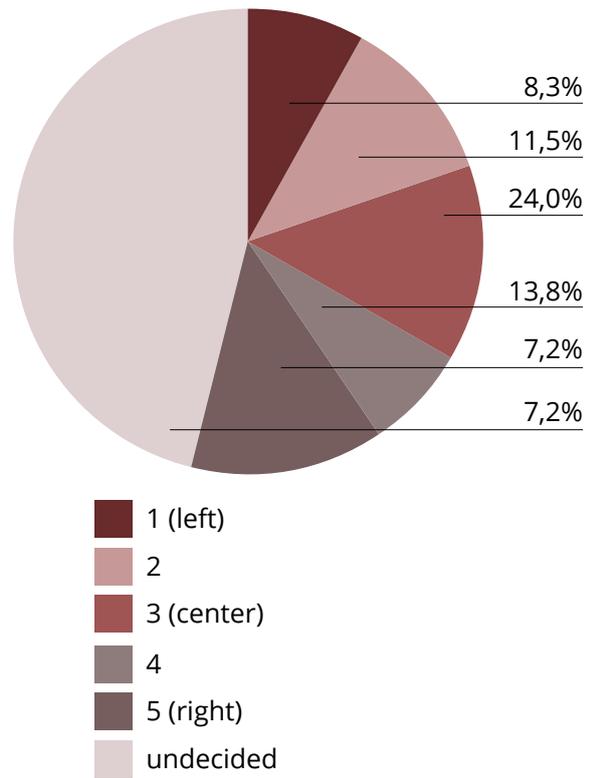
8,3%

11,5%

24,0%

13,8%

7,2%

7,2%

■ 1 (left)

■ 2

■ 3 (center)

■ 4

■ 5 (right)

■ undecided

Figure 4. Political orientation of participants (*N*=1,272)

5.5.2 METRIC ANALYSIS OF THE APPLIED TOOLS

Table 3 shows the reliability analysis results for the applied scales of attitudes and behavioural intentions (and the respective number of items in each of them), calculated as internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's α).

Table 3. Reliability of the scales used in the research

Scale	Cronbach's α	No. of items
Scale of attitudes toward asylum beneficiaries	0.94	19
Scale of realistic threat	0.78	4
Scale of symbolic threat	0.83	5
Scale of support for rights of asylum beneficiaries	0.95	13
Scale of expectations of negative changes in the community	0.89	5
Scale of behavioural readiness to assist	0.83	4
Scale of social proximity	0.89	7

The reliability coefficients ranging from 0.78 to as much as 0.95 suggest that we are dealing with highly reliable tools, where even the lowest reliability – i.e. that for the scale of realistic threat – is highly acceptable given that the scale has only four items.

The following sections of the tool analysis describe the exploratory factor analysis results for the aforementioned scales of attitudes and behavioural intentions. The results on the variables are not distributed according to normal distribution (the K-S test is significant for all items). Therefore, the common factor model

was used as the extraction method for all scales. Prior analysis of suitability for the factorisation of the item correlation matrix for all scales always showed the values of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measures (KMO coefficient) well above the critical value of 0.60 (ranging from 0.71 to 0.96) as well as significant chi-squared values based on a Bartlett's sphericity test, suggesting that the use of the factor analysis was justified.

The factor analysis of the **Scale of attitudes toward asylum beneficiaries** initially revealed a three-factor structure based on the Kaiser-Guttman criterion of a characteristic root value

hither than 1 (F1 – 9.45; F2 – 1.31; F3 – 1.16). These three factors explained 56.23% of variance. As a result of Oblimin rotation, it turned out that the first factor was correlated with positive items (expect Item 19 – *Too much importance is given to the issue of asylum beneficiaries in Croatia* – with a saturation of 0.26, which was nevertheless retained in the scale because it contributed to the diversity of descriptions of attitudes to asylum beneficiaries). As the correlations among the factors ranged from -.0.69 to 0.50, an additional analysis of factor points was made using the principal component method in order to establish the existence of higher-order factors. As a result, one factor was extracted which explained as much as 77.46% of variance. Accordingly, this scale can be said to have a single-factor structure.

A single-factor structure was also shown by the scales of perceived threat. For the ***Scale of realistic treat***, a single factor was extracted with a characteristic root higher than one, which accounted for 50.88% of variance in the results, with high item loadings in the factor structure matrix (saturation ranging from 0.57 to 0.91). The ***Scale of symbolic threat*** also demonstrated a single-factor structure, with the extracted factor accounting for 50.71% of variance. The factor saturation of the items ranged from 0.47 to 0.85.

The items of the ***Scale of support for the rights of asylum beneficiaries*** also formed a single factor, which explained a 5% common variance. The factor saturation of the items ranged from 0.63 to 0.85.

The ***Scale of expectations of negative changes in the community*** also revealed a single-factor structure, and that factor accounted for 63% of variance in the results, with item saturation levels ranging from 0.66 and 0.90.

The ***Scale of (behavioural) readiness to assist asylum beneficiaries***, i.e. to engage personally in the process of their integration, also displayed a single-factor structure with 56% of explained variance. The factor saturation of the items ranged from 0.66 to 0.83.

The ***Scale of social proximity*** initially demonstrated a two-factor structure, and those factors explained somewhat more than 66% of variance in the results. The items projected onto the first factor were those denoting more distant relations, whereas those projected onto the second factor included two items indicating the highest level of proximity (partnership and family relationship). The correlation of these two factors amounted to 0.57. Accordingly, the factor analysis was repeated with one factor being specified and saturation levels in the factor structure matrix showing values between 0.51 and 0.88. This factor explained 55% of variance in the results for social proximity. The use of a single-factor structure was additionally justified by a second-order confirmatory factor analysis which showed that both of the initially obtained factors were highly saturated by a higher-order factor (0.91), which explained over 82% of variance in social proximity.

5.5.3 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THE MEASURED CONSTRUCTS

In view of the first goal – *Identify the attitudes of Croatian citizens and their readiness for the acceptance and integration of third-country nationals granted international protection in the Republic of Croatia* – average values and dispersions were calculated for each of the constructs referring to different aspects of the participants' attitudes and behavioural intentions toward the integration of asylum beneficiaries. As defined earlier under Research Problem 1.1, the attitude of Croatian citizens toward the integration of asylum beneficiaries into Croatian society was examined by using the following constructs: attitudes toward asylum beneficiaries, perception of asylum beneficiaries as a group threat (realistic and symbolic), perception of negative changes which may occur in the local community upon the arrival of asylum beneficiaries, support for asylum beneficiaries' legally guaranteed rights, readiness for social proximity with asylum beneficiaries, readiness to help asylum beneficiaries in their integration and choice of the preferred form of integration in and adjustment to Croatian society (acculturation). These data are presented in this section.

The conducted analysis of the metric characteristics of the applied tools (factor structure and reliability analysis) made it possible to form the aggregate score as a simple linear combination (sum) of scores for all items used for measuring a specific. Also, with a view to a clearer interpretation, the aggregate score for each variable was calculated as the average value of the items' scale values. As a result, the score is always expressed in points from 1 to 5. The value 3 (*Neither agree nor disagree*) denotes the central and neutral point of the scale. Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics of scores for the measured variables.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics (means *M*, standard deviations *SD*, minimum and maximum values, and number of participants[10]) for each variable

Tools and scales	N	M	SD	Min.	Max.
Scale of attitudes toward asylum beneficiaries	1129	3.03	0.86	1.00	4.95
Scale of realistic threat	1239	3.23	0.95	1.00	5.00
Scale of symbolic threat	1223	3.43	0.86	1.00	5.00
Scale of support for rights of asylum beneficiaries	1117	3.32	0.96	1.00	5.00
Scale of expectations of negative changes in the community	1189	3.06	1.06	1.00	5.00
Scale of readiness to help personally	1200	2.91	0.96	1.00	5.00
Frequency of contacts with asylum beneficiaries	1264	1.81	0.93	1.00	5.00
Quality of contacts with asylum beneficiaries	643	2.07	0.55	1.00	3.00
Perception of media portrayal of asylum beneficiaries	1234	3.24	1.42	1.00	7.00
Scale of social proximity	959	3.88	2.46	0.00	7.00

With regard to their *attitudes toward asylum beneficiaries*, the participants express what are, on average, neutral attitudes: the average value of the respondents' answers is *M* = 3.03. The response distribution analysis (Figure 5) shows a more or less symmetric distribution of results, with a slight clustering tendency in the positive attitude zone (curvature index = - 0.13). In this context, a clearly negative attitude (2 or below) was shown by 14.1% of the participants, and a clearly positive attitude (4 or above) by 15.3%.

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10   The number of participants who answered the questions on particular scales varies because they could choose not to answer a question by declaring the response "I refuse to answer." Such responses (and, as a result, participants) were left out of the analyses. Accordingly, differences in the number of participants stem from the fact that different questions had differing refusal levels: from almost a fourth of the participants who refused to answer to a question on the *Scale of social proximity*, to more than 99% of the participants who answered to the question about the frequency of contact with asylum beneficiaries or over 97% who answered on the *Scale of realistic threat*. Differences in the number of participants who answered particular questions are especially important for understanding the description of the results. Therefore, we note that these percentages were calculated in relation to the number of participants who had answered a specific question, rather than their total number. To make this completely clear, along with the percentages of answers, we always indicate the frequency of participants to which such percentages refer.
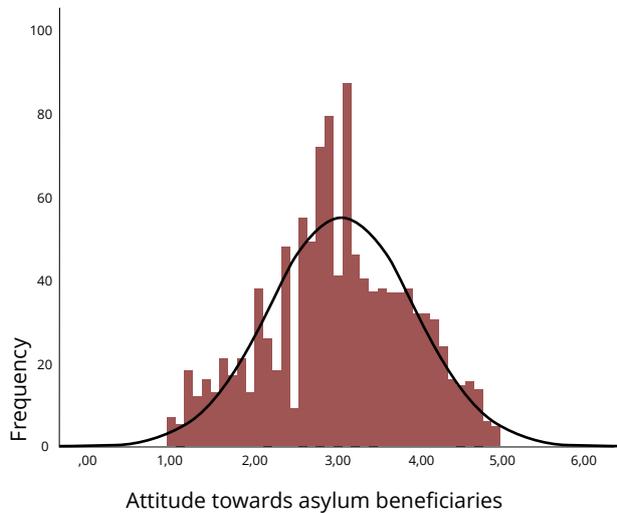
Figure 5. Distribution of answers on the *Scale of attitudes towards asylum beneficiaries* (score range from 1 to 5)

As for the *perception of threat*, the participants feel a slightly realistic and a somewhat higher symbolic threat. The presentation of score distribution (Fig. 6) for both types of threat show a symmetric distribution (curvature index for realistic threat = 0.04, for symbolic threat = 0.08). A low perception of realistic threat (2 or below) was expressed by 14.3% of the participants, and a high realistic threat (4 or above) was perceived by somewhat more that a fourth of the participants, i.e. 26.9%. As to symbolic threat, low threat was expressed by 5.6% of the participants, and high threat by somewhat over a fourth of the participants, i.e. 28.2%.
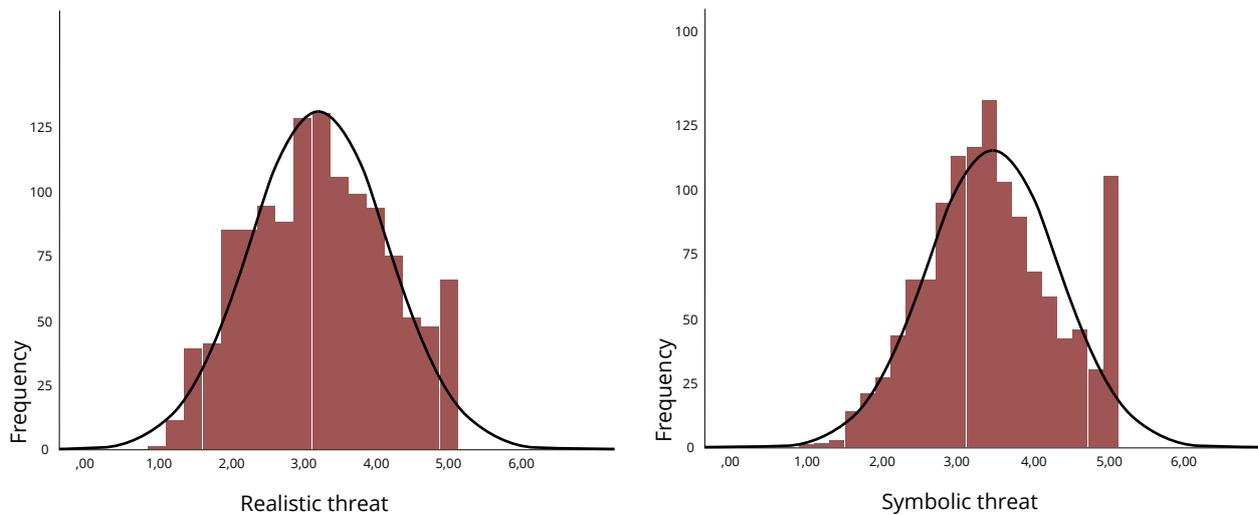

Figure 6. Distribution of answers on the *Scales of perception of realistic* (left) *and symbolic* (right) *threats.*

The participants also display a slight *support for the rights of asylum beneficiaries* (*M* = 3.32). With the curvature index of -0.58, the distribution of scores show a slight negative asymmetry, i.e. scores tending more toward the zone of positive values (Figure 7), with only 11.6% of the participants clearly not supporting the rights of asylum beneficiaries (scores 2 or below) and 27.9% of them showing a clear support for the rights of asylum beneficiaries (scores 4 or above).
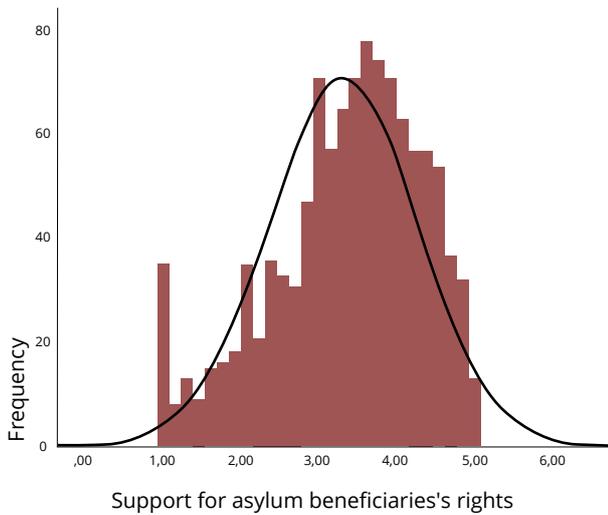
Figure 7. Distribution of answers on the *Scale of support for asylum beneficiaries' rights* (score range from 1 to 5)

Figure 8. Distribution of answers on the *Scale of expected negative changes in the community* (score range from 1 to 5)

The participants express a neutral attitude regarding *expected negative changes in the community* (*M* = 3.06). The distribution of scores is symmetric (Fig. 8), with the curvature index = -0.08. About a fifth of the participants do not anticipate negative changes in their communities upon the arrival of asylum beneficiaries (values lower than 2 were scored by 21% or the participants), whereas the share of those who clearly expect such changes (scores 4 or above) is only somewhat higher, i.e. 22.7 %.
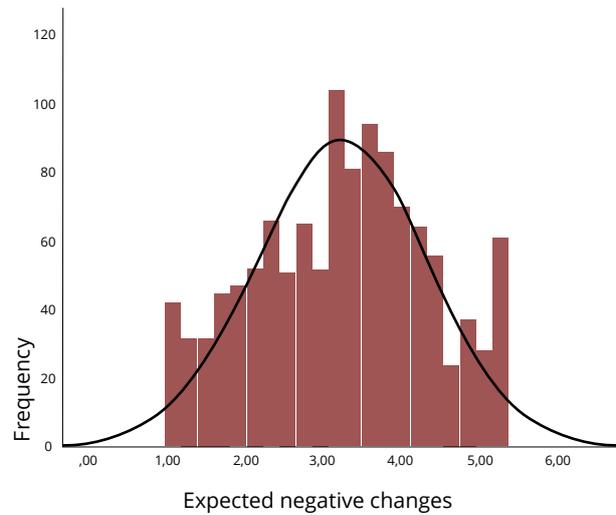
When it comes to their *readiness to help asylum beneficiaries personally*, the participants state they are not sure of their readiness in this respect, as shown by their average score which is around the mean value on the 1 to 5 scale (*M* = 2.91). A low and negative curvature index = - 0.12 suggests a higher score clustering in the zone of positive values, but distribution is generally symmetric (Fig. 9). Somewhat less than a quarter of the participants (22.9%) would not be ready to engage personally in helping asylum beneficiaries (scores below 2), whereas 17.2% state they would be ready to engage personally in the efforts to integrate asylum beneficiaries into their communities.
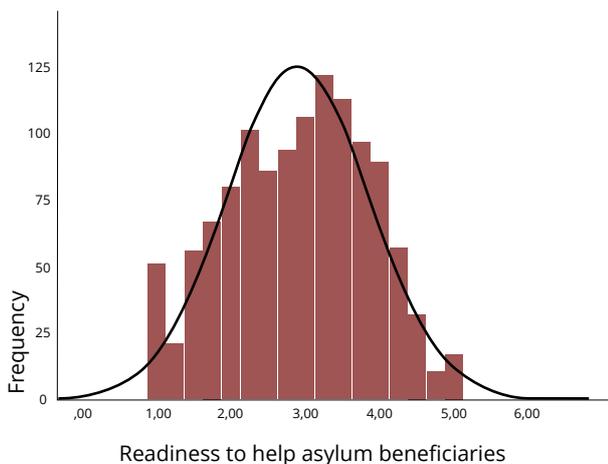

Figure 9. Distribution of answers on the *Scale of readiness to help asylum beneficiaries* (score range from 1 to 5)

Regarding the *frequency of contacts with asylum beneficiaries*, the average value for the total sample (i.e. *M* = 1.81) suggest that the participants come into contact only rarely, where those who have any contact (somewhat more than half of the sample or 52.1%) assess it as neutral (*M* = 2.07) on a 1-to-3 scale. Among the participants who stated they had contacts with asylum beneficiaries, 28.9 % meets them rarely, 17.9 % meets them only sometimes, 5% meets them frequently, while 0.4% meets them very frequently. Accordingly, these results show that encounters of Croatian citizens with asylum beneficiaries occur only rarely.

Table 5 shows the sources of information on asylum beneficiaries used by Croatian citizens.

Source of information about asylum beneficiaries	Frequency	Share (%)
Mass media (printed and online editions of newspapers, television, radio)	1150	90.4
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	583	45.8
Non-governmental/civil-society organisations	98	7.7
Local or central government authorities	56	4.4
Personal contact	97	7.6
Friends	12	0.9
I don' look for information on asylum beneficiaries	69	5.4
Other	1	0.1

The figures contained in Table 5 show that the mass media (printed and online editions of newspapers, television and radio) are *the most common source of information for Croatian citizens* (more than 90% of citizens use them to keep themselves informed about asylum beneficiaries). They are followed by social media, which are used as a source of information about asylum beneficiaries by nearly half of the participants (45.8%). Other sources of information are used much less frequently. The next most important source of information – non-governmental organisations – is used by only 7.7% of the participants, with a similar share of those getting information through personal contact (7.6%). Somewhat more than 5% of the participants do not look for information about asylum beneficiaries at all.

Since the media are such a vital source of information, it was important to see how the participants perceived *the media portrayal of asylum beneficiaries*. The original response scale from -3 via 0 as natural value to 3 was transformed onto a 1 to 7 scale, where the values from 1 to 3 represented its negative end, and those from 5 to 7 its positive end, with 4 constituting a neutral point. The citizens we found to perceive the media portrayal of asylum beneficiaries as slightly negative (M = 3.24).

The average level of *social proximity* which the participants are ready to establish with asylum beneficiaries is M = 3.88, which is somewhere between accepting asylum beneficiaries as fellow workers (Level 3) and neighbours (Level 4). As many as 15% of the participants did not want any kind of relationship with asylum beneficiaries, and almost one fourth (24.6%) refused to answer this question. Table 6 show the distribution of answers.

Table 6. Frequency and percentage shares of participants ready for specific levels of proximity to asylum beneficiaries

Level of proximity	Frequency	Share (%)
I would accept an intimate relationship with an asylum beneficiary.	222	19.9
I would accept an asylum beneficiary as a family member.	308	27.5
I would accept an asylum beneficiary as a friend.	706	60.5
I would accept an asylum beneficiary as a neighbour.	821	69.7
I would accept an asylum beneficiary as a fellow worker.	876	73.6
I would accept an asylum beneficiary as a Croatian citizen.	784	67
I would accept an asylum beneficiary as a person in transit through Croatia.	1073	86.5
I wouldn't accept any kind of relationship.	144	15

The participants were also asked about acceptable *acculturation strategies*, that is, about how asylum beneficiaries should address the acceptance of the Croatian culture and the maintenance of their own culture. These results are shown in Table 7 and reveal that most of the participants (70.7%) chose integration as the preferred acculturation strategy for asylum beneficiaries (both maintaining their own culture and accepting their host country's culture). About one fifth of the participants (20.8%) uphold assimilation as the preferred acculturation strategy; i.e. they expect asylum beneficiaries to relinquish their specific culture and accept solely that of their host country. Separation – i.e. the opinion that asylum beneficiaries should maintain only their own culture without accepting Croatia's – is upheld by 3.7% of the participants.

Table 7. Frequency and percentage shares of participants choosing a specific acculturation strategy as the preferred approach

Preferred acculturation strategy	Frequency	Share (%)
Assimilation	265	21.9
Integration	899	74.2
Separation	47	3.9

Lastly, the participants were asked to estimate the number of persons granted asylum at the time of survey (May-June 2018) and express their view as to whether the future number of asylum beneficiaries in Croatia should decrease, increase or remain the same. These results are shown in Table 8.

		Frequency	Per cent (%)
Estimate of the current number of persons granted asylum	Less than 50	120	10.1
	51–100	224	18.9
	101–400	249	21
	401–700	213	18
	701–1000	152	12.8
	over 1,000	226	19.1
Estimate of the current number of persons granted asylum (responses in three categories)	Underestimated	344	29.1
	Estimated correctly	249	21
	Overestimated	591	49.9
Attitude on the number of asylum beneficiaries in the future	Reduce significantly	237	21.1
	Reduce	275	24.5
	Keep the same	514	45.8
	Increase	95	8.5
	Increase greatly	2	0.2
Attitude on the number of asylum beneficiaries in the future (responses in three categories)	Reduce	512	45.6
	Remain the same	514	45.8
	Increase	97	8.6

Table 8 shows that roughly one fifth of the sample (21%) estimates the number of asylum beneficiaries more or less accurately (thus, they chose the suggested range of 101–400). Namely, according to the data of the MoI, the number of persons granted asylum in the Republic of Croatia during the research period was approximately 400. Slightly over one quarter of the participants (29%) estimated that the number of asylum beneficiaries is lower than it actually is, while almost one half (49.9%) overestimated the number of asylum beneficiaries. The projections of the optimum number of asylum beneficiaries in the future align with these responses: most participants, 45.8% of them, believe that the number of asylum beneficiaries should remain the same, a negligibly smaller share of participants (45.6%) would reduce their number, while less than one tenth, 8.6%, believe that the number of asylum beneficiaries in Croatia should increase in the future.

5.5.4. REGIONAL DIFFERENCES IN MEASURED CONSTRUCTS

This chapter contains data pertaining to research problem 1.2, within which framework the similarities and differences in attitudes and other relevant variables are identified among participants from the four Croatian regions: Eastern, Central, Littoral and Dalmatian. The equality of variance test (Levene's test) has been proven significant for all key variables, so that Welch's analysis of variance (ANOVA) has been utilized. These results are shown in Table 9. The Games-Howell post-hoc comparisons test has been used, as it was specifically formulated for situations in which the homogeneity of variances is not achieved. Moreover, this test generates reliable results even when the sample sizes for different groups are not

equal. As shown in Table 9, the classic ANOVA F-test and Welch's test exhibit the same, statistically significant, differences in all but one case (the one that regards the assessment of the quality of contacts with persons granted asylum, where the F-ratio shows that the differences are statistically significant, while a more rigid application of Welch's method does not recognize these differences as statistically significant).

Table 9. Differences among the four regions based on research variables

	Region	N	M	SD	F	df	η^2	Welch's *F*
Attitudes toward persons granted asylum	Eastern	298	3.01	0.88	31.44**	3/1125	.08	29.96** (df= 3/612.28)
	Central	255	3.19	0.81				
	Littoral	305	3.27	0.70				
	Dalmatian	271	2.64	0.92				
Realistic threat	Eastern	312	3.22	0.97	15.19**	3/1235	.04	14.92** (df= 3/683.43)
	Central	310	3.05	0.99				
	Littoral	316	3.15	0.83				
	Dalmatian	301	3.53	0.93				
Symbolic threat	Eastern	302	3.45	0.93	16.06**	3/1219	.04	15.79** (df= 3/672.41)
	Central	292	3.31	0.81				
	Littoral	314	3.27	0.73				
	Dalmatian	315	3.70	0.91				
Support for the rights of persons granted asylum	Eastern	301	3.22	0.94	55.09**	3/1113	.13	56.92** (df= 3/594.56)
	Central	241	3.49	0.86				
	Littoral	297	3.75	0.65				
	Dalmatian	278	2.82	1.11				
Expectations of negative change in the community	Eastern	307	3.04	1.14	18.84**	3/1185	.05	20.03** (df= 3/656.69)
	Central	277	2.80	0.99				
	Littoral	309	2.97	1.00				
	Dalmatian	296	3.43	1.02				
Readiness to assist persons granted asylum	Eastern	312	2.87	0.96	20.70**	3/1196	.05	21.59** (df= 3/655.99)
	Central	294	2.94	0.94				
	Littoral	315	3.20	0.82				
	Dalmatian	279	2.60	1.02				
Frequency of contacts with persons granted asylum	Eastern	314	1.49	0.76	21.31**	3/1260	.05	24.98** (df= 3/696.10)
	Central	317	2.05	0.93				
	Littoral	317	1.90	1.06				
	Dalmatian	316	1.80	0.83				

	Region	N	M	SD	F	df	η²	Welch's F
Quality of contacts with persons granted asylum	Eastern	111	2.10	0.47	3.01*	3/639	.01	2.36 (df= 3/330.55)
	Central	209	2.11	0.54				
	Littoral	153	2.11	0.48				
	Dalmatian	170	1.96	0.66				
Perception of media portrayals of persons granted asylum	Eastern	314	3.19	1.45	4.18**	3/1230	.01	5.03** (df= 3/675.78)
	Central	309	3.48	1.23				
	Littoral	316	3.14	1.25				
	Dalmatian	295	3.14	1.68				
Social proximity	Eastern	276	3.87	2.16	48.38**	3/955	.13	42.27** (df= 3/516.10)
	Central	212	4.40	2.20				
	Littoral	252	4.77	2.26				
	Dalmatian	219	2.36	2.55				

*$p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$*

As Table 9 shows, the *attitude toward persons granted asylum* differs among the four Croatian regions (Welch's F, hereinafter: F_w) = (3, 612.28) = 29.96; $p < 0.01$. These differences are plainly shown in Fig. 10. The extent of the effect, expressed as the coefficient η², of 0.08, indicates that this is small to medium effect, i.e., that only 8% of the variance in attitudes toward asylum beneficiaries may be explained by regional differences.
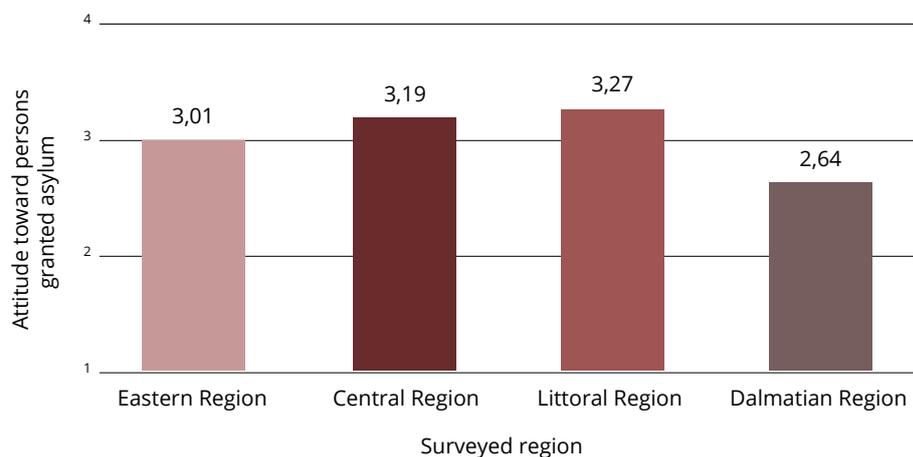

Fig. 10. Attitude towards persons granted asylum among participants from different regions (higher results indicate more positive attitude)

The post-hoc tests (analysis that shows statistically significant results between various regions) are shown in Table 10. These tests demonstrate that participants from Central and Littoral Croatia have an equally positive attitude towards asylum beneficiaries and this attitude is more positive than in other Croatian regions. A slightly more negative attitude, and the most negative in all regions, was expressed by participants from the Dalmatian region. An entirely neutral attitude was expressed by participants from the

Eastern Region. Thus, if we were to rank attitudes towards asylum beneficiaries, then it would run from the slightly negative attitude in Dalmatia, through the neutral attitude in Eastern Croatia to the slightly positive attitude in the Central and Littoral regions.

Table 10. Post-hoc comparisons of regional differences in attitudes towards persons granted asylum

Comparison of regions	ΔM	Games-Howell	
		SE	p
Eastern – Central	-0.19	0.07	**<.05**
Eastern – Littoral	-0.26	0.07	**<.01**
Eastern – Dalmatian	0.36	0.08	**<.01**
Central – Littoral	-0.07	0.07	>.05
Central – Dalmatian	0.55	0.08	**<.01**
Littoral – Dalmatian	0.62	0.07	**<.01**

Participants from the four regions also differ with regard to the threat which they perceive from persons granted asylum, both in terms of the *realistic threat* F_W = (3, 683.43) = 14.92; $p < 0.01$, and the *symbolic threat* F_W = (3, 672.41) = 15.79; $p < 0.01$. The effect size in both cases is small ($\eta^2 = 0.04$), which means only a 4% variance in the perceived threat from asylum beneficiaries may be explained by regional differences. Regional differences in the perception of the realistic threat are presented in Fig. 11.
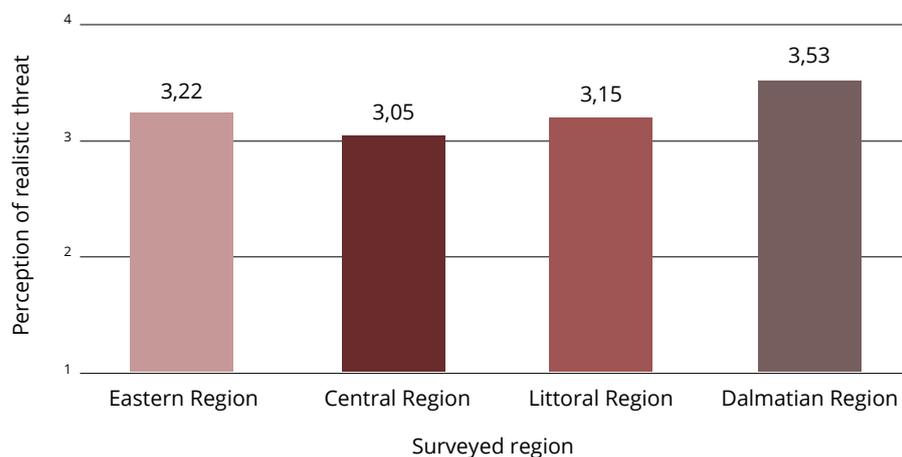

Fig. 11. Perception of realistic threat from persons granted asylum among participants from various regions

The post-hoc tests shown in Table 11 demonstrate significant differences in perceptions of realistic threats between the Eastern and Dalmatian regions, wherein the participants from Dalmatia perceive a higher level of realistic threat from persons granted asylum than those in the Eastern Region, but also those in the Central and Littoral regions. In other words, the participants from Dalmatia perceive the highest level of realistic threats, and it is statistically significantly higher than the level of realistic threat perceived by residents of the Eastern, Littoral and Central regions. The differences between other Croatian regions are not statistically significant in this regard.

Table 11. Post-hoc comparisons of regional differences in the perception of realistic threat from persons granted asylum

Comparison of regions	ΔM	Games-Howell	
		SE	p
Eastern – Central	0.17	0.08	>.05
Eastern – Littoral	0.07	0.07	>.05
Eastern – Dalmatian	-0.31	0.08	**<.01**
Central – Littoral	-0.10	0.07	>.05
Central – Dalmatian	-0.48	0.08	**<.01**
Littoral – Dalmatian	-0.38	0.07	**<.01**

Regional differences in the *perception of symbolic threat* are shown in Fig. 12.
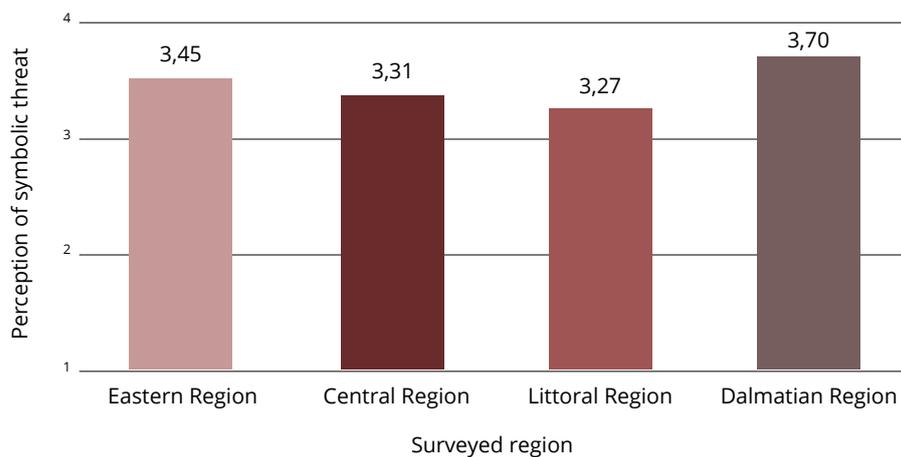
Fig. 12. Perception of symbolic threat from persons granted asylum among participants from various regions

Post-hoc comparisons of the perception of symbolic threat in various regions are shown in Table 12, and they exhibit the same pattern of significant regional differences as in the case of perceptions of realistic threat. Thus, there are significant differences in perceptions of symbolic threat between the Eastern and Dalmatian regions, wherein the participants from Dalmatia perceive a higher level of symbolic threat from persons granted asylum than those in the Eastern Region, but also in the Central and Littoral regions. In other words, the participants in the Dalmatian Region, as in the case of realistic threat, perceive the highest level of symbolic threat, and it is statistically significantly higher than the level of symbolic threat perceived by residents of the Eastern, Littoral and Central regions. The differences between other Croatian regions are not statistically significant in this regard.

Comparison of regions	ΔM	Games-Howell	
		SE	p
Eastern – Central	0.14	0.07	>.05
Eastern – Littoral	0.17	0.07	>.05
Eastern – Dalmatian	-0.25	0.07	**<.01**
Central – Littoral	0.04	0.06	>.05
Central – Dalmatian	-0.39	0.07	**<.01**
Littoral – Dalmatian	-0.43	0.07	**<.01**

With regard to *support for the legal rights of persons granted asylum*, there are also regional differences, $F_w = (3, 594.56) = 56.92$; $p < 0.01$, and they are presented in Fig. 13. This is a high value of the effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.13$), and approximately 13% of the variance in the difference in support for the rights of asylum beneficiaries may be ascribed to regional differences.
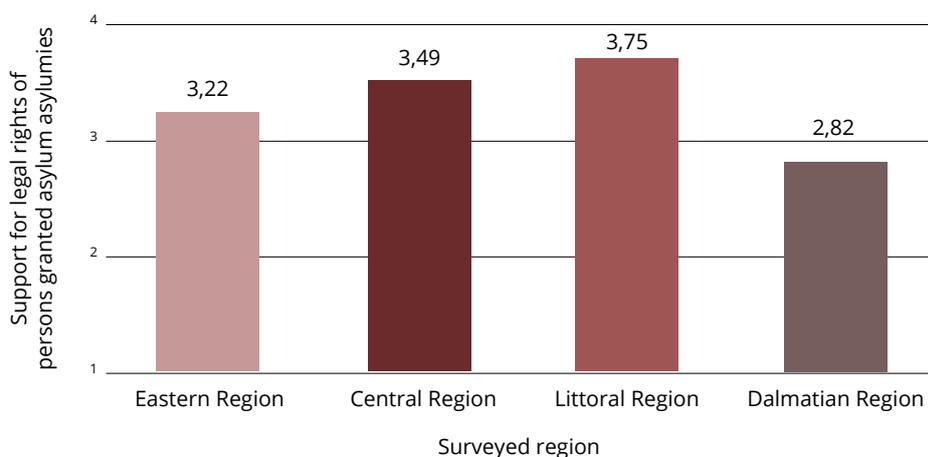
Fig. 13. Support for the legal rights of persons granted asylum among participants from various regions

Table 13 contains the post-hoc mutual comparisons among regions on the matter of support expressed for the rights of persons granted asylum, and it shows that all regional differences are mutually significant. The greatest support for the rights of asylum beneficiaries was expressed by participants from the Littoral Region, followed by those from the Central and then Eastern regions. The least support for the rights of asylum beneficiaries was expressed by participants from Dalmatia, and the value of their support is somewhat lower than the neutral point of the scale ($M = 2.82$).

Table 13. Post-hoc comparisons of regional differences in support for the rights of persons granted asylum

Comparison of regions	ΔM	Games-Howell	
		SE	p
Eastern – Central	-0.27	0.08	**<.01**
Eastern – Littoral	-0.53	0.07	**<.01**
Eastern – Dalmatian	0.40	0.09	**<.01**
Central – Littoral	-0.26	0.07	**<.01**
Central – Dalmatian	0.67	0.09	**<.01**
Littoral – Dalmatian	0.93	0.08	**<.01**

There are also regional differences in *expectations of negative changes in the community* which could arise due to the arrival of persons granted asylum F_w = (3, 656.69) = 20.03; *p* < 0.01; these differences are illustrated in Fig. 14, while the post-hoc comparisons of the differences among individual regions are shown in Table 14. Although the differences are significant, this is a moderate effect size (η^2 = 0.05). The lowest negative changes are expected by the residents of the Central and Littoral regions, and there are no statistically significant differences between them, and their expectations rest in the zone of the scale's neutral values. In the Eastern Region, residents expect statistically more significant negative changes than in the Central Region, and those values are precisely on the scale's neutral point. In other words, the residents of these three regions actually do not expect negative changes in their communities or they have assessed that such changes will be entirely negligibly negative. In the Dalmatian Region, however, the residents expect negative changes and their expectations are statistically significantly more negative than in all other regions in Croatia.
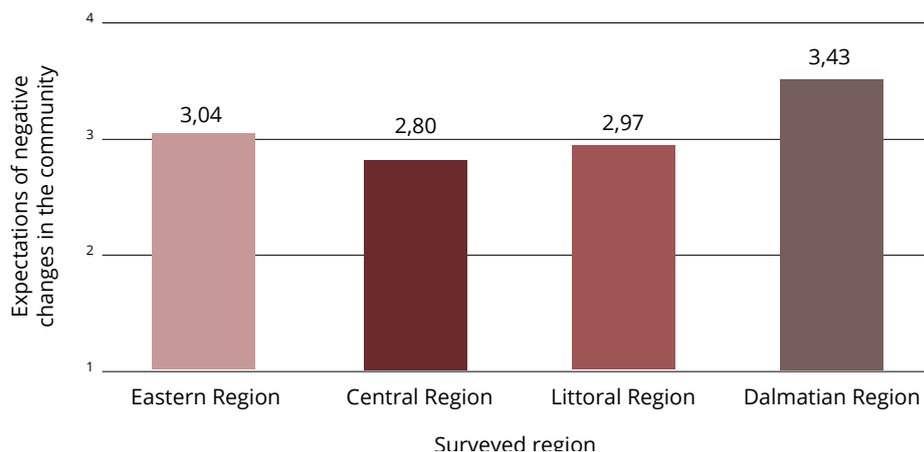

Fig. 14. Expectations of negative changes in the community among participants from various regions

Comparison of regions	ΔM	Games-Howell	
		SE	p
Eastern – Central	0.24	0.09	**<.05**
Eastern – Littoral	0.07	0.09	>.05
Eastern – Dalmatian	-0.39	0.09	**<.01**
Central – Littoral	-0.18	0.08	>.05
Central – Dalmatian	-0.63	0.08	**<.01**
Littoral – Dalmatian	-0.45	0.08	**<.01**

With regard to *readiness for personal engagement in the provision of assistance to persons granted asylum*, there are also differences between participants from various Croatian regions, $F_W = (3, 655.99) = 21.59$; $p < 0.01$, with an average effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.05$), and these differences are illustrated in Fig. 15, while the post-hoc comparisons of the differences between individual regions shown in Table 15. Thus, the highest degree of readiness for personal engagement was demonstrated by residents of the Littoral Region, and then, statistically significantly less, by those from the Central Region. It is important to stress that both values are around the scale's neutral point, which was presented to the participants as "I'm not sure." In other words, the highest expressions of readiness to assist asylum beneficiaries are indicated by precisely this response: that the participants are unsure. The residents of the remaining Croatian regions – Eastern and Dalmatian – are statistically less significantly ready to become personally engaged in providing assistance to asylum beneficiaries, wherein the readiness of residents of Dalmatia differs from that of all others and has the lowest value ($M = 2.60$), and so their responses are on average between the responses that they probably would not become personally engaged and that they are unsure if they would.
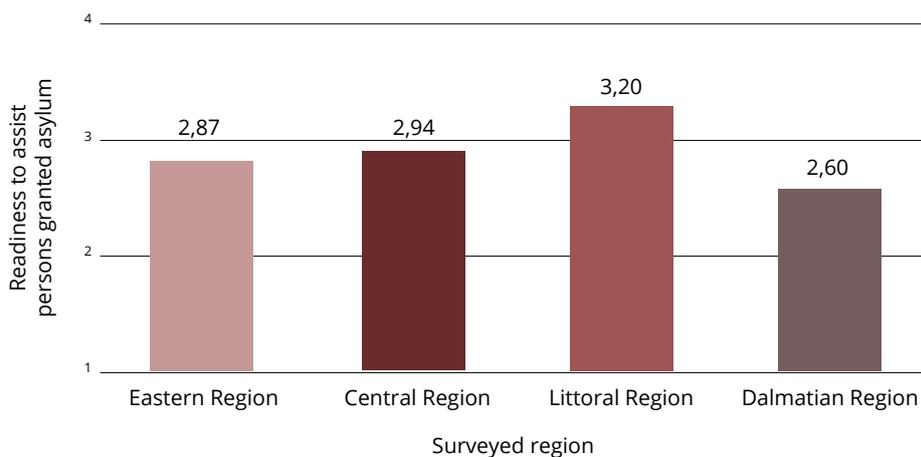

Fig. 15. Readiness to assist persons granted asylum among participants from various regions

Comparison of regions	ΔM	Games-Howell	
		SE	p
Eastern – Central	-0.08	0.08	>.05
Eastern – Littoral	-0.34	0.07	**<.01**
Eastern – Dalmatian	0.26	0.08	**<.01**
Central – Littoral	-0.26	0.07	**<.01**
Central – Dalmatian	0.34	0.08	**<.01**
Littoral – Dalmatian	0.60	0.08	**<.01**

The four Croatian regions also differ with respect to the *frequency and quality of contacts with persons granted asylum*. We noted above that only 52% of Croatia's residents had had any contact with asylum beneficiaries. Assessments of their frequency differ among the four regions, $F_W = (3, 696.10) = 24.98$; $p < 0.01$, with an average effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.05$). These differences are shown in Fig. 16 and Table 16. The most frequent contacts, but these also rare, were made by participants from the Central and then Littoral regions, and between these regions there are no differences in the frequency of contacts with asylum beneficiaries. The Dalmatian Region follows, and participants in the Eastern Region had almost no contacts with persons granted asylum at all and their assessments of the frequency of contacts differ from those in all other regions.
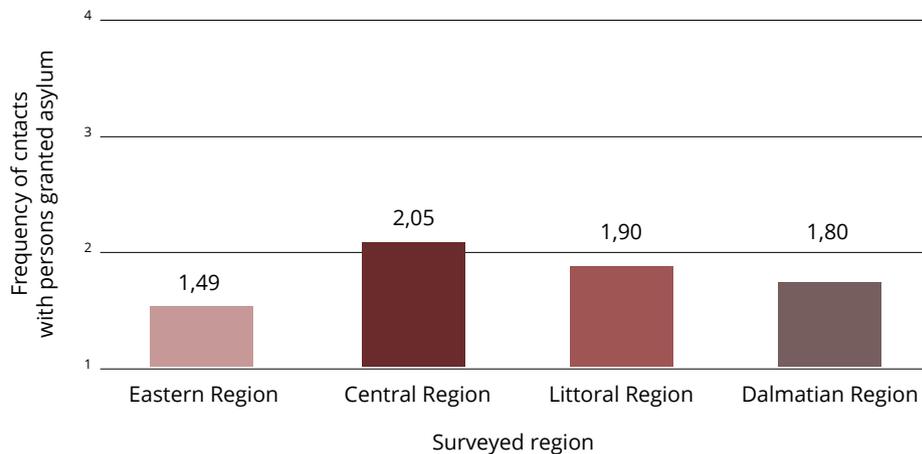

Fig. 16. Frequency of contacts with persons granted asylum by participants from various regions

Comparison of regions	ΔM	Games-Howell	
		SE	p
Eastern – Central	-0.56	0.07	**<.01**
Eastern – Littoral	-0.41	0.07	**<.01**
Eastern – Dalmatian	-0.31	0.06	**<.01**
Central – Littoral	0.15	0.08	>.05
Central – Dalmatian	0.25	0.07	**<.01**
Littoral – Dalmatian	0.10	0.08	>.05

With regard to the *quality of contacts with asylum beneficiaries* there are no regional differences among residents of Croatia, F_W = (3, 330.55) = 2.36; p > 0.05. All assessments, as seen in Fig. 17, revolve around the value of 2, which means that participants assess the quality of contacts neutrally, i.e., "neither positive, nor negative."
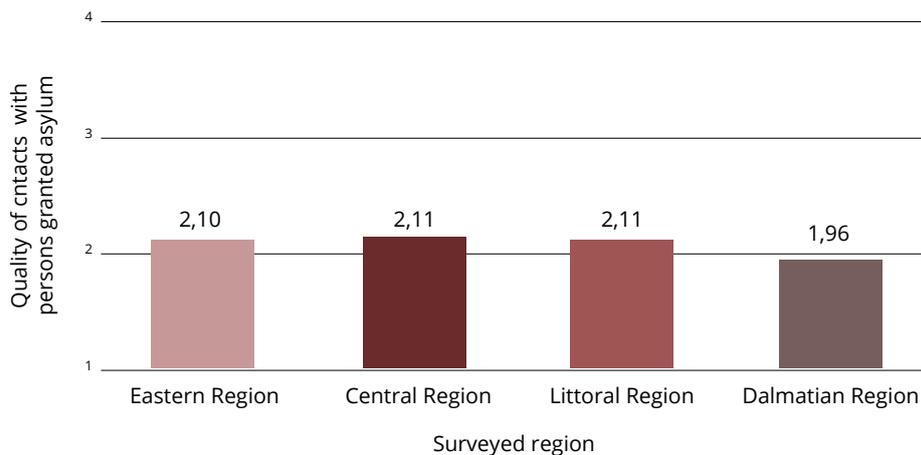

Fig. 17. Quality of contacts with persons granted asylum by participants from various regions

The *perception of media portrayals of persons granted asylum* also differs by regions, F_W = (3, 675.78) = 5.03; p < 0.01, with a small effect size and differences ($η^2$ = 0.01). These differences are shown in Fig. 18 and Table 17, and they indicate that residents of the Central Region perceive media portrayals of asylum beneficiaries as the most positive (but, actually slightly negative) and their assessments differ from the assessments of participants in all other Croatian regions. The other regions do not differ among them, and their evaluations of the media portrayals of asylum beneficiaries stand around an assessment of 3, which indicates a slightly negative evaluation of the media portrayals of persons granted asylum.
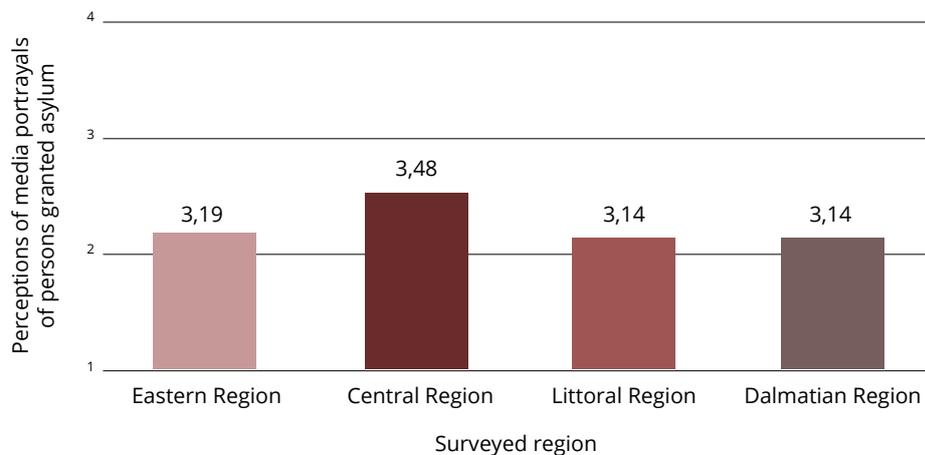
Fig. 18. Perceptions of the media portrayals of persons granted asylum among participants from various regions (higher results indicate more positive portrayals)

Table 17. Post-hoc comparisons of regional differences in perceptions of the media portrayals of persons granted asylum

Comparison of regions	ΔM	Games-Howell	
		SE	p
Eastern – Central	-0.29	0.11	**<.05**
Eastern – Littoral	0.06	0.11	>.05
Eastern – Dalmatian	0.06	0.13	>.05
Central – Littoral	0.34	0.10	**<.01**
Central – Dalmatian	0.34	0.12	**<.05**
Littoral – Dalmatian	0.00	0.12	>.05

The regions considerably and statistically significantly differ with regard to the *social proximity* their residents are prepared to have with persons granted asylum, $F_W = (3, 516.10) = 42.27$; $p < 0.01$, with a large effect size and differences ($\eta^2 = 0.13$). These assessments are shown in Fig. 19 and Table 18. The residents of the Littoral Region are open to the highest degree of proximity (friendly relations), followed by those in the Central Region, but these responses do not statistically significantly differ. Participants from the Eastern Region are prepared for neighbourly relations, and they are thus prepared for a statistically considerably lower degree of proximity than people in the Littoral and Central regions, but nonetheless higher than in Dalmatia, where participants are prepared for a lower degree of proximity – their responses on average indicate their readiness only for asylum beneficiaries becoming citizens of Croatia. The responses of residents of the Dalmatian Region statistically significantly differ from all others.
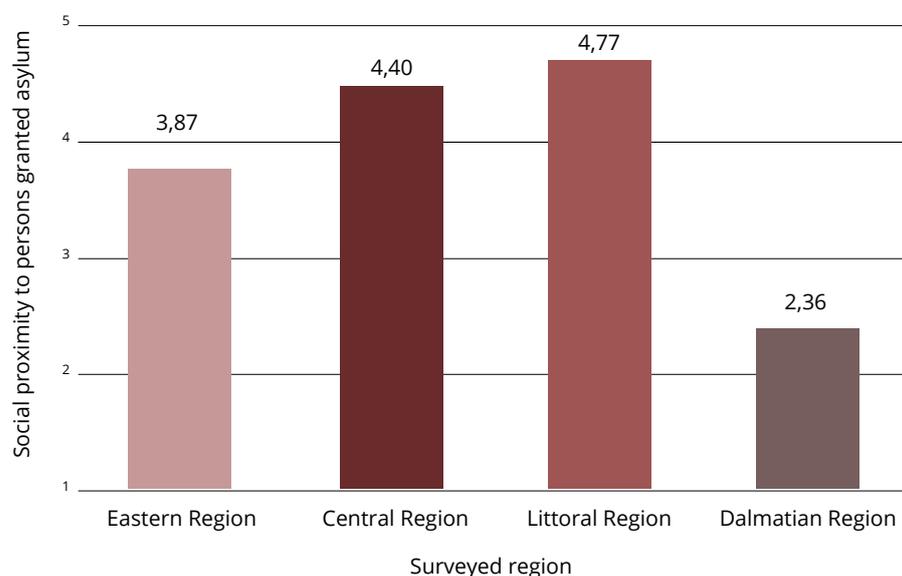
Fig. 19. Readiness for social proximity to persons granted asylum among participants from various regions

Table 18. Post-hoc comparisons of regional differences in readiness for social proximity with persons granted asylum

Comparison of regions	ΔM	Games-Howell	
		SE	p
Eastern – Central	-0.54	0.20	**<.05**
Eastern – Littoral	-0.90	0.19	**<.01**
Eastern – Dalmatian	1.51	0.22	**<.01**
Central – Littoral	-0.37	0.21	>.05
Central – Dalmatian	2.04	0.23	**<.01**
Littoral – Dalmatian	2.41	0.22	**<.01**

Finally, there are also regional differences in the *preference of acculturation strategies for persons granted asylum*. The distribution of responses given by respondents is shown in Table 19. The value of the chi-squared test, which is also statistically significant, shows that the distribution of these responses varies in different regions. An inspection of the values in the table indicates that although integration is the most preferred acculturation strategy in all the regions, in Dalmatia it is rather equal to assimilation, so it is possible to say that the participants from this region equally prefer integration and assimilation of persons granted asylum. In other regions, the preferred acculturation strategy is integration.

Table 19. Distribution of acculturation-strategy preferences for persons granted asylum in the four regions

		Frequency (percentage)				χ^2
		Eastern	Central	Littoral	Dalmatian	
Perception of desirability of accult. strategies	Assimilation	64 (20.8%)	35 (11.9%)	42 (13.3%)	124 (42.5%)	
	Integration	238 (77.3%)	250 (84.7%)	261 (82.6%)	150 (51.4%)	116.32**
	Separation	6 (1.9%)	10 (3.4%)	13 (4.1%)	18 (6.2%)	

** $p < 0.01$

We shall now also present regional differences in estimates of the number of persons who have been granted asylum in Croatia, and estimates of the desirable number of asylum beneficiaries in the future. Fig. 20 shows the *estimates of the number of persons granted asylum in Croatia* by participants from the four regions in terms of whether they overestimate, underestimate or accurately estimate the number of asylum beneficiaries. The interregional differences were computed with the help of a chi-squared test, which shows that these differences are a statistically significant X^2 (6, $N = 1184$) = 74.91, $p < .01$. An examination of the distribution of the results shows that this difference ensues from a clear overestimation of the number of asylum beneficiaries in the Littoral and Dalmatian regions and t in the Central Region, and a clear underestimation of the number of asylum beneficiaries in the Eastern Region.
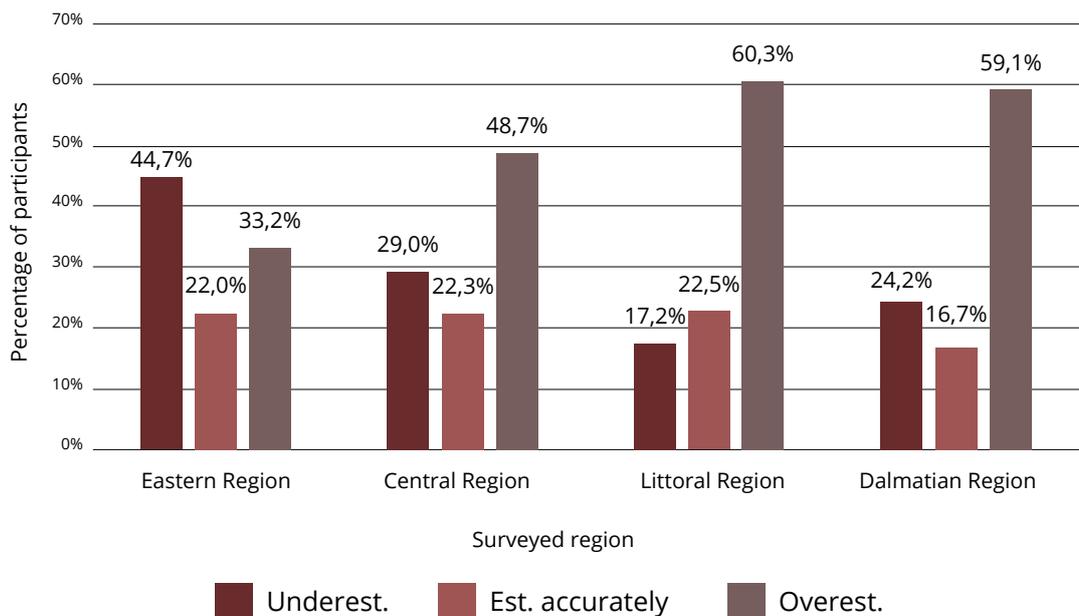

Fig. 20. Estimates of the number of persons granted asylum in the four regions in Croatia

An illustration of estimates of the *desirable number of persons granted asylum in the future* (thus, an estimate as to whether the number of asylum beneficiaries or cases of granted asylum should be reduced, increased or remain the same) is provided in Fig. 21. Testing of the interregional differences in estimates of the desired number of asylum beneficiaries yielded a statistically significant chi-squared test, X^2 (6, N = 1123) = 115.94, p < .01, indicating that the regions differ from one another in these estimates. An inspection of the distribution of responses shows a clear pattern of responses that is the source of these differences: while the residents of the Central and Littoral regions are more keen for the number of asylum beneficiaries to remain the same in the future, the residents of the Eastern and Dalmatian regions would prefer for it to decline in the future.
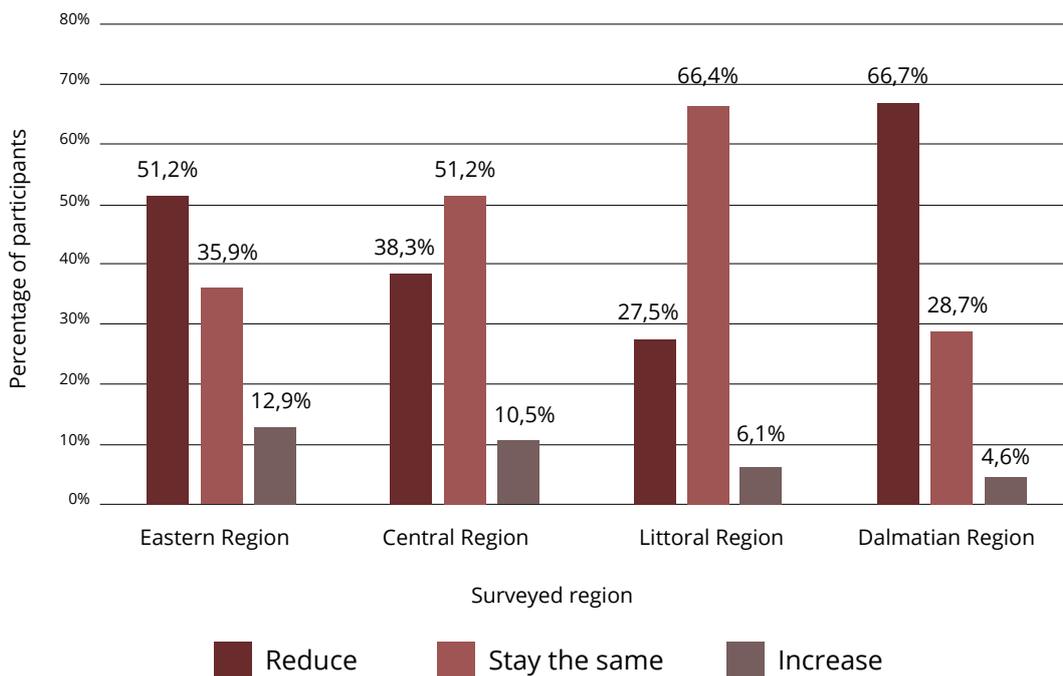

Fig. 21. Estimate of the desirable number of persons granted asylum in the future in the four regions

5.5.5. CORRELATIONS OF ALL VARIABLES IN THE RESEARCH

Within the framework of research problem 1.3, the connections have been examined between utilised measurements of attitudes towards the integration of persons granted asylum (attitude towards asylum beneficiaries, support for rights of asylum beneficiaries, perceptions of realistic and symbolic threats, expectations of negative changes in the community, readiness to assist asylum beneficiaries and readiness for close relationships with them), frequency and quality of personal contacts with asylum beneficiaries, perceptions of the number of asylum beneficiaries now and in the future, perceptions of the media portrayals of asylum beneficiaries and socio-demographic traits of respondents, their political orientation and religiosity.

Table A (*Appendix 2*) shows the Pearson coefficients of correlation between all variables used in the research. For the purpose of this descriptive analysis, we shall only comment on the correlations between key attitude variables. From the table, it is therefore apparent that the attitudes toward persons granted asylum, both threat measures and support for the rights of persons granted asylum are mutually highly linked and have the expected direction. As expected, positive attitudes toward persons granted asylum and the high support for their rights are highly positively correlated.

The measures of symbolic and realistic threats are mutually positively and highly correlated, indicating that the perception of a high realistic threat is accompanied by a perception of a high symbolic threat. Both types of threats are also highly negatively correlated to attitudes on and support for the rights of asylum beneficiaries, which means that a high level of perceived realistic and symbolic threats is accompanied by more negative attitudes towards asylum beneficiaries, as well as less support for their rights.

Expectations of negative changes in the community and readiness to assist asylum beneficiaries are highly correlated to these variables in the anticipated direction. So those who expect that the arrival of asylum beneficiaries to their community will lead to negative changes in it also have more negative attitudes towards persons granted asylum, they perceive a higher realistic and symbolic threat, express less support for the rights of persons granted asylum and are less prepared to become personally engaged in assisting asylum beneficiaries. On the other hand, those who are more prepared to become personally engaged in rendering support have more positive attitudes towards asylum beneficiaries, perceive less of a threat, give greater support to the exercise of rights by asylum beneficiaries and do not expect negative changes in their communities .

Social proximity measure is highly correlated to these variables, and the correlation goes in the expected direction. Thus, the higher readiness for social proximity with persons granted asylum is accompanied by more positive attitudes towards them, a lower perception of threat, higher support for their rights, expectation of fewer negative changes in the community and higher readiness for personal engagement in assisting asylum beneficiaries.

The correlations between these attitudes and measures of the attitude towards preserving the culture of asylum beneficiaries and estimates of the desirable number of asylum beneficiaries in the future are moderately high. Thus, in general terms, more favourable attitudes correlate positively with the position that the asylum beneficiaries' culture be preserved (and the weaker attitude that the most desirable acculturation strategy for asylum beneficiaries is assimilation), and with the assessment that the number of asylum beneficiaries should be increased in the future. The estimate of the quality of contacts with persons granted asylum also has a moderately high correlation with these

attitudes. So those who have generally positive contacts with persons granted asylum also have more positive attitudes towards them, perceive a lower threat, express greater support for the rights of asylum beneficiaries, expect fewer negative changes in the community, and are more ready to assist asylum beneficiaries.

Socio-demographic variables generally do not correlate with attitudes, and when they do, those correlations are low. Religiosity and political-orientation variables also have a low correlation with attitudes: thus, it has been shown that more negative attitudes toward persons granted asylum, a higher perception of a threat, lower support for the rights of asylum beneficiaries and higher expectations of negative changes are demonstrated by participants who are practicing believers, and those of a right-wing political orientation. Generally, it may be said that the variables of political orientation are a more important determinant of attitudes than religiosity, that it, that political orientation is linked to a higher number of key variables in the research than religiosity, although the correlations are not high.

5.5.6. POSSIBILITY OF PREDICTING READINESS FOR SOCIAL PROXIMITY AND READINESS TO ASSIST THE INTEGRATION OF PERSONS GRANTED ASYLUM

Research problem 1.4. focuses on the possibility of predicting the readiness of Croatian citizens for the integration of persons granted asylum. An analytical model was set on the basis of a hierarchical regression analysis and using it, on the basis of selected traits of research participants, it is possible to predict the readiness for acceptance and integration of persons granted asylum into Croatian society. Two measures of behavioural intentions were selected as criteria: readiness for social proximity with persons granted asylum, and readiness to assist persons granted asylum in the process of their adaptation to life in Croatia. We will provide an overview of results in the total sample of citizens, which do not essentially differ in comparison to the results in the sub-samples of regions. However, where such differences do arise, they shall be specifically highlighted.

Predicting the results of these two criteria – readiness for social proximity and readiness to assist asylum beneficiaries – was conducted using a hierarchical regression analysis, which consists of a graduated introduction of variable blocks

(predictors) and observing their contribution, in order to ascertain the utility of individual sets of predictors with monitoring of the rest. Our selection of predictors was guided by the criteria of their theoretical and metric relevance. When the metric relevance (e.g. zero or very low correlation of predictors with a criterion) was low, the predictor was not included in the regression equation. Since socio-demographic variables generally are significant for the prediction of different social attitudes, it was important to control them and include them into the regression equation despite their generally low correlation with the criteria.

We forecasted two criterion variables on the basis of six blocks of predictors: in the *first step* we introduced socio-demographic variables (age, gender, marital status: recoded as single or in a relationship, regardless of whether the person is married or in another type of partnership; employment status: recoded as employed or unemployed; level of education expressed as number of years of completed schooling, and self-evaluation of living standard); in the *second step* we introduced variables that measure the religious and political orientation of participants (practicing faith: recoded in the sense of 'I am' or 'I am not a practicing believer'; importance of faith expressed as a self-evaluation of degree of importance, and political orientation expressed as self-evaluation of positioning oneself on a scale from left-wing to right-wing)[11]; in the *third step* we introduced measures of the attitude towards the number of asylum beneficiaries in the future, and desirable acculturation strategies (variable of change in the number of asylum beneficiaries was recoded as the opinion on whether the number of asylum beneficiaries should decline, remain the same or increase in the future, while the variable of desirable acculturation strategies was recoded so as to measure whether participants advocate or do not advocate strategies for the integration of asylum beneficiaries into Croatian society)[12]; in the *fourth step* we introduced variables of the frequency of contacts with persons granted asylum (from not at all to frequent)[13]; in the *fifth step* we introduced variables of symbolic and realistic threats; while in the *final, sixth step*, we introduced the variable of negative change in the community.[14]

Below we shall present the results of predictions of readiness for social proximity and readiness to personally assist persons granted asylum.

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[11]   Originally the political orientation variable was measured as stated: the participant positioned him-/herself on a scale from left-wing (1) to right-wing (5), but the participant could also choose to state that he/she has no political orientation. As we have shown in the descriptive analysis of results, 46% of participants chose precisely this option, so the sample for the prediction was reduced by almost a half. We believe, however, that the political orientation variable in Croatian context (but also in other contexts) is too important to be left out of the analysis when speaking of the prediction of attitudes and other measures of attitudes towards persons granted asylum, and we have chosen to include it in the analysis with the reduction in the sample as described.

[12]   We opted for this manner of presenting variables of attitudes toward acculturation strategies for two reasons: above all, we were interested in whether the attitude toward integration as a desirable acculturation strategy was an important predictor of target criterion variables; secondly, as shown in Table 7, less than 4% of participants advocated separation as a desirable acculturation strategy, so it seemed justifiable to express the variable of desirable acculturation strategy dichotomously: as support for integration or lack of support for integration.

[13]   Besides frequency of contacts, we posed to participants who had contacts with asylum beneficiaries the question of quality of contacts with them on a three-grade scale from generally negative to generally positive contacts. Social-psychology research has shown persuasively (e.g. Tropp & Pettigrew, 2011) that quality of contact is a crucial factor in the establishment of positive intergroup relations. Thus, it is justifiable to incorporate precisely this measure as a theoretically relevant predictor. As demonstrated by correlation table A (see Appendix), the quality of contact is a metrically relevant predictor. However, the fact that only slightly over half of the sample (52.1%) had any contact with asylum beneficiaries would additionally reduce the sample of participants in the analysis of prediction of criterion-variable results, so we refrained from introducing this predictor into the regression equation.

[14]   We did not include the variable of attitudes towards persons granted asylum and their integration into the prediction of the two selected criteria because of the potential problem of multicollinearity: namely, although it is highly correlated with both criteria, this variable is also very highly correlated with other predictors that in various ways impact the general attitude towards asylum beneficiaries and questions of their integration. Thus, we have decided to include as predictors precisely these individual aspects of attitudes towards asylum beneficiaries, rather than a general one.

5.5.6.1. SOCIAL PROXIMITY WITH PERSONS GRANTED ASYLUM

The results of the hierarchical regression analysis on the sample of Croatian citizens used to predict social proximity with asylum beneficiaries are shown in Table 20.

Table 20. Results of hierarchical regression analysis with socio-demographic variables, practicing and importance of religion, political orientation, attitude towards persons granted asylum, acculturation strategies, frequency of contacts with persons granted asylum, perception of realistic and symbolic threats and perception of negative change in the community as predictors of social proximity with persons granted asylum (N=472)

	step 1	step 2	step 3	step 4	step 5	step 6
Predictors	β	β	β	β	β	β
1. Age	.03	.01	-.05	-.04	-.04	-.03
2. Gender	.03	.02	-.03	-.03	-.05	-.05
3. Marital status	-.15**	-.11*	-.07*	-.07*	-.05	-.05
4. Employment status	.04	.01	-.01	-.02	-.01	-.00
5. Level of education	.11*	.10*	-.01	-.01	.00	.00
6. Living standard	-.02	.01	.03	.03	.00	-.00
7. Religious practice		-.27***	-.12*	-.12*	-.11*	-.10*
8. Importance of religion		.17*	.05	.06	.05	.03
9. Political orientation		-.21***	-.07	-.07	-.06	-.06
10. Change in number of persons granted asylum			.47***	.46***	.28***	.25***
11. Acculturation strategies			.29***	.29***	.20***	.19***
12. Frequency of contact				.04	.04	.06
13. Realistic threat					-.15**	-.10
14. Symbolic threat					-.20**	-.14*
15. Perception of negative change in community						-.17**
R	.18	.36	.71	.71	.75	.75
R²	.04	.13	.50	.50	.56	.56
Adjusted R²	.02	.11	.49	.49	.54	.55
F (df)	2.80*	7.60***	42.22***	38.83***	40.63***	39.31***
	(6, 456)	(9, 462)	(11, 460)	(12, 459)	(14, 457)	(15, 456)
ΔR²	.04	.09	.37	.00	.05	.01
ΔF (df)	2.80*	16.63***	172.59***	1.24	26.04***	9.85**
	(6, 465)	(3, 462)	(2, 460)	(1, 459)	(2, 457)	(1, 456)

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

As evident from Table 20, in the final, sixth step, 56% of the variance of social proximity to persons granted asylum was explained using the select set of predictors (F (15, 456) = 39.31; $p < 0.001$). The socio-demographic traits of the participants did not significantly contribute to the explanation of readiness for social proximity with asylum beneficiaries. Practicing religion was a peripherally significant predictor, wherein the participants who did not express themselves as practicing believers expressed readiness for a greater degree of proximity with asylum beneficiaries. The attitude towards the number of asylum beneficiaries in the future and acculturation strategies are actually the most important predictors of readiness for proximity with persons granted asylum (their independent contribution is 37% in the total explained variance). Those citizens who believe the number of asylum beneficiaries should increase in the future, as well as those who advocate integration, are more prepared for a higher degree of proximity. Finally, the perception of symbolic threats is peripherally significant, while fear of negative changes in the community has also proven significant: those who perceive a higher symbolic threat from asylum beneficiaries and who expect more negative change in the community due to the arrival of asylum beneficiaries are ready for a lower degree of proximity to them.

The described findings for the overall sample generally also apply to the sub-samples in the four regions: in the Eastern Region, the selected predictors explained 79% of the variance of readiness for proximity with asylum beneficiaries (F (15, 84) = 20.91; $p < 0.001$), in the Central Region 62% (F (15, 94) = 10.07; $p < 0.001$), in the Littoral Region only 21% (F (15, 140) = 2.46; $p < 0.01$), and in the Dalmatian Region 76% (F (15, 90) = 18.47; $p < 0.001$).

However, with regard to social proximity predictions, it is important to stress certain deviations and particularities in individual regions. Thus, for example, in the Eastern Region in the final step, practicing religion does not determine social proximity (β = -.02, $p > 0.05$), and the variables of change in the number of asylum beneficiaries (β = .18, $p < 0.05$) and acculturation strategies (β = .16, $p < 0.05$), as well as the symbolic threat (β = -.32, $p < 0.01$) and perception of negative change in the community (β = -.43, $p < 0.01$) remain peripherally significant; in the Central Region, acculturation strategies (β = .19, $p < 0.05$) and, intriguingly, perception of realistic threats (β = -.29, $p < 0.05$) remain significant. This means that in the Central Region, those residents who believe that persons granted asylum constitute a threat to the resources

of the local population (for example, that they will threaten their jobs, become a social burden, etc.) are also ready for a lower degree of proximity to them. In the Littoral Region, where, indeed, the least part of the variance of social proximity has been explained, that is, in which this set of predictors has been least useful in predicting to which extent the local population would be ready for closer social contacts with persons granted asylum, in the final step of the regression equation, only acculturation strategies (β = .22, $p < 0.05$) remained (peripherally) significant. Once more, participants with a greater affinity for integration are also more prepared for closer social contact with persons granted asylum. Finally, in the Dalmatian Region, certain socio-demographic variables even manifested as significant in the prediction: single people (β = -.17, $p < 0.01$) and persons who assessed their living standard as higher (β = .15, $p < 0.05$) expressed readiness for closer relations with asylum beneficiaries, as did those who believe that the number of asylum beneficiaries in Croatia should be increased in the future (β = .36, $p < 0.001$) and those who foresee fewer negative changes in the community due to the arrival of asylum beneficiaries (β = -.25, $p < 0.01$).

In conclusion, it may be said that based on this set of predictors it is possible to predict readiness of the host population for social proximity with persons granted asylum. Familiarity with the elements which we incorporated as predictors is useful if the intention is to create conditions conducive to the improvement of contacts between the host population and persons granted asylum. It would appear that with minor regional particularities, the most important aspect in this is knowing the attitude towards future increases in the number of asylum beneficiaries and the attitude towards the method of the integration of asylum beneficiaries into Croatian society. Those citizens who believe that the number of persons granted asylum should increase in the future and that integration is an appropriate acculturation strategy are also prepared for closer social relations with asylum beneficiaries. Citizens who share such attitudes could be vital allies when implementing integration policies in local communities. On the other hand, the perception of symbolic threats, and expectations of negative changes in the community will have negative impact on the readiness of citizens for closer contacts with asylum beneficiaries. Thus, a proactive approach may be recommended in the procedure to incorporate persons granted asylum into a local community and secure conditions

that will facilitate the establishment of close relations with the host population, so that concerns do not grow among citizens over preservation of the culture and way of life in their communities.

5.5.6.2. READINESS TO ASSIST ASYLUM BENEFICIARIES

The results of the hierarchical regression analysis on a sample of citizens of Croatia used to predict readiness to personally assist persons granted asylum are shown in Table 21.

Table 21. Results of hierarchical regression analysis with socio-demographic variables, practicing and importance of religion, political orientation, attitude towards persons granted asylum, acculturation strategies, frequency of contacts with persons granted asylum, perception of realistic and symbolic threats and perception of negative changes in the community as predictors of readiness to assist persons granted asylum (N=543)

Predictors	step 1 β	step 2 β	step 3 β	step 4 β	step 5 β	step 6 β
1. Age	.08	.06	-.01	.00	.02	.02
2. Gender	.16***	.13**	.09**	.09**	.07*	.07*
3. Marital status	-.06	-.03	.00	.01	.04	.04
4. Employment status	.02	-.01	-.03	-.05	-.04	-.04
5. Level of education	.08	.07	-.04	-.04	-.03	-.03
6. Living standard	.02	.05	.08*	.08*	.05	.05
7. Religious practice		-.14*	-.02	-.02	-.01	-.00
8. Importance of religion		.17**	.06	.07	.06	.05
9. Political orientation		-.26***	-.12**	-.10**	-.08*	-.08*
10. Change in number of persons granted asylum			.54***	.53***	.29***	.28***
11. Acculturation strategies			.17***	.18***	.06	.05
12. Frequency of contact				.15***	.15***	.16***
13. Realistic threat					-.15**	-.13**
14. Symbolic threat					-.31***	-.28***
15. Perception of negative change in community						-.08
R	.20	.33	.68	.70	.76	.76
R²	.04	.11	.47	.49	.58	.58
Adjusted R²	.03	.09	.46	.48	.57	.57
F (df)	3.54**	7.16***	42.40***	42.10***	51.60***	48.51***
	(6, 356)	(9, 533)	(11, 531)	(12, 530)	(14, 528)	(15, 527)
ΔR²	.04	.07	.36	.02	.09	.00
ΔF (df)	3.54**	13.91***	179.40***	21.13***	56.08***	2.81
	(6, 536)	(3, 533)	(2, 531)	(1, 530)	(2, 528)	(1, 527)

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Table 21 shows that in the final, sixth step, the selected set of predictors explains 58% of the variances in readiness to personally assist persons granted asylum (F (15, 527) = 48.51; $p <$ 0.001). Here as well, the socio-demographic traits of the participants did not significantly contribute to the explanation of readiness to assist, with the exception (peripherally) of the gender variable: women would be more prepared to assist. Furthermore, the political orientation of the participants is also peripherally significant: those on the left side of the political spectrum would be readier to assist. The attitude towards the number of asylum beneficiaries in the future also proved significant in the prediction of readiness to assist: those who believe the number of asylum beneficiaries should increase in the future are readier to render assistance. Another highly significant predictor is the frequency of contacts with persons granted asylum; those who have had more frequent contacts with asylum beneficiaries were also readier to render assistance. Finally, the variables of realistic and symbolic threats have also proven significant in the prediction of readiness to assist: those participants who perceive a threat from asylum beneficiaries are also less ready to become personally involved in assisting them.

The described results apply generally also to the four Croatian regions, with some particularities. Thus, in the Eastern Region, this set of predictors explains 70% of the variance of readiness to assist persons granted asylum (F (15, 94) = 14.26; $p <$ 0.001), 56% in the Central Region (F (15, 112) = 9.67; $p <$ 0.001), 37% in the Littoral Region (F (15, 159) = 6.20; $p <$ 0.001), and as much as 86% in the Dalmatian Region (F (15, 110) = 46.77; $p <$ 0.001). In the Eastern Region, the gender of the participants remains a peripherally significant vital predictor in the final step of the regression model (β = .17, $p <$ 0.05), as does the perception of symbolic threat (β = -.32, $p <$ 0.05), while expectation of negative changes in the community remains a highly significant predictor (β = -.43, $p <$ 0.001). In the Central Region, the employment status of the participants is peripherally significant (β = -.17, p < 0.05), so that unemployed participants will be readier for personal engagement, and so is the symbolic threat (β = -.26, $p <$ 0.05). Acceptance of a higher number of asylum beneficiaries in the future remains highly significant (β = .43, $p <$ 0.001). In the Littoral Region, readiness to assist is peripherally predicted by the participants' self-evaluation of their living standards (β = .16, $p <$ 0.05) (wherein those with a higher standard

are readier to assist), as is the realistic threat (β = -.23, $p <$ 0.05). The political orientation of the participants is also important (β = -.25, $p <$ 0.01), while frequency of contact appears as a highly significant predictor (β = .38, $p <$ 0.001). Finally, in Dalmatia, several predictors appear peripherally significant: age (β = .11, $p <$ 0.05), wherein older people are readier to personally assist asylum beneficiaries, living standard (β = .13, $p <$ 0.05), practicing religion (β = -.14, $p <$ 0.05), and estimate of the number of asylum beneficiaries in the future (β = .17, $p <$ 0.05). Two predictors are highly significant: the predictor of the importance of religion appears as important for the first time (β = .27, $p <$ 0.001), wherein those to whom religion is more important in life are readier to assist. Another highly significant predictor is once again the perception of a symbolic threat from asylum beneficiaries (β = -.51, $p <$ 0.001)

In conclusion, it may be stated that based on this set of predictors it is possible to predict readiness of participants for personal engagement in the assistance of persons granted asylum just as well as it is to predict readiness of the host population for social proximity with asylum beneficiaries. In this case as well, it may be stated that, minor regional particularities aside, the most important factors in the readiness to personally assist persons granted asylum are the opinion of participants that the number of asylum beneficiaries may increase in the future and, once again, the assessment of the existence if symbolic and realistic threats. It is therefore possible to draw a conclusion with regard to the readiness of the host population to become involved in assisting persons granted asylum: in the process of integration of asylum beneficiaries into local communities and ensuring the readiness of citizens to engage personally in order to make the adjustment of persons granted asylum as successful as possible, it is vital to alleviate the concerns of citizens pertaining to the preservation of resources and culture of local communities, wherein citizens who believe that the number of asylum beneficiaries should increase may be important partners in implementing the integration policies.

A concise overview of all variables which facilitate the prediction of citizens' readiness to establish close social relations with persons granted asylum and readiness to personally assist persons granted asylum is shown in Table 22.

Table 22. Overview of variables which help predict readiness for socially close relations with persons granted asylum, and readiness to personally assist persons granted asylum

Predictors	Readiness for social proximity					Readiness to assist				
	Ttl	ER	CR	LR	DR	ttl	ER	CR	LR	DR
1. Age										✓
2. Gender						✓	✓			
3. Marital status					✓					
4. Employment status								✓		
5. Level of education										
6. Living standard					✓				✓	✓
7. Religion practicing	✓									✓
8. Importance of religion										✓
9. Political orientation						✓			✓	
10. Change in number of persons granted asylum	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓		✓
11. Acculturation strategies	✓	✓	✓	✓						
12. Frequency of contact						✓			✓	
13. Realistic threat			✓			✓			✓	
14. Symbolic threat	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓		✓
15. Perception of negative change in community	✓	✓			✓		✓			

Legend: Ttl: significant predictors in the total sample; ER: significant predictors in the Eastern Region; CR: significant predictors in the Central Region, LR: significant predictors in the Littoral Region, DR: significant predictors in the Dalmatian Region. Red colour indicates predictors in the overall sample, and black those in the individual regions.

As evident in Table 22, the most common predictors for both criteria are above all the expectations of negative changes in the community due to the arrival of persons granted asylum, symbolic but also realistic threats, estimates that the number of asylum beneficiaries in Croatia should increase in the future and recognition of integration as an appropriate acculturation strategy (particularly for the criterion of readiness for social proximity).

In other words, greater readiness for engaging in contacts with persons granted asylum, measured by readiness for closer relations and readiness for personal involvement in assistance, may be expected if citizens perceive a lesser threat from asylum beneficiaries, which means, if they understand that their arrival does not constitute a threat to existing identity and culture, nor a threat to the resources of local communities, if they expect fewer negative changes in their communities due to the arrival of asylum beneficiaries, if they believe that the number of asylum beneficiaries in Croatia should increase in the future and if they believe that integration is a suitable acculturation strategy in Croatia.

In conclusion, the selected set of predictors can be used to predict moderately well behavioural intentions (readiness for close relations with persons granted asylum and intention to personally assist persons granted asylum in their adjustment process). The results demonstrate that integration policies in local communities throughout Croatia aimed at the development of a general positive attitude towards asylum beneficiaries, and particularly at the readiness of citizens for contacts with asylum beneficiaries and personal engagement in their integration, should aim to alleviate citizens' fear that their local communities will change in the cultural sense or in another undesirable way. The best strategy is the timely dissemination of information to local communities, engagement of local resources that will care for newly-arrived individuals and families and introduce them – as some kind of cultural mediators – into community life, and careful monitoring of the process of integration from the standpoint of both asylum beneficiaries and the local community.

ASSESSING THE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN THE INTEGRATION PROCESS
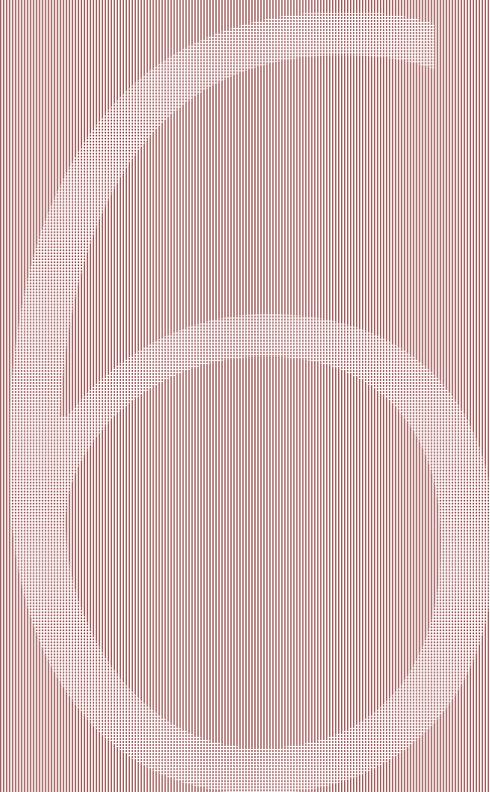
ASSESSING THE NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN THE INTEGRATION PROCESS

6

The second goal of the project was to identify the needs of local and regional self-government units in the process of integration of third-country nationals who have been granted international protection in the Republic of Croatia, and the challenges the self-government units are facing (or will face) with the integration of persons granted asylum into Croatian society.

In order to achieve this goal, it was necessary to identify the experiences, needs, challenges and expectations of LSGU and RSGU representatives when it comes to the current and future integration of asylum beneficiaries into their social environment. With this in mind, qualitative research was undertaken which encompassed a range of interviews with key stakeholders in the integration process. Those stakeholders included representatives of local self-government units (LSGU), regional self-government units (RSGU), professional institutions, civil-society organizations (CSO), and religious communities which are in their own ways responsible for, or involved in, the process of reception and integration of persons granted asylum.

Their views of the integration processes have been supplemented with the views of the persons granted asylum, and this has been clearly indicated in the text, where relevant. The statements that corroborate the findings are written in italics and end with a code written in brackets, which identifies the interlocutor.

6.1. QUALITATIVE-RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING

The first target group consists of representatives of county and municipal public bodies in the selected regional and local self-government units, and of professional institutions providing support for persons granted asylum. These are social-welfare centres, schools and other educational institutions, health-care institutions, employment services, open universities, homes for children and youth, Red Cross organizations, civil-society organizations, religious organizations, and civil initiatives active in those communities. The second target group includes asylum beneficiaries living in the selected communities.

For the purpose of sampling, a list of 30 self-government units has been drawn up, based on the criteria of regional representativeness, size of municipality, experience

with integration of persons granted asylum, and available state-owned housing units. The selected self-government units include 9 counties and 21 towns, distributed over four regions defined for the purpose of this research – Eastern, Central and North-Western, Littoral and Istrian, and Dalmatian regions – and the City of Zagreb. The capital has been singled out because it differs from all other regions in terms of the number of stakeholders in the integration and in terms of its capacities, and also in terms of the number of asylum beneficiaries living there. The list has been agreed with the client which commissioned the research.

Persons included in the sample shared the characteristics of key informants on the basis of their role (their function), experience and knowledge about the needs and challenges posed by the integration of asylum beneficiaries into the local community. The number of interlocutors in each self-government unit varied between two (in Tovarnik, Duga Resa, Solin) – because in these communities there were no stakeholders who possessed information relevant to the assessment of needs, or they were unwilling to participate, despite the number of attempts by the interviewers – and 31 (the highest number of interlocutors) in Zagreb, where the number of stakeholders in the integration of asylum beneficiaries is by far the highest, as is the number of persons granted international protection. In the majority of self-government units, the planned number of interviews (5) were conducted. In total, 168 interviews were conducted, and four focus groups organized with a total of 227 participants, 26 of them asylum beneficiaries. Asylum beneficiaries who participated in the focus groups were of both genders, of various levels of education and experience of living in Croatia; some were accompanied by their families, and others were not, and they originated from different countries, which means that the principle of maximizing variance of key informant has been respected. The list of interlocutors with their contact details is kept in a safe place, with a view to protecting their identity, in keeping with the procedure foreseen.

6.2. QUALITATIVE-DATA GATHERING PROCEDURES AND TOOLS

Preparation for data gathering

The Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities sent a letter announcing the research to the county prefects and mayors, soliciting their support. Thereafter, the research team sent an invitation letter via e-mail to the representatives of local and regional self-government units (heads of the relevant county and municipal departments for social services i.e. heads in charge of the fields of education, health care, social welfare, and accommodation), heads of state administration offices in the counties, heads of public services (social-welfare centres, selected primary and secondary schools, open universities, health centres, employment service, and public-health institute), and other stakeholders (such as the Croatian Red Cross, religious communities and other civil-society organizations). Subsequently, members of the research team and other interviewers contacted the key stakeholders directly and arranged meetings and interviews.

Persons granted asylum were approached with the support of organizations involved with their accommodation, primarily the Croatian Red Cross, Jesuit Refugee Service, NGO Are You Syrious, International Organization for Migration, and other local contacts. The communication with about one third of the asylum beneficiaries was carried out in English or Croatian, and interpreters were engaged for the communication with others.

Tools

Handbooks for conducting semi-structured interviews and focus groups were developed. The handbooks were adapted to each type of interlocutor (e.g. representative of a body within a local or regional self-government unit, state administration office at the county-level, public service at the county or municipal level, civil-society organization), to make their content fitting to the role of the interlocutor. Special handbooks were developed for interviews and focus groups with asylum beneficiaries. For Croatian participants, the handbook includes questions about the experience and activities of the community, with emphasis placed on the key dimensions of integration: language learning and education, accommodation and housing, employment, social welfare and health care,

intersectorial cooperation, awareness raising among professional staff and the public. The handbooks are accompanied by lists of questions for expanding individual topics.

The handbook includes complete and detailed information about the interview procedure, the interlocutor's right to forgo further participation, method of data usage and the protection of the interlocutors' privacy and its limitation, handling of audio recordings and production of transcripts in which interlocutors' data are anonymized. Consent forms were developed for interviews and focus groups with persons granted asylum, and these were also translated into Arabic, thus ensuring that the interlocutors had clear understanding of the conditions under which they consented to be interviewed.

With a view to protecting the relationship of confidentiality, and bearing in mind that persons granted asylum make up a specially vulnerable group of participants, they were not asked to sign a declaration of informed consent, since this could have caused anxiety and unwillingness to cooperate, as shown by research carried out on similar vulnerable groups.

Qualitative-data gathering

The interviews were carried out by all the members of the research team (5) and 11 additional interviewers. All of them had qualifications in social sciences and many years of experience in conducting interviews; they had been given detailed instructions for the interviews to be conducted for the purpose of this research, and they had received some key documents, such as the *Action Plan for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection,* to become thoroughly acquainted with the challenges facing local communities.

Nearly all the interviews were audio-recorded, with the prior consent of the interviewee, and discussions in the focus groups were also recorded. The interviews lasted between 15 and 60 minutes, while the focus groups lasted 90 minutes. The recordings of the interviews and focus groups were transcribed, whereafter the audio recordings were erased, as evidenced by a certified protocol.

At the beginning of the focus groups with persons granted asylum, the participants were informed thoroughly about the purpose and goals of the research, it was clearly emphasized that their participation was completely voluntary

and anonymous, and the continuation of their participation was taken as their consent to the research.

The qualitative-data gathering took place between the middle of April and the end of June 2018.

The quality of the data gathering was ensured by the participation of experienced interviewers and focus-group leaders, who were also very knowledgeable about issues pertaining to the integration of persons granted asylum. The instructions for interviews, well-prepared handbooks for interviews, and interaction between the interviewers and two members of the research team during the data gathering allowed everybody to resolve any doubts and adhere to the set standards.

6.3. QUALITATIVE-DATA PROCESSING PROCEDURES

Transcript production

The first step in the data processing consisted of the production of transcripts of interviews and focus groups. The audio recordings were turned into transcripts of interviews and focus groups whose content related to any experience, thought, concern, possibility, challenge, or any other need expressed by the interlocutor.

Coding-scheme development

A coding scheme was developed on the basis of a sample of 25 transcripts, tested on 15 additional transcripts through independent coding by two researchers. A further 10 transcripts were coded twice independently by two researchers, which resulted in the coding scheme.

Two highly elaborate coding schemes were developed for the purpose of transcript coding: 1) for coding transcripts of interviews with representatives of local and regional self-government units, public services and civil-society organizations, and 2) for coding transcripts of interviews with persons granted international protection. The coding scheme for representatives of institutions includes 30 first-tier codes, each of them including second-tier codes, too (1–28 second-tier codes). The coding scheme for asylum beneficiaries includes 37 first-tier codes, 36 of which also include second-tier codes (3–14). Together with the coding schemes, the *Instructions on Coding Transcripts of Interviews*

with Representatives of Institutions were also developed, which explain in detail how to structure a code for each transcript and which standard coding steps to apply. A similar but shorter instruction was developed for coding transcripts of interviews with persons granted international protection.

Transcript coding

The coding was performed by members of the research team and four coders, who were all instructed in detail, and who followed the above-mentioned *Instructions for Coding Transcripts.* The transcripts of interviews and focus groups with persons granted asylum were coded exclusively by members of the research team. With a view to harmonizing the coding criteria and coordinating the work of various coders, they were trained until they reached at least 95% conformity in the first-tier codes between different pairs of coders. Such a high conformity criterion was achieved by coders coding the same transcripts independently, and then comparing the differences, if any. The criteria were then harmonized during an argument-based discussion, and then they proceeded with further independent coding. A total of 30 transcripts were coded independently, by multiple coders, which proved to be enough to achieve the previously set conformity criterion. When doubts occurred in the continuation of the coding, the coders consulted the research leader and another member of the team, and the doubts were resolved.

Each transcript was marked by a unique code which made it possible to anonymize the interlocutor's identity. A table was prepared and filled with all the relevant data about the interviews and focus groups conducted, such as the number of the interview, name of the interviewer, name of the transcriber, name of the coder, name of the person who entered the data into the program for qualitative analysis, data on type of institution, region, locality, name of institution, address and contact details, date of interview, number of interlocutors, name and surname of interlocutor, function of interlocutor within the institution. In the case of persons granted asylum, data suitable to their roles were entered in the table. The table made it possible to monitor the work on each transcript as an element of quality assurance of the process of coding and data entry into the program for qualitative analysis.

From all the interviews and focus groups conducted, 158 transcripts were prepared for analysis. The others did not contain any useful information because, in spite of their role, the interlocutors were completely uninformed about the topic of the research. The transcripts include information received from 216 interlocutors. Of this number, 143 transcripts contain information received from 191 representatives of local and regional self-government units, state-administration offices in counties, public institutions providing specific services (such as the Croatian Employment Service, Croatian Public Health Institute, social-welfare centres, schools), and civil-society organizations. Of the total number of transcripts selected for analysis, 15 are transcripts of interviews or focus groups with persons granted asylum, which include a total of 26 interlocutors. They were subjected to the open-coding procedure.

The coded transcripts were entered into the database of the MaxQDa software package used to analyse them. The coded material was processed using the regular procedures, which include: 1) definition of units of analysis, 2) identification of the units of analysis in transcripts, 3) open coding of units of analysis according to the coding scheme, and 4) grouping of the coded units of analysis into concepts, categories and themes of equivalent meaning. The analysis made it possible to identify specific elements of the statements which referred to the needs, challenges, capabilities and expectations of representatives of the selected local communities. The four regions and the City of Zagreb were compared, as were the similarities and differences in the statements of stakeholders belonging to various sectors.

No secondary documentation relevant to the purpose of this research was available in the units of local and regional self-government.

6.4. RESULTS OF THE ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

6.4.1. EXPERIENCES WITH PERSONS GRANTED ASYLUM AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN

In all the regions (with the exception of the City of Zagreb)[15], the majority of stakeholders in the integration system representing LSGUs (towns and municipalities) had not had any direct experience of contact and work with persons granted asylum, or, if they had, they had met persons granted asylum in rare individual cases. In the Eastern Region, several LSGUs had had some experience in local communities in which a small number of asylum beneficiaries had been accommodated (Slavonski Brod), and in local communities in which unaccompanied minors had been accommodated in homes for children and youth (Osijek). Some interlocutors from this region, and from the Central Region, refer to the experience of the migration crisis. In the Central Region, LSGUs know whether there are persons granted asylum in their local community, but they have no precise information about it or about how many there are, or, as in the case of Kutina, they referred to the presence of asylum seekers in the reception centre. None of the interlocutors from LSGUs of the Littoral Region had had any experience of contacts or work with persons granted asylum in their professional activity to date. In the region of Dalmatia, most LSGUs had not had any direct contact with persons granted asylum; and, where they had, the contact was indirect and consisted of their allocating tasks to professional services working with persons granted asylum. On the other hand, given that the highest number of persons granted asylum have been accommodated in Zagreb, and given that the largest number of stakeholders in the integration system are in Zagreb, interlocutors from the Zagreb city authorities mention and describe their experiences of direct and indirect contact

with asylum beneficiaries primarily through their participation in projects implemented jointly with civil-society organizations and the Government Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities. The case was similar for the regional self-government units (counties) in all the regions: the majority of them had not had any direct contact with persons granted asylum. The majority of RSGUs in the Eastern, Central and Dalmatian regions had not had any experience with contacts, and they did not have complete information, but they were aware of the activities of professional institutions who had worked with persons granted asylum. (Most frequently these were social-welfare centres, schools and the Red Cross.) Of three interlocutors from RSGUs in the Littoral Region, only one mentions contacts with asylum beneficiaries within an activity aimed at including refugees in society, but the refugees had abandoned the location before the activity was completed. In the Eastern Region, they had experience of placing unaccompanied minors into homes. RSGUs in the Central Region had had experience with persons granted asylum and with the reception of several families in their area (Sisak, Bjelovar), while others had not met any persons granted asylum within the scope of their professional activity, and they only received information from the media.

In all the regions, and in Zagreb, it was professional institutions that had had most direct contact and experience of working with persons granted asylum. In those LSGUs in which there are asylum beneficiaries in the Eastern and Central regions, they are primarily dealt with by social-welfare centres, schools, the Red Cross and the Employment Service, medical services and special guardians of unaccompanied asylee minors. Professional institutions in the Littoral Region speak of encounters with refugees, some mentioning encounters from a long time ago (seven years ago), others citing more recent encounters, with both adults and minors. When describing their experiences, they speak mostly of the circumstances in which the refugees arrived in the local community, and describe meeting them. In Dalmatia, the majority of professional institutions had already met asylum beneficiaries, and they had assumed the care falling within their remit, while the professional institutions in the City of Zagreb had had most such contacts, and they describe their experiences of meeting and working with persons granted asylum in detail. In all the regions (with the exception of the City of Zagreb), CSOs had had very little direct experience

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[15]   Participants in this research come from four regions of Croatia: Eastern Region, Central Region (which includes North-Western Region and the City of Zagreb), Istria and Littoral, and Dalmatia. For greater clarity, the names Eastern, Central, Littoral and Dalmatian regions, and the City of Zagreb, have been used in the text. Due to its size and specific features of integration, the City of Zagreb has been elaborated as a separate unit. In addition, the findings relevant to integration processes and policies which were obtained from Croatian interlocutors have been complemented with analysis of interviews and focus groups with asylum beneficiaries, which is clearly indicated in the text.

with persons granted asylum. For example, in Littoral, only two organizations mention specific encounters with refugees, and in Dalmatia, the civil sector mostly speaks of the refugee crisis without describing any direct operational experience. In the Eastern Region, some experience had been gained in teaching language to adult asylum beneficiaries and in supporting unaccompanied minors. Several religious organizations (Islamic and Evangelic) in the Central Region had implemented programmes and workshops with refugees, or they refer to Zagreb, where the majority of contacts with persons granted asylum and most of the integration work take place. All CSOs in the City of Zagreb cite direct encounters with persons granted asylum and describe such experiences in detail.

As for awareness of the Action Plan for Integration, a large majority of LSGUs and RSGUs in each of the regions state that they are not familiar with the Action Plan, or, if they are aware of its existence, they are only partially familiar with its contents. In the Eastern Region, they only know that the Action Plan exists, and offer explanation saying they do not follow things like this or have no time for it, and that they will do it if it becomes necessary. The exception to this is one representative who took part in the extended working group of the OHRRNM. In the Central Region, one interlocutor claims they are not informed about the Action Plan because "there has been no need to deal with that". Some of the LSGUs were generally informed, but they had received the information only recently, at meetings organized in local communities over the past year by the OHRRNM. In line with his perception of the role of LSGUs in the integration system, and of the need to have a plan and implement its measures, one interviewee estimates as follows: *...when it comes to the measures, responsible entities and the achievement of goals, the focus is on the Office of the Government of the RoC, ministries, and only in several cases on local communities. LSGUs are only mentioned in a few places, with reference to social protection and provision of information after they have been accommodated. Everything else, such as employment, health care and education, lies within the authority of state institutions, or individual ministries. I can see that the role of the local community is rather small, which does not mean that it could not be bigger* (14_1_059). Only in Dalmatia do LSGUs state that they are generally acquainted with the Action Plan, and one representative of a town was directly involved in the working group of the OHRRNM. Other interlocutors, including representatives of the RSGUs, were not familiar with the document, or they had learned about it only marginally and recently, but they did not know details about the contents of the document.

Of all the professional services in the Eastern Region, local SWCs were best informed about the Plan, although some interlocutors, for example, in the Central Region, say that they had been invited to engage intensively in the reception of persons granted asylum, but they blame the OHRRNM and MoI for not informing them when the persons granted asylum eventually did arrive in their community (for example, Varaždin). Two out of five professional institutions in the Littoral Region claim they are very familiar with the Action Plan, while others say they know about it "in principle". In the Dalmatian Region, professional institutions claim they are familiar with the Action Plan. It seems that the information CSOs have about the existence and contents of the Plan is poor and only general, and only in the Eastern Region do some CSOs claim they are familiar with the Action Plan, and one interlocutor says the role of LSGUs is not emphasized enough in the Action Plan. In the City of Zagreb, stakeholders in the system say either that they are generally informed about the Action Plan or that they have heard about it, but have no detailed information about its contents. Professional institutions in Zagreb report that they are generally informed about the Action Plan, and one school has not heard about it. Nearly all CSOs in Zagreb are aware that the Action Plan exists; the majority of them are familiar with its contents, but some perceive it only as a wish-list. Some interlocutors from CSOs do not see the foreseen measures as advanced. For example: (...) *in some parts the measures are really not all that advanced and progressive, but represent repetition of something that has been present in legislation for a long time, but is not implemented* (8_15_147).

In none of the regions, and in none of the stakeholders in the system from the LSGU and RSGU sector (with one exception), have we come across an example of their own action plan for the integration of persons granted asylum in their local community, adopted at their own initiative or derived from the national Action Plan. The interlocutors mainly expect that they will manage when it becomes necessary, and that they will only then work on their own action plan. The majority of stakeholders explains this by the lack of information about the number, time and structure of persons granted asylum that could arrive in their community, and by the lack of time to develop their own plan. They also believe that the system of reception of persons granted asylum has not been developed with sufficient clarity at the national level, except for the fact that Croatia has accepted certain quotas, and that the implementation of relocation is not sufficiently transparent. Although they do not have their own action plans, LSGUs and professional institutions in all the regions point out that they adhere to the existing ordinances (e.g. on the inclusion of persons granted asylum in schools and the testing of their knowledge), or internal instructions and recommendations issued by their ministries. One interlocutor stresses that they operate in this way precisely because the national Action Plan is too general to proceed. Some RSGUs in the Eastern Region are of the opinion that they are not obliged to adopt their own action plans, and professional institutions (schools, SWCs) point out that they are mainly guided by instructions of the relevant ministries of the central office (for example, employment services). LSGUs and RSGUs highlight that they expect to receive more information once the problem of integration becomes concrete, and that, before it happens, they cannot assess potentials and abilities for integration of the local community and themselves, as stakeholders in it. Once the reception and distribution of asylum beneficiaries happens, they expect to develop their own plans, in line with their legal obligations, and they emphasize that they will proceed in keeping with the regulations and measures within their remits. They expect that they will manage, and organize themselves, if persons granted asylum come to the territory of their county, as demonstrated by these statements: *...there has been no reason for it, it has not been a problem, first of all, there have been no asylum beneficiaries – if the asylum beneficiaries were to appear now, we would probably have to do something, and secondly, there have been no legislative requirements, we have not been obliged to*

do anything (24_2_110); or: *We have not developed an action plan for integration on the basis of that Action Plan. If it becomes necessary, we will work on it* (3_1_021); and: *they have not developed any plans, but if the asylum beneficiaries come, they will manage* (6_4_020). Only one stakeholder from the Central Region states that they are planning to develop an action plan by the end of the current year *on the basis of the experiences of the Kutina Reception Centre,* and if it becomes necessary – for example, if asylum beneficiaries move to the county – they will adopt plans that fall under their field of competence. In the Littoral and Dalmatian regions, units of self-government operate on an equally *ad hoc* basis, and the interlocutors point out that they have not developed their own action plan, mainly because there has been no reason to do it, given that there are no persons granted asylum in their local community, and there are no legal requirements whereby they should develop such plans. They are guided primarily by the instructions received from state authorities (for example, the MSE's protocol on the inclusion of children in the education system). In the City of Zagreb, there is only one office in the whole city government which has a document that could be taken as a kind of their own (sectorial) action plan for integration.

Professional institutions have stressed that they do not have plans of their own either, but many of them perform tasks relating to the integration of persons granted asylum in line with the remit of their daily operations and competences, *as instructed by the Ministry* (26_5_120). Some services have begun to consider elaborating their own action plans after a meeting with the OHRRNM and exchange of information about the distribution plan, but they are not describing it as a separate plan, rather an elaboration of the already existing operational standards, in keeping with the instructions of the competent ministries (for example, appointing a person who will work with unaccompanied minors). Some interlocutors highlight that it is all done within the remit of their daily tasks and competences, or that they have recently appointed a coordinator who should only deal with the tasks relating to persons granted asylum. In the Central Region, CSOs have no special plans of their own, but some invoke their general acts and assessments of the community's needs and available resources, or they do not separate their work with asylum beneficiaries, if they engage in it at all, from their standard and regular activities of care provision. In Dalmatia, one CSO has developed the framework for their

own action plan in coordination with other umbrella organizations, while other CSOs have no plans. In Zagreb, most professional institutions have not developed their own plans, but some have prepared their own internal operational protocols, independently of the action plan, and on the basis of their previous experience with marginalized groups. The same applies to some CSOs, which have their own internal guidelines for work aimed at integration.

Stakeholders from various sectors and regions have not developed their own plans and operational protocols for integration independent of the Action Plan. Just like LSGUs and professional institutions, they also claim that their work on the integration of asylum beneficiaries is, to a large extent, incorporated in their regular activities, and that they act in line with the current regulations. However, it is worth pointing out what the stakeholders themselves think about what is important in relation to their current and future work relating to integrational practice, and about their activities implementing measures for the integration of asylum beneficiaries thus far. Many activities are identical or very similar in the majority of regions, and for stakeholders belonging to the same sectors. In the Eastern Region, LSGUs have not had any significant experience of the implementation of activities focused on integration measures, and only one stakeholder from an LSGU in Littoral cites activities within the framework of the provision of social welfare for persons granted asylum. In the Central Region, some LSGUs emphasize that they have not implemented measures aimed at integration to a significant level, but when they have, those measures included enrolling asylee children in kindergarten and school, and, in one case, financial assistance for the Red Cross, which implemented programmes with persons granted asylum. In Dalmatia, LSGUs primarily mention employment, but it seems that LSGUs are most active in the field of inclusion of children in the education system, and in providing support for other institutions. They also state that they are prepared to step up their engagement and to be involved in the Croatian-language programme. Stakeholders from the City of Zagreb cite school coordination as the most important aspect of their operation, referring to the inclusion of children in the primary-education system (the communication between the MSE and schools going through them), because, for example: *Every school that gets such a pupil, there is a prescribed procedure, every school has its professional commission, they send a proposal to us, and we adopt an administrative decision, and when the Ministry approves it, then the child is included in the preparatory lessons in the school which has trained staff, where teachers have been trained previously* (8_1_156). Sometimes they make efforts to link schools which have had less experience of working with persons granted asylum with schools that are more experienced, with a view to enabling the knowledge and experience to be transferred. They also provide support for other institutions, especially NGOs dealing directly with persons granted asylum (making donations, making venues available and financing projects). State administration offices in RSGUs in the Eastern Region are most active when it comes to including children in the education system, approving preparatory Croatian-language lessons and enrolment of children in schools. Education is mentioned most frequently in responses by Dalmatian RSGUs, too, together with the need to coordinate various activities at the county level. Some interlocutors point out work with children as the most important aspect of their own future plan, and, among activities carried out to date, they point out primarily enrolling children in schools, in some cases also organizing Croatian-language courses, and in one case financing programmes for raising the awareness of youth and the whole community. RSGUs in the Littoral Region mention networking with other organizations as the most important aspect of their potential activity, and only one RSGU (which has had concrete experience) refers to activities connected with the integration of refugees, specifically those connected with inclusion in the education system and language-learning programmes, for example: *In keeping with the instructions from the Ministry, and in line with the ordinances on preparatory and supplementary lessons and the ordinance on the implementation of the curriculum and testing of the knowledge of asylum beneficiaries, we are in charge of directing persons granted asylum to an institute for adult education which provides Croatian-language lessons for persons granted asylum* (24_3_113).

The opinions and experience-sharing of stakeholders from professional institutions of all the regions are rather similar, when it comes to the implementation of the current measures for integration, and the planning of future ones. In the Eastern Region there is only one professional institution which singles out customized job-seeking support as the most important aspect of its operation, while the activities performed by professional institutions are diverse: support for inclusion in the education system, provision of information to asylee children in Croatia and engaging in some practical issues, appointing special guardians for unaccompanied minors (SWCs); in schools and homes for children, those are providing food suitable for the religious customs of the asylee children, and adequate health care. Some professional institutions in the Central and North-Western Region mention Croatian-language lessons and "connecting and networking" as important aspects of their operation. Activities performed by others include support for inclusion in the education system, provision of information for persons granted asylum, counselling and informing about rights and opportunities to exercise those rights, public-awareness raising and information, organizing creative workshops for persons granted asylum, providing social welfare and health care, assistance in finding accommodation, employment, and others. The field of operation of professional institutions in Littoral is similar, with measures relating to assistance with job-seeking being the most prominent, together with the provision of social welfare, assistance with the reception of asylum beneficiaries and organization of their accommodation, inclusion in the education system, provision of psychosocial support, organization of workshops and lectures both about and for persons granted asylum – for example: *We had training for guardians of foreign unaccompanied minors in Zadar, organized by UNHCR, and we presented an example of good practice there (teacher and asylum beneficiaries)* (26_10_117) – and support for persons granted asylum in making their first contacts in the community. In Dalmatia, professional institutions emphasize the need to ensure that persons granted asylum can enjoy all their rights, and the civil sector underlines language acquisition. Here, the range of activities carried out by professional institutions corresponds to the spectrum of rights guaranteed by law, with everybody operating within their remit and covering activities such as including children in schools, assistance in job seeking, providing health care, and assistance in

finding adequate accommodation. It is important to mention that the engagement of the staff often goes beyond what is professionally required of them. For example: *He found a job through an acquaintance of our teacher. Which means that we get involved privately, too, to find them a job through our friends, acquaintances, and so on* (28_10_128). Professional institutions in Zagreb, which have a lot of experience of working with persons granted asylum, cite the following as the most important aspects of their operation: support in integration within their field of competence, social care for the minors, accommodation, employment (contact person, individual counselling and provision of information to persons granted asylum about their rights and opportunities), and networking with other institutions. They are very active in their respective fields of competence, and they work on the inclusion of children in the education system, which has also involved raising the awareness of teachers and school staff, children and parents. They also provide psychosocial support, assistance and information that asylum beneficiaries need to be able to function normally in Croatian society; they organize thematic workshops in cooperation with NGOs, provide assistance in finding employment (professional development programmes, preparation for the labour market), provide social welfare, health care and accommodation, and make sure that children have everything they need to be able to function normally in school. Moreover, professional institutions have resolved quite a few issues *ad hoc*, even when those fell outside the remit of their primary function.

Although they do not have extensive experience of working with persons granted asylum, CSOs of all the regions think in a similar way and speak of similar activities carried out thus far or planned for the future. In the Eastern Region, CSOs have played the role of liaison and intermediary between persons granted asylum and official institutions, to help them find their way in their dealings with the administration and in exercising their rights. When they were received, they took persons granted asylum through institutions where they had to take care of formalities, receive health-care services or humanitarian aid in the form of food and toiletries packages. They believe that their activities have reinforced LSGUs and the institutions. In similar fashion, in the Central Region, CSOs have been engaged primarily in providing general information to persons granted asylum, assisting them in addressing the institutions, and providing interpretation,

training and programmes of public-awareness raising, as well as providing material (humanitarian) aid. In the Littoral Region, CSOs mention a wide range of activities relating to the arrival of asylum beneficiaries, such as assisting them in establishing their first contacts in the community, and providing food, clothes and basic toiletries, to supporting them in job seeking and in mastering school curricula and the language. In Dalmatia, CSOs have been engaged primarily in providing psychological support and care, and they have also served as liaison between persons granted asylum and official institutions, provided support in language learning, and escorted them as they carried out different tasks, for example: *Over a period of a month and a half or two, they contacted a member of our staff intensively, since they needed his physical assistance, to be taken to the police directorate, to be taken to the employment service, to be taken to the health centre at which they were registered; so, in practice, it was escort, we provided them with escort wherever they needed to go to take care of their paperwork, and all those everyday issues: where is their doctor, where is the gynaecologist for women, what are his working hours... So there is a whole range of information that they received from our municipal Red Cross* (27_14_139). In Zagreb, the range of activities undertaken to date by CSOs is equally diverse, and includes initial reception of, and provision of information to, persons granted asylum (administration), support in job seeking (assessment of asylum-beneficiaries' skills and setting up links with employers), provision of health care and psychosocial support, inclusion in the education system and language-learning programme (language learning often being organized on a voluntary basis), and coordinating and supporting other participants in the integration process, for example: *Here, at the same time, we organize some kind of workshops for children – those are children who do not attend kindergarten – we have a social worker who holds, after the Croatian-language course, what I would describe as psychosocial workshops, discussions, coffees, get-togethers for women in a relaxed atmosphere* (8_19_153). Another important aspect of their activities is support for inclusion in the community, raising the awareness of the community, holding various workshops for persons granted asylum, where an attempt is made to take into consideration wishes expressed by persons granted asylum about the topics of such workshops.

Finally, when it comes to the issue of earmarking funds for the integration of persons granted asylum, all the stakeholders in all the regions agree that the lack of financial resources represents a serious structural limitation, and that more funds should be earmarked for integration activities. Stakeholders representing LSGUs and RSGUs in all the regions state that they do not have specially earmarked funds in their budgets just for the integration of persons granted asylum, and only in rare cases have they planned them in the next budget. They emphasize that their entire budget is centralized, and that there are no funds specially earmarked for integration, but some of them have stated that they could repurpose some budget items, or that they could activate such budget items if and when necessary. They also say that, if necessary, they could secure the funding though budget amendments, but that such funding could not be substantial, since they often lack funds even for their current needs. Several interlocutors estimate that the funds normally earmarked for social welfare and health care are sufficient, and one pointed out that the funds could be drawn from the "intervention budget items" (Central Region), or that permission could be sought to introduce a new item into the budget, if necessary (Littoral Region). In Dalmatia, LSGUs have no earmarked funds, but they are finding them within their regular budget, while RSGUs have no fund. Similarly, in the City of Zagreb there are no earmarked funds for integration, and funds are found within the regular budget. Representatives of professional institutions also emphasize that they have no financial resources for the implementation of the measures mentioned, and that they cover their costs using funding for their regular activities, since they offer services to asylum beneficiaries as they do to all other beneficiaries, although their costs have increased. In some areas, such as the Central and North-Western Region, professional institutions have budget items that can be (re)activated if necessary: *But, as the Centre, actually, like any other centre, we have an item in our annual plans, which is later elaborated at the monthly level, for both benefits and accommodation and personal needs of persons granted asylum.*

We have not planned a specific amount yet, because there has been no need to do it. If the need arises, we will immediately claim funds when planning at the monthly level. So there are regulated assumptions, which can be activated immediately when the need arises (19_5_052). With the exception of one, professional institutions of the City of Zagreb have no earmarked funds for persons granted asylum, and they draw funds from the institutions' regular budgets. The situation of CSOs is very similar when it comes to financing integration activities. In the Eastern Region, no organization has earmarked or planned funds for the integration of persons granted asylum, because they either have insufficient information about the needs, or have no resources to implement integration measures. The situation is the same in other regions. The only organization that has funds within the framework of its regular budget is the Red Cross. A CSO in the Littoral Region points out that it is possible to introduce a new item into the budget if such a need arises, and in the Dalmatian Region, the civil sector is the only one which claims to endeavour to secure additional funding for integration activities. CSOs in Zagreb mainly fund their activities through national or international projects, or they have their own earmarked programme resources.

6.4.2. IMPORTANCE OF DIMENSIONS OF INTEGRATION AND ASSESSMENT OF INTEGRATION SUCCESS IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

All the stakeholders in all the regions mention communication, that is, acquisition of the Croatian language, as the most important dimension of integration, and they single out this dimension as the basic requirement for all other aspects of integration, and especially for the inclusion of children in the education system, and for the inclusion of adults in the labour market. It is also a precondition for persons granted asylum to be able to find their way in general in the local communities in which they are accommodated, and a road to achieving independence. This aspect of integration is well illustrated by the following statements by our interlocutors: *This activity is one of the most important, because the question always arises how to integrate people faster and better into Croatian society, and generally into any society in which they live. The language is very important* (8_14_159) or *Look, I think that the most important thing is for them to learn the Croatian language as well as they can, Croatian is the official*

language in schools, and to understand the material being taught and everything else, the most important thing is to learn Croatian (27_1_142) or *In any case, language is the biggest problem. It's been detected everywhere that language and interpreters are by far the biggest problem* (24_3_113).

Persons granted asylum themselves emphasize this element as the most important, and often say that there are not enough courses and that they have to wait for a long time to be included in language-learning programmes. The statements by persons granted asylum reveal that language courses and informal language teaching are more often provided by non-governmental organizations, and in an informal fashion, than through courses organized by the state. For example: *When we arrived in that xxx[16], we asked about language learning, but we were told that there, in xxx, there was no place where we could go and learn Croatian. The Croatian Red Cross offered us to come to Zagreb, but at that time it was too far to travel there. Then my daughter started her first year of school and her teacher offered to let me come to school with her when I could to learn the language in that way. It seemed very acceptable to me, and I attended regular lessons with my daughter. I sat in the last row during the whole of her first year. I attended lessons in Croatian, natural sciences, mathematics, music* (063_1.2.7._1_2). In addition, persons granted asylum do not feel fluent after they have completed the course; and, even when they are able to communicate, they notice that their linguistic level is insufficient for communication in a business environment. For example: *Today I can communicate, and have a conversation, as you can see. Understand everything, but when I speak, my grammar is poor. This is still an obstacle for finding a job and engaging in some important conversations* (064_1.2.7._1_1). But many also mention additional effort they have invested in learning the language on their own using the internet, or reading.

The other dimensions of integration most often cited by all the stakeholders in all the regions are the inclusion of children in the education system, employment of adults, and resolution of their housing issues. In the Eastern Region, interlocutors further elaborate this aspect and warn that the success of integration will depend on the way in which persons granted asylum are accommodated, that they should not be

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[16]   The name of the locality in which this family of asylum beneficiaries is accommodated has been left out to protect the identity of the interviewee.

concentrated in a single locality – but, on the other hand, that it will be important for them to have familiar people and culture in their vicinity. Other aspects of integration often mentioned in all the regions, by all the stakeholders, include the asylum beneficiaries' intentions to stay in Croatia, and the inclusion of asylum beneficiaries in community activities. The latter is illustrated well by the following statement: *Because I believe that spending time with local people doing the same tasks actually brings people together. I think the worst you can do is to put people in an apartment and leave them in that apartment, secure their minimum needs and leave it at that. That is no life, if you ask me. I truly believe we have to ensure (...) inclusion (...) through those opportunities that the local community can offer* (30_5_135). Interlocutors often mention the dimensions of general adjustment to the surroundings and the acceptance of persons granted asylum in the social community. CSOs mention these aspects somewhat more often than other stakeholders, although others also mention these dimensions. For example, when it comes to the dimension of general acceptance of persons granted asylum, an interlocutor from an LGSU says: *Acceptance is the first and most important element, because, if they live here in isolated communities without being accepted, that is no integration. That is co-existence – which can be good, too – but our aim is to make sure that they function in our society* (21_2_040). Or *It is important to inform them about their rights, obligations, culture and customs in our country* (11_14_093). Some of the asylum beneficiaries interviewed also point out that it would be important for people coming to Croatia to be given a course in Croatian culture. Thus, one asylum beneficiary says: *People who come from, for example, Iran, come from a culture that is more closed, they have not had so much freedom, and when they cross the border, they think they have all kinds of rights, which leads to confusion. I found it hard at first, too, but it was easier for me as a Christian than it is for Muslims, because some perspectives are more similar* (122_1.3.4._1_1).

As for the asylum beneficiaries' intentions to stay in Croatia, in the Eastern Region interlocutors cite the example of persons granted asylum who do not use any of the services available to them: for example, low interest in attending Croatian-language courses, and an even poorer rate of course completion. In the Eastern Region some people also believe that, in view of great cultural and religious differences, the most important factor for the process of integration is "that asylum beneficiaries adapt to us" and "their socialization". Good social-welfare and health-care services are often mentioned as important dimensions of integration, as well as a generally well organized system of care for persons granted asylum and intersectorial networks. These aspects are frequently cited by professional institutions, and are not necessarily specific to any region, and professional institutions in all the regions also mention the highest number of various dimensions important for good integration of persons granted asylum. Interestingly, professional institutions recognize rather often the importance of integration of children, as a facilitating element for the integration of adults. This is illustrated well by the following statement: *In my view, the key is the integration of the youngest through the schooling system, because one can achieve most in this way. (...) We cannot expect that we can change the culture and attitudes of a person who is 40 or 50 years old and who came seeking asylum. It is much easier with a child of 10: the child can be integrated into our society much easier, and accept values that are here (...) If children are integrated, if they are accepted, chances are that their parents will be happier, more content, that they will make additional effort to fit into the community, than if their child was rejected, because then they would, obviously, hold it against the community, the state, and the general atmosphere would be bad* (8_8_148). Other stakeholders in other regions also recognize the importance of the integration of children. Persons granted asylum also speak of the importance of including children in the education system, and recognize that this is also important for the integration of adults. For example: *Then a member of the Red Cross staff accompanied us when we went to a meeting in the kindergarten, he spoke to them, and they enrolled two children without any problem. The teachers really treat them well. At first, the children were scared because they did not understand anything, but now all is really good and they have adjusted really well. My daughter started the first grade of the primary school, and in that school everything has been organized well from the very start. I believe that it is most important to provide an opportunity to learn the language and perhaps provide us with an opportunity to introduce ourselves to the*

parents of children who attend kindergarten with our children, so that they know the reasons for us moving to their town (063_1.2.7._1_2).

Interestingly, only interlocutors from local communities of Littoral and Dalmatia mention public-awareness raising as an important aspect of integration.

When it comes to assessing how successful or unsuccessful the integration is, and to indicators that could illustrate one or the other valuation, stakeholders differ primarily in respect of whether they had had any experience with integration or not (mostly in the Eastern Region). However, even those who had not had any direct experience venture in assessing whether integration into their community would be successful or not. Thus they estimate (for example, in the Central Region) that integration would be more successful if persons granted asylum were placed in communities as neighbours of the local residents, rather than being isolated or placed somewhere at the periphery of the settlement, and if they were provided with adequate care, contacts with local residents, and included in the life of the community. We have heard a similar opinion in the Littoral Region: *...on the basis of my experience, I believe that ghettoization of those people is out of the question, that is clear, since it creates problems of another kind* (24_2_110). An interlocutor from the Central and North-Western Region says: *When we were at that meeting with representatives of the Government Office for Human Rights, we suggested that, if migrants were to come to our area, they should be accommodated in big settlements (...) because if they are accommodated in some far-away, peripheral parts of the county, it will undoubtedly be much more difficult to implement integration measures, because here, if one is closer to the centre, everything is more accessible. In far-away and peripheral parts of the county there is no adequate health-care, social and psychological support, which they would undoubtedly need* (15_2_067). Generally speaking, the success of integration is assessed on the basis of the readiness of the system to respond to challenges, and on the basis of the readiness of individual asylum beneficiaries to adjust to the new surroundings.

There are no significant differences among sectors, or among regions, in their understanding of the indicators of successful integration. Language acquisition again features as the basis for assessment of integration success. Further indicators of successful integration are the employment and financial independence of adults, their independence of the system's institutions, primarily from social benefits. When it comes to children, the indicator of successful integration is their inclusion in kindergartens and schools. It has been mentioned before that stakeholders often mention that the inclusion of children in the education system facilitates the integration of their parents, that is, of the entire family. In this respect, stakeholders, and especially representatives of professional institutions, describe how families are integrated more easily – for example: *Families are integrated faster because of their children, because they have to be involved with the institutions, with the school or pre-school curricula. For this reason families often stay here longer. They are more involved in everything, they find employment sooner. Some learn the language sooner, too, but that depends on the family, on their origin, and obviously also on their education* (8_14_159) – and how younger children of pre-school age and years 1–4 of primary school are integrated more easily – for example: *As for the earlier years [1-4], the integration is much better there, much faster, because children function mainly by playing, spending time together and so on* (8_9_160). However, one interlocutor who is an asylum beneficiary has a different perspective of the fact that families are integrated better and says: *I think that Croats trust asylum beneficiaries with families more than those who are on their own: then they seem to be slightly afraid of them* (169_1.2.1._2_1 FG\S3).[17]

CSOs (especially in Zagreb) often emphasize that what is important for integration is that persons granted asylum be equal to the local population, without any 'privileges', as the assistance provided to persons granted asylum is seen by some of the local population; for example: *When a person is granted asylum, and obtains a residence permit and a work permit, he can become an active citizen, he can work, and what causes the grudge of the population is that asylum beneficiaries receive that assistance, that they have three paid meals, while people in Croatia go hungry, and so on* (8_15_149). This aspect has been recognized in Dalmatia, too, but at a very general level. An interlocutor representing an LSGU says: *is that the education system for the children to be included, at*

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[17] Statements by persons granted asylum who took part in focus groups are quoted in the same fashion as other statements (in italics), although the statements are not necessarily recorded as direct speech in every single case. The focus groups were conducted with the help of an interpreter, and they were transcribed mainly using the 3rd person singular, although in some notes there is also some direct speech.

first those preparations so that they master the language and all that, and then education, and actually all that is important to us is also important to them. There is a natural process we follow: kindergarten, then school, then university if they are interested, then job. So there are essentially no differences between us and them. (29_2_131). It is worth pointing out that in Dalmatia, which has had limited experience with integration, LSGUs and RSGUs actually have no information about the indicators revealing whether the integration of persons granted asylum into their community has been successful or not.

In two regions (Eastern and Dalmatia), interlocutors from professional institutions highlight particularly that it will take time to assess integration success, and that the effects still cannot be assessed well, since the process is relatively new. Thus, in the Eastern Region they say, *Progress has been made, and it is positive progress, which takes us forward. The efforts are visible, as are some positive results. How measurable they are, it is thankless to say, because very little time has elapsed (...) but given the dynamics to date, I believe that in the forthcoming period the results will be visible and measurable* (7_6_028), while interlocutors in Dalmatia say, *We should allow some time, several years, or at least two years of their subsidized rent (...) and then we will see how they will go on from that to taking care of themselves and fighting for their own livelihood, but in all segments of life, housing, utility costs, and all that comes with it* (27_5_140), and *The goal of the state is never to integrate them into society in a way that it keeps on paying their guaranteed minimal allowance, or any other type of support – that can be temporary, but they should be helped in their registration with the employment service, and, for example, with a social worker who would be the main social worker for that person, who would endeavour to find a job for that person and make him/her independent. Because the goal of any state and policy is to have as few new beneficiaries as possible, be they Croatian citizens or asylum beneficiaries* (28_5_125). In this context, we should mention some professional institutions of the Littoral Region which claim that they still have too little experience to be able to assess integration success, while recognizing that it depends on a range of factors. In the Central Region, professional institutions also mention that the community's experience of the Croatian War could be a facilitating factor for the integration of persons granted asylum, because of the models of integration of refugees from other countries that were applied then, primarily from Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo.

The development of a social network and involvement of persons granted asylum in the community's life are mentioned more rarely as indicators of integration success, as is the absence of incidents involving persons granted asylum.

In very rare cases, interlocutors include, among the indicators of integration success, integration as a two-way process. Those who do are representatives of professional institutions, and statements from two regions are illustrative. In Dalmatia, an interlocutor says: *Well, last year at the time of Bajram, when they had the long lent, they cooked in the evenings, they expressed their wish to cook in the evenings. We made it possible in the way that they wrote the list of ingredients they needed, and our housekeeper then prepared the ingredients and left them on the floor on which they lived, since on the floor on which there are school children there is a kitchen. They prepared the ingredients in the evening, and all other children could taste the food together with them, and in this way they showed their culture, their food which is rather different* (...)*. They are trying to do it with stories, too, in their contacts with children they give out much more than with adults, that is, with people of a similar age to theirs. The music and everything* (28_10_128). And an interlocutor from the Central Region says: (...) *the community should also adjust, and understand them. We cannot expect only of them to adjust 100% to living with us, without giving anything ourselves to understand them and to accept some of their customs and so on* (18_8_079). Interestingly, only in the Eastern and Dalmatian regions have interlocutors mentioned contacts with the local Islamic community as an indicator of the level of integration.

When it comes to the indicators of integration failure, statements by stakeholders in the four regions prevalently coincide. Dependence and reliance on social benefits are

seen as clear indicators, together with lack of language proficiency. Professional institutions and CSOs often mention – though more rarely than LSGUs and RSGUs – lack of interest in schooling, residential and social isolation from the host population, unresolved administrative issues such as the registration of permanent or temporary residence, and lack of information about the rights and procedures among persons granted asylum.

As for the perception of local communities as areas for the integration of persons granted asylum, all the stakeholders from all the regions express some kind of concern. The only exception is the Littoral Region, where interlocutors do not expect any difficulties, as shown, for example, by the following statement: *When it comes to acceptance, over here people are much more open, they have no prejudices* (...) *so I believe that here in* (...) *there would be no problems* (24_2_110). In other communities, some form of negative reaction of the local population is expected, especially in small communities, as mentioned by LSGUs and RSGUs in the Eastern and Dalmatian regions. The general view is that larger towns would be more ready to accept persons granted asylum. In all the communities, CSOs foresee the fewest problems. The reasons for the difficulties expected with the integration of persons granted asylum in local communities are diverse. For example, in the Eastern Region, representatives of LSGUs and RSGUs cite poverty and general difficulties experienced by the population of the region, which could have negative impact on their acceptance of newcomers. Only in the Eastern Region do interlocutors mention fear of terrorism, and discomfort caused by the 'mixing' of the population: *Most people fear asylum beneficiaries because of a number of prejudices, especially those relating to terrorism* (6_4_020); *Our phenotypes are different; you don't even see a black person in the street, let alone living in your own backyard, and then sooner or later dating your daughter or grand-daughter* (6_2_018). CSOs view this region as open, too, but they also recognize the potential for negative reactions of the population caused by the poverty and impression that persons granted asylum enjoy more benefits than the local population. Interestingly, both professional institutions and CSOs in Dalmatia, Central Croatia and Zagreb specially warn that it is necessary to distribute resources equally, and express their fear that the local population could get an impression that asylum beneficiaries are privileged in exercising their rights in comparison to local residents.

In the Central Region, interlocutors recognize challenges for integration in local communities caused by differences in faiths, cultures and norms, and also by fear of the unknown and a feeling of insecurity (especially LSGUs and RSGUs). Among the advantages of their local communities, interlocutors list the experience of caring for refugees during the Croatian War, and the history of co-existence with national minorities, especially the Roma. In Dalmatia, most of the interlocutors from LSGUs do not foresee difficulties with the local population in relation to the integration of persons granted asylum, except for small communities. *But in some of our rural communities it will be hard for them to be accepted, and that will be a problem in itself* (27_1_141). On the other hand, professionals from small communities see advantages for integration in such communities, and cite their social empathy. In RSGUs, they also believe that the experience of taking care of refugees during the Croatian War could be beneficial, but they also call for caution, since the citizens' reactions will only be visible once those communities begin receiving asylum beneficiaries and learning about them: *I think that our awareness is very high, given our recent historic experience* (...) *and I don't expect any resistance to anything. But only when it becomes real, when you face up to something real, when you have a concrete family, a concrete person, only then will you see what it is all about...* (29_2_131). Although Zagreb has the most extensive experience of integration of persons granted asylum, here interlocutors are most critical about the local community as a favourable place for integration, and all the stakeholders share a similar opinion. Professional institutions believe the biggest problem lies in negative attitudes and sentiments towards persons granted asylum, arising primarily from the fears of the local population. CSOs also perceive local communities as small and closed and notice negative attitudes and animosity towards persons granted asylum from the local population, reflected most often in xenophobic comments and behaviours, and the perception that the asylum beneficiaries are privileged over the local population: *And then they are trained for the labour market, and helped to find a job. But given that we have hordes of unemployed, then look, they are being helped to find a job, and who is helping me? I live here, I'm left with the employment bureau, and nobody will help me find a job* (...)*, however, she is a refugee from Syria, and they will be helped to find a job* (8_19_151).

The experience of persons granted asylum of their acceptance into the communities in which they arrived are mostly more favourable than the prevalently negative expectations described earlier by interlocutors from local communities. Nearly all the asylum beneficiaries interviewed say that they only have positive experience of being accepted by the local community, but that it has taken some time for them to feel accepted by their neighbours, that is, that the neighbours had to get to know them to understand that they were not problematic, but 'normal people'. For example: *Now it is different. I guess people got to know us and they stopped seeing us as some kind of danger.* Or: *To be honest, I can say that only now. At first it was not very pleasant. When we came to live in the settlement in which there is the house in which we still live, people were not very nice to us. The children did not have any friends either* (063_1.2.7._1_2). The importance of speaking Croatian has been pointed out, because the language proficiency makes it possible to be accepted by the host population, and otherwise they feel isolated: *As soon as you can speak the language, they accept you as their equals. At least that is my opinion. If you can't speak, then you are somehow isolated* (109_1.3.1._1_1). Some interlocutors believe that similarities between the Syrian and Croatian mentalities contributed to their feeling safe and accepted, and that Croatian people are easily approachable. Three interlocutors mention having negative experiences when they moved to the community. *Well, until about a year ago I didn't feel accepted, and I didn't have the feeling that I belonged to this community. There were situations when people wouldn't greet us on the street, and when nobody would come to our yard for months. Such resistance of the community made me feel unsafe, and I isolated myself and my family* (064_1.2.7._1_1). Children's going to school is very important for the adults to feel integrated in the community, since it allows them to meet parents of classmates who their children spend time with. *I've been included in the community mostly thanks to the school and my daughter. She was accepted by children in her class (and her teacher contributed to that), she started to be invited to their get-togethers, and other children would come to our house to play with* (064_1.2.7._1_1). An important indicator of the level of acceptance in the community is the development of a social network by children and adults, especially when it involves visits to each other's homes. *Thus we established contacts with the parents of those children, and now we often spend pleasant times together* (064_1.2.7._1_1). Interlocutors point out that it took some time for their neighbours to get to know them as people: *little by little we began spending time together, having coffee, and somehow they got to know us as people. Today even that one neighbour who at first didn't accept us at all spends time with us, and has coffee with us* (063_1.2.7._1_2). *Their interest in Arabian food is an incentive for expanding the circle of friends and for spending time together* (170_1.2.1._2_2 FG\S3). A statement by one participant is interesting, as it demonstrates that there are specific prejudices when it comes to persons granted asylum, not necessarily when it comes to people coming from the Middle East: *when he tells people he gets to know that he is an asylum beneficiary, they avoid him, but when he says he came from Iraq to study here, they accept him* (169_1.2.1._2_1 FG\S2). One interlocutor believes that *Croats trust asylum beneficiaries with families more than those who are single, in which case they seem to be slightly scared of them* (169_1.2.1._2_1 FG\S3).

It is interesting to note that, for the most part, the asylum beneficiaries interviewed see no major cultural obstacles to their living in Croatia, even when such could be deduced from certain statements. The issue of the headscarf is mentioned as the most obvious external sign of affiliation to a tradition which is different from Croatian traditions. Our female interlocutors have not experienced any problems because of their headscarves, but they have often been asked whether they wear a headscarf at home, and whether it doesn't make them hot. One interlocutor says *he wants to get married again and legalize bigamy with a Croatian wife and an Iraqi one* (169_1.2.1._2_1 FG\S4), although polygamy is prohibited by law in Croatia.

However, several persons granted asylum also describe negative experiences in the communities in which they have been accommodated. Most of the experiences regard verbal comments and unpleasant behaviour by individual persons. One example is comments made about Arabs, saying "that they are all the same and that they kill both adults

and children". One interlocutor explains that they all feel the consequences when a migrant does something bad or commits a criminal offence. He states that *after an asylum seeker attacked a woman in Dugave, the local population thought that all the refugees were like that, and the following day he felt that the neighbours started behaving differently towards him* (169_1.2.1._2_1 FG\S2). An interlocutor says that *once somebody spat at them in town* (171_1.2.1._2_2 FG\A3), while a female interlocutor describes that *when she put a plastic bag on a seat next to her in the bus, somebody yelled "boom" (the sound of a bomb exploding)* (171_1.2.1._2_2 FG\A1). Verbal humiliation has also been reported by an interlocutor whose family was told by a neighbour: *where have you come and what are you doing here* (063_1.2.7._1_2). There have also been several physical attacks, as three interviewed asylum beneficiaries report.

When it comes to the local community's expectations of persons granted asylum, the responses of the interlocutors are very rare and brief, and they boil down to the expectation that persons granted asylum fit in and be grateful. Only two interlocutors from the Central and Dalmatian regions have responded to those questions, and their answers are given here. The interlocutor from an LSGU in the Central Region says: (...) *we will certainly accommodate the persons granted asylum, those... we don't even know how many we have at the moment, in all parts of Croatia and (...) they will not feel unwelcome, but it all depends on them, because they also need to adjust to the people in this country, in the community they come to.* (21_4_041). A similar view is held by a representative of a CSO in Dalmatia: *I think that persons granted asylum should be a bit more patient in such a case, although I understand their fear and disappointment* (...) *if they had to leave their own country, I do understand, because it was a question of survival, of saving one's life, then there should be a minimum of gratitude to the country and the people receiving them, and not expect immediately that everything will be served to them and resolved, although on the other hand it is up to the institutions, and citizens, and organizations involved with this to try to make their life as bearable and easy as possible.* (27_14_139).

Persons granted asylum themselves also speak about their expectations and what it is that would make it easier for them to integrate into the community in which they live. Generally speaking, interlocutors believe that the support system for persons granted asylum is not organized well, and that there are contradictions. That everything would be alright in their lives if they could get a job and salary. They warn that social benefits are linked to their being unemployed, and that the amount is insufficient to live on, that they would like to work and earn more, but without the benefit being taken from them. As it is, they have no means to finance their faster learning of the language, which would enable them to seek better jobs. One interlocutor says that *he receives 2,500 kuna from the Government. That he should be paid well by the state so that he can learn, work, so that after two years he can stop worrying about his employment because he will already have a job and advance on it. So that he can get married and live normally, etc.* (169_1.2.1._2_1 FG\S1). Therefore, they believe that the system of support for integration in the first two years of somebody's stay should be organized differently. In their mind, it should not be limited to two years only, but be in place until they find a suitable job where they can advance – *Now they seek and cannot find a job* (169_1.2.1._2_1 FG\S2).

The openness of persons granted asylum towards their new surroundings and their wish to be included in the community have also been stressed as factors facilitating integration. Therefore, interlocutors point out, *they themselves should be open, and should not isolate themselves from Croats, it is a priority so that they can come and live here, they should not be afraid of their new surroundings, they should accept them* (109_1.3.1._1_1). Some believe that we can already recognize two groups of persons granted asylum which are problematic: *one is those who isolate themselves from society, and the other has adjusted poorly, and adopted some bad habits: they smoke, drink, go to clubs, they have accepted bad aspects.* (...) *There are migrants who don't want to stay in Croatia, and thus they are not getting involved in the community, either* (167_1.2.1._1_1).

6.4.3. CAPACITY OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES BY DIMENSION OF INTEGRATION

The high level of correspondence in the assessments of the importance of integration of persons granted asylum by all the participants is also visible to a certain extent in the local communities' assessments of their capacities relating to the implementation of integration measures. Nonetheless, stakeholders in integration who come from various local communities display substantial differences within the same region, and especially between

different regions, when it comes to assessing their capacity. The differences are primarily a result of different experiences with persons granted asylum in certain communities, and among certain stakeholders in integration. The various dimensions of integration have been grouped into six areas which reflect the main findings of the qualitative research: 1) language learning and education; 2) accommodation and housing; 3) employment; 4) awareness raising among professionals and the public; 5) social welfare and health care; 6) intersectorial cooperation.

6.4.3.1. LANGUAGE LEARNING AND EDUCATION

All the stakeholders in all the regions express their general agreement that the acquisition of the Croatian language is very important as one of the most significant aspects of integration, but their assessment of the competences relating to securing and organizing courses in Croatian as a foreign language varies, depending on the stakeholder.[18] The majority of LSGUs see no possibility of their being involved in the organization of language courses. They believe that it falls within the remit of the Ministry of Science and Education, while citing problems with the duration of courses (the number of lessons being deemed too small) and confusion regarding the financing of the courses. Still, some LSGUs in the Central Region have been involved in the courses by approving their organization and their being held in schools, or they point out that courses can be initiated either through county administrative departments or through the regular school system. This would imply additional tasks for teachers, with certain remuneration, or the courses could be organized within open-university programmes, if intended for adult participants: *I also see a possibility at open universities, which could organize such courses without any problem. Then there is the Employment Service, which could step in. They have venues, they usually organize training for us, re-skilling, up-skilling, based on the needs expressed by our county. It could be organized without any major problem* (12_2_100).

Representatives of RSGUs believe even less that they have a role in the organization of language courses, and say that they have neither human resources nor logistic capacities for it, while transferring that responsibility to the Ministry of Science and Education and the Education and Teacher Training Agency. Some also emphasize the problem of courses having too few lessons, but do not offer any specific assessment of the current institutional and human-resources capacities necessary for language learning in local communities.

On the other hand, representatives of professional institutions shift responsibility for the organization of language courses to other bodies of state administration – from local level, through regional level, to the state level. It has been pointed out that it is unclear who should organize courses and implement them; the number of lessons that the state foresees as mandatory is equally unclear, as are the mechanisms whereby courses should be financed. Further difficulties mentioned include the uniform access, since not all the participants share the same level of literacy, motivation, acquired knowledge or learning ability. Only in Dalmatia are stakeholders prepared to take responsibility for organizing courses: *While we waited for a public tender, time went by, and we made the decision that it would be much better if were to include him in one of the Croatian-language learning centres, which means one of the language schools, which nowadays also offer Croatian-language courses, because we could see when we contacted him that his Croatian was not all that good* (...) (28_10_128).

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[18]   Pursuant to the International and Temporary Protection Act (Official Gazette "Narodne novine", no. 70/15), persons granted asylum are obliged to attend a course in Croatian language, history and culture, and the coverage of the course-attendance costs is guaranteed, but the act does not stipulate the modalities of providing the language course.

Civil-society organizations in all local communities rarely point out their role in organizing language courses, and they believe that the responsibility for this lies primarily with the state. In some cases, they cite experience of language-learning services provided by their networks of volunteers. In Zagreb, CSO representatives are involved more directly in organizing courses, and some CSOs offer formal forms of courses (for example, JRS, STRC), and the majority of asylum beneficiaries see those as the only available official language courses (along with the course offered by the Centre for Croatian as a Second and Foreign Language – Croaticum). Other Zagreb-based CSOs also provide, or used to provide, persons granted asylum with an opportunity to learn Croatian, but in a more unofficial fashion, through the involvement of volunteers (for example, AYS and CPS). Furthermore, CSOs believe that persons granted asylum acquire language best and fastest through daily interaction with the local population, and they see employment as an excellent opportunity to achieve that. They mention a project of the Croatian Employment Service as an example of good practice. In it, persons granted asylum are trained on the job, and a Croatian language course is organized in parallel at their workplace.

Persons granted asylum point out problems mainly regarding their access to organized Croatian-language courses, and the slow pace of organizing and implementing courses. Often they are unable to assess precisely (or they cannot remember) the number of lessons in the language course. The majority of asylum beneficiaries accommodated in Zagreb attend courses organized by CSOs and by Croaticum at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. When describing their experiences, they mention some aspects of the courses' implementation. Thus, they say that positive aspects included the ease of the setting, where all the participants in the course were of the same gender (mentioned by female interlocutors), satisfaction with the instructors and the need for the course to be held every day, while the negative aspects were the overlapping of various courses (for example, the professional training/re-skilling course and the language course), and the fact that several parallel language courses were held in various institutions in the same time-slot. Asylum beneficiaries estimate that the level of their Croatian at the end of the course was sufficient for simple daily activities such as shopping and conversations about daily life, but

not for work. Only four interlocutors estimate that today the level of their Croatian is sufficient for more complex activities (such as work, good understanding and communication). The other interlocutors mostly estimate that their current language proficiency is still sufficient for simple daily activities: *he has no problem communicating with people. If he can't find a word, he uses pictures, hands, and communicates in every possible way* (167_1.2.1._1_1). Interlocutors point out that they have invested additional effort in language learning themselves (using the internet or books) and underline the importance of mastering conversational and everyday language. They cite diverse forms of assistance in mastering the language (course instructors, JRS and CRC volunteers, children's teachers, etc.) but add that additional lessons are needed. They also use internet services, English, friends and younger members of their families who speak Croatian (better) to assist them with communication: *My daughter mastered the language quickly, and she was my interpreter: I took her with me though she was still small to interpret and help me* (064_1.2.7._1_1).

As regards the inclusion in the education system of persons granted asylum,[19] the majority of stakeholders point out problems with slow administration, and they emphasize that teachers are overburdened, estimating that there is a need for additional teachers, which falls under the competence of the MSE: *They are informed now, the decision has been sent to the school where they will attend 70 lessons of preparatory course in the Croatian language. Now, the school must ask approval to hire – which takes a lot of time – a teacher, professor, who will teach them Croatian*

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[19]   As specified in the *Action Plan for Integration of Third-Country Nationals*, pursuant to the Primary and Secondary School Education Act (Official Gazette "Narodne novine", nos. 87/2008, 86/2009, 92/2010, 105/2010-corr., 90/2011, 16/2012, 86/2012, 94/2013, 152/2014) and the Ordinance on the Elements and Criteria for the Selection of Candidates for Enrolment in the First Year of Secondary Schools (Official Gazette "Narodne novine", no. 49/2015), persons granted asylum, asylum seekers, aliens under subsidiary protection, aliens under temporary protection, and aliens residing unlawfully in the Republic of Croatia are entitled to primary and secondary education. With a view to making their integration into the education system as successful as possible, the same Act prescribes the obligation of schools to provide special assistance for children who have the right to education in the Republic of Croatia but do not speak Croatian, or speak it insufficiently.
With a view to integrating such pupils successfully, the school is obliged to organize individual and group forms of teaching, in order to enable those students to master the Croatian language effectively and catch up on the knowledge they lack in certain subjects.

(2_3_011). Diverse stakeholders also mention that asylee children should be additionally worked with, since the current Croatian lessons are insufficient for them to be able to follow regular lessons held in Croatian, which opens the issue of assessment of the acquired knowledge.

Representatives of RSGUs are somewhat better informed about problems relating to enrolment in schools, and they recognize challenges posed by the inclusion of older children in schools. They highlight problems relating to missing personal documents, recognition of school certificates and qualifications acquired earlier, which make the assessment of knowledge already acquired and allocation to classes in schools rather challenging. In the Littoral and Central regions, they also point out that the insufficient number of teachers, interpreters and teaching assistants is something that falls outside their area of influence, that it depends on the competent ministry, and that it is very important for the successful integration of children into the system.

Professional institutions are somewhat more focused on the teaching process itself, and they point out problems resulting partly from insufficient language skills and the impossibility of communicating with asylee children. They emphasize that it is necessary to work additionally with asylee children, but also warn that children whose parents intend to move on to other countries have a low level of motivation for language acquisition and schooling (in the Eastern Region and the City of Zagreb). In addition, they caution that the curriculum that asylee children are expected to master without sufficient language skills is too broad, and that this can have a negative impact on their results in schools: *When it comes to language learning, I'd like to point out that the problem lies in the fact that the course is held in parallel to their integration into school. From the pedagogical perspective, I believe that keeping pupils in school for 6 or 7 hours without them understanding a single word of what is being done there cannot be justified. It is a form of violence against those children. Before they enter a classroom, they should acquire some basic language skills* (15_2_066). Representatives of professional institutions in the Central Region, especially schools, underline the role schools play in awareness raising in the school environment, and point to the need to train professional staff in schools with a view to preventing discrimination and promoting tolerance both in schools and outside them. School employees also warn that the method of grading is unclear, and so is the financing of specific needs (such as payment for school excursions, food etc.). Generally, professional institutions note that asylee children are received well in their classes in the schools of the Central Region, that reactions of local children are positive, and that they are ready to assist their peers with integration, as illustrated by this statement: *Children have accepted them. As you know, there is always some teasing and all that, but we have never had any incident. Everything went really... they have integrated very well, the classmates have accepted them* (20_9_037).

CSOs mention their involvement in the education system somewhat less frequently. In Dalmatia, their primary role is to raise the awareness of local children so that they accept their asylee peers better. In the Central Region, they underline the insufficient number of Croatian lessons, some specific difficulties with enrolment in schools, and financing of some specific needs of children, often provided by CSOs (for example, school supplies).

According to the opinions expressed by persons granted asylum, the large majority of experiences of the integration of children in kindergarten and school (and even in the system of higher education for one interlocutor) have been positive. Their statements leave the impression that all those who participated in the organization of placing children in schools and kindergartens (for example, CRC staff, headmasters, teachers, classmates) have been forthcoming and have done what they could for the children to be included in the school or pre-school group: *When my son came to school on his first day, the teacher was the best. She was excellent. She smiled. She took him through the whole school, and rotated the children who sat next to him so that they all got to know him. She received him really well. He is highly satisfied. At school, they are all friends* (170_1.2.1._2_2 FG\S1). Some interlocutors see the enrolment of children in school or kindergarten as an

opportunity to develop their own social network with other parents. However, three interlocutors mention negative experiences, too, relating to waiting for enrolment in school, or to the fact that institutions were not familiar with the way in which children could start attending school.

6.4.3.2. ACCOMMODATION AND HOUSING

The responses of the majority of stakeholders reveal that they actually have no information about the current capacity of their local community to accommodate persons granted asylum. Most of them attribute the responsibility of resolving this aspect of integration to the state or to the Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing.[20] LSGU and RSGU representatives mainly point out that they themselves own no housing units, or that the existing housing units have already been allocated to beneficiaries belonging to certain social categories. They believe that one possible solution could be to repurpose existing unoccupied housing units or to rent private apartments, but they warn that this could cause problems with landlords, as renters could be unwilling to rent their apartments to accommodate asylum beneficiaries, and they could increase their prices: *...it is hard to find a property to rent, even if it is empty, when you mention the purpose: either the price rises sky-high, or the owner simply turns it down* (1_1_008).

Only representatives of LSGUs and RGSUs in some local communities of the Central Region estimate that they could provide accommodation for persons granted asylum, since they have a certain number of housing units owned by their towns, and they are also considering the option of using the model of state-stimulated housing construction (so-called POS apartments), for apartments intended to house persons granted asylum. In the Littoral and Dalmatian regions, representatives of RSGUs say that it is possible to find accommodation away from the

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[20]   Pursuant to the International and Temporary Protection Act (Official Gazette "Narodne novine" no. 70/15) persons granted international protection are entitled to accommodation for a period of no more than two years from the day of delivery of the decision granting them international protection, if they do not possess financial resources or items of greater value. The procedure for the recognition of the right to accommodation is launched by the submission of an application to the competent social welfare centre. The Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing provides housing units in line with the pace of adoption of decisions granting international protection by the Ministry of the Interior.

urban centres, but still within their immediate vicinity. Stakeholders from LSGUs of Dalmatia also mention problems with renting private apartments, relating to tourism: *Whatever is available is used for tourism, and tenants in xxx are not secure. Firstly, they have a difficult time and the price is high; secondly, they are not secure; and, thirdly, most of the apartments are vacant between October and June, so I don't really believe that this is an option – I think that this will be the biggest problem, or the biggest barrier for the arrival of migrants in xxx* (28_1_123).

Stakeholders representing professional institutions and CSOs do not have any information on possible accommodation capacities, and they also cite renting private apartments as a possible solution. Only representatives of Zagreb-based CSOs stand out with their estimate that capacities for the accommodation of persons granted asylum are insufficient, and their belief that remit for apartments lies exclusively with the state, and not with local communities. They also underline that: *they have publicly supported the takeover of housing by the Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing as of 1st January, and today is 6th June, and it seems to us that it is not working, but now we've also heard that they'll get the AMIF, and that they'll finally start furnishing state-owned apartments* (8_15_147). CSOs in Zagreb emphasize problems relating to persons who have to move out of reception centres: *At this moment, there are still 36 people at Porin waiting to move out, and about 20 at Kutina* (8_15_147).

When talking about accommodation, persons granted asylum discuss primarily the condition of their current accommodation in private apartments or houses, which is, in the opinion of most of them, satisfactory. Their remarks mostly regard their original accommodation in a reception centre, which they were partially (un)satisfied with, due to cramped space and unsuitable food. Those who are not satisfied with their accommodation are primarily minors placed in children's homes, who believe that such homes are *inadequate for the accommodation of refugees* (007c_1.1.1._1_1). Only one interlocutor shares a positive experience of looking for an apartment in Croatia, while others say their experience is negative, and linked mainly to landlords' prejudices. For example: *She's looking for an apartment at the moment. Her rental contract expires in two months' time, she has to find another apartment, salary, utilities, and all. She's asked her friends, neighbours and kindergarten teachers, but when landlords hear that they are asylum beneficiaries, they do not*

want to rent (170_1.2.1._2_2 FG\S2). In addition to landlords' prejudices, our interlocutors mention prices too high for renting, which corresponds to the estimates of institutional stakeholders. The greatest help in resolving the accommodation and housing issue came to our interlocutors from staff at social-welfare centres (and this actually falls within their activities relating to the integration of persons granted asylum). But, in addition to SWCs, interlocutors also mention the CRC, Porin reception centre, Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing, and the MSE, although they also point out factors that could improve the quality of housing, such as the employment of spouses, because it would, for example: *help in solving the issue of furbishing and decorating the house* (063_1.2.7._1_2).

6.4.3.3. EMPLOYMENT

In all local communities, persons granted asylum have been recognized as a very desirable working force, in sectors in which it is needed. Nearly all the stakeholders say that their employment is possible, but assessments as to the sectors and possible types of jobs vary to a certain extent among various stakeholders and regions. The majority of stakeholders also question asylum beneficiaries' competences and professional qualifications.

LSGU representatives primarily point to the demand for a vocationally-trained labour force in the construction sector and public works, as well as in agriculture in the Eastern Region. In addition to noting that employers should also be informed about the possibility of employing persons granted asylum, LSGUs also consider possible mechanisms for re-skilling and up-skilling, and overcoming the language barrier, and they point their finger in the direction of professional services that should take on the task: *I know that the Employment Service has re-skilling and professional development programmes, and I believe that those could certainly be offered to persons granted asylum. With good intersectorial cooperation, it could certainly be offered and realized. I think it is important to possibly include asylum beneficiaries in the labour market and, while doing so, to assess their potentials. This could certainly be done by the Employment Service* (14_1_060). Still, some stakeholders from LSGUs express doubts in respect of asylum beneficiaries' qualifications, and in their verification: *At this moment, we don't have any programmes. I presume that many persons granted asylum have various professions and that they have graduated from schools. The issue is the recognition of their diplomas/qualifications, and the question of whether they have diplomas with them at all* (26_1_121). In contrast, representatives of RSGUs in some regions make no estimates about the employment of persons granted asylum (for example, in Dalmatia and the City of Zagreb), and other RSGU representatives think that persons granted asylum could find employment primarily in low-skill and auxiliary jobs, such as kitchen assistant, storage assistant and similar. In the Eastern Region, they believe that persons granted asylum could be employed in agriculture, and in industries typical of the local community.

Professional institutions are largely in unison in their view that asylum beneficiaries have a better chance of finding employment in low-skill positions. Stakeholders from professional institutions warn somewhat more frequently about the issue of qualification recognition, and the estimate of asylum beneficiaries' competences: *When it comes to the possibility of finding employment, we are talking about people whose competences for the labour market are rather low. They cannot prove their qualifications, not even in practice, given the language barrier... it will take some time for those people to prove their competences* (7_6_028). Professional institutions also highlight gender differences among persons granted asylum in their approach to the labour market, and say that the employment of women is challenging: *However, it takes quite a lot of time for them to accept that they are here now and that they have to engage in some kind of activity, especially for women. That's our experience. They tend to be very passive, and have very low motivation for any change relating to their inclusion in the labour market* (8_6_144). Representatives of professional institutions in the Central Region emphasize the need to inform employers about possible incentives for employment, professional development at work, and self-employment, but they also point to the administrative obstacles posed by the CES: in order to participate in verified programmes

/ professional training or courses, one needs to have a certificate of completion of primary school, and at least sufficient knowledge of the Croatian language. Language is mentioned in the majority of regions as a barrier to employment, and it has been highlighted especially by interlocutors from Littoral and Eastern regions.

Representatives of CSOs believe that the chance of finding a job for a person granted asylum is somewhat higher in the private sector, hospitality and tourism, construction and agriculture (Central Region). They also mention difficulties with qualification recognition, inability to speak Croatian and cultural differences, low wages, and the unwillingness of asylum beneficiaries to take seasonal jobs, because of insecurity and the risks they entail. CSO representatives from the Littoral Region who have no experience with the implementation of integration measures in this field believe that it would be useful to involve persons granted asylum in volunteering programmes, so that they can help persons granted asylum who come to their communities.

Persons granted asylum themselves underline language proficiency and qualification recognition as the two most important requirements for somebody to find and hold a job, but they also believe that the continuation, that is, completion, of education and the acquisition of qualifications and experience are very important. Although they are highly motivated for integration into the labour market, because they believe that employment is the main precondition for gaining independence, they are also aware of the economic situation in Croatia, and they do not want to be a burden on the state, but would rather be an active and productive member of society: *We know what the financial, economic situation is here. Because of that, we don't want the state to give us money, we want to work.* (169_1.2.1._2_1 FG\S4). However, their experience of looking for a job is not positive. On the contrary, the majority of interlocutors describe negative experiences, relating primarily to their insufficient language skills, and the aversion of some employers who are unwilling to take persons granted asylum, for example: *Some employers needed my qualification, but they sought excellent language proficiency, which in my case definitely isn't there. Then they told me to learn the language and get back to them. Some employers, especially private businessmen, asked where I was from. When I told them I was from XY and that I was granted asylum in Croatia, they told me immediately that they wouldn't hire me* (064_1.2.7._1_1). Negative experiences also relate to low wages, lower remuneration than

that received by local workers, and even missed payment for the job done. There were also cases in which persons granted asylum were offered unfavourable contracts, or were not informed about contractual provisions at all.

Persons granted asylum associate their positive experience with assistance in job seeking received from the local employment service, working conditions or a correct relationship with the employer. One interlocutor pointed out the added value of learning by doing, and mastering Croatian at the same time: *... My boss is very good, and the owner is very good. All the girls work together. It is very good. I learn words every day. They help me* (170_1.2.1._2_2 FG\S2). Assistance in job-seeking has been rendered in most cases by civil-society organizations (Red Cross, JRS and AYS), and in some cases the positive role played by the CES is also mentioned, although one interlocutor underlines that this model of job seeking has its limitations: *The employment service operates the way it does, it takes personal data and some kind of a CV, they haven't found anything for him, but they did find jobs for other guys and they work now* (172_1.2.1._2_1 FG\A4).

6.4.3.4. AWARENESS RAISING AMONG PROFESSIONALS AND THE PUBLIC

The topic of public-awareness raising gives rise to the highest level of consensus of all the stakeholders. Nearly all the interlocutors attach a lot of importance to the programmes of public information and awareness raising about the arrival and integration of persons granted asylum in local communities. The majority also recognize the role of the media in the process, and believe that it is very important to provide local populations with examples of good practice and successful integration of persons granted asylum, and inform them about their culture and customs, with a view to preventing prejudice and discrimination: *People definitely have to learn what and how much is expected, the same that we need to know, but the population should also know. A human approach to all of this and to those people, we should ask them to treat those people who will come in a human manner. Of course, it will take some time, it can't be done at once, like, now we'll announce it. But if that is the plan, we should start doing it. To raise people's awareness, because I've heard a hundred times: well, we were refugees, we were displaced, we have experience. But it's not the same* (1_5_001).

LSGU representatives often see that they have a role to play in such activities, too, and mention the already existing action plans which vary between public forums and public lectures, and distribution of information through the news media and social networks. Some underline the importance of personal contact with asylum beneficiaries, too, as an efficient mechanism for combatting public fears and resistance.

Only some of the RSGU representatives speak of their role in the public-awareness raising activities, and most of them believe that this is the task of the media. Still, in the Central Region they believe that the county should take the lead in public-awareness raising, and that the topic should be linked to the situation of refugees during the Croatian War, to win the sympathy of the public.

Professional institutions also leave the role of awareness raising to the media, but point to the importance of its implementation in local communities, and expect stronger engagement of the civil sector. According to the responses of CSO representatives, the civil sector, primarily in Zagreb for the time being, engages in awareness raising through workshops and cultural events.

Another element that has been mentioned as important is the training of staff and professionals, which is missing in the majority of institutions, offices and organizations. The majority of people who have participated in training are staff at professional institutions (SWCs and schools, especially in Zagreb), but the importance of additional training programmes is still mentioned. Representatives of some LSGUs and RSGUs cite only some working meetings organized by the OHRRNM or other professional institutions where their staff was but partially informed about persons granted asylum: *We attended two meetings with the Government Office, two meetings, which, alright, they were informative, but they did not answer all the questions we raised* (27_1_141). Some CSOs prepare and hold training sessions for professionals involved in the integration of persons granted asylum, while others say that their staff is collecting experience working on international projects and being directly involved with persons granted asylum.

Persons granted asylum offer a range of proposals that could contribute to Croats' being better informed about their cultures. These include lectures for children, youth, teachers, parents of schoolmates of the asylee children, focusing on interesting features of their countries: *Perhaps those who feel some resistance in respect of us would behave differently if we informed them about the country we come from* (064_1.2.7._1_1). Generally speaking, a number of interlocutors say they feel the need to explain their culture, but they give up when they see that their interlocutors are not interested.

Participation in public events such as festivals is also something our interlocutors see as an opportunity to present one's culture (for example, by organizing New Year celebrations linked to some other calendar, such as the Iranian New Year). A number of interlocutors mention preparing food from their countries, along with music and dance, which can create opportunities for conversations. When it comes to organizing activities that could bring their culture closer to the local population, *they expect assistance from organizations and NGOs which have already had a chance to try their food – and they cite the example of cooking food for RSGUs and STRC and in Kutina* (170_1.2.1._2_2 FG\S3). Several interlocutors emphasize that the exemplary conduct of the asylum beneficiaries themselves is also an element of presentation of their own culture and integration in the local community.

6.4.3.5. SOCIAL WELFARE AND HEALTH CARE

Nearly all the stakeholders from all the regions agree in their estimate that adequate social-welfare services have been provided to persons granted asylum, just as they are provided to all other beneficiaries who are Croatian citizens. Some LSGUs mention that

they have amended their decision on managing benefits within the social-welfare system to make sure that persons granted asylum and persons under subsidiary protection can enjoy all the rights that citizens of the RoC living in their towns enjoy, and that they also receive some additional forms of assistance and additional rights, just as some vulnerable social groups do. Contrary to this, some representatives of LSGUs and professional institutions from the Dalmatian and Eastern regions say that persons granted asylum should not be singled out, that is, that they should not have more entitlements and higher priority than domestic social-welfare beneficiaries, as illustrated by the statement of one interlocutor: *Well, I believe it should not happen, because, as I said, they should not be subject to positive discrimination to such an extent that the rule of positive discrimination kicks in, if you already have lists for social housing, for POS [state-stimulated housing construction] apartments, that all other citizens are entitled to, and I believe they should also be included, which means that they'd not need any other special rights* (27_1_142).

Statements by asylum beneficiaries leave an impression that, in their view, the system of social welfare – and, more specifically, the distribution of financial support – is not functioning fully. Although there are some positive experiences, their prevalent view is that payments of social benefits are several months late, or that they are not receiving benefits although they believe they are entitled to them. They underline especially the fact that they lose their entitlement to financial support if they get a job or if they are accommodated in a reception centre. Once a decision on an acquired right is issued, the financial support is paid automatically, but the fact that a number of persons granted asylum do not see in this light indicates a need to explain to them their rights and the functioning of the system better. As it is, they feel deprived and attribute this to a lack of care on the part of the SWC staff. It is possible that some of them have not undertaken steps required before they can begin enjoying their right to financial support as prescribed by law. We should bear in mind that, pursuant to the International and Temporary Protection Act and the Social Welfare Act, persons granted international protection most often exercise their right to the guaranteed minimum benefit, one-off benefit, housing-cost support, assistance-and-care support, and fuel-and-food-in-soup-kitchen support. In addition to these financial allowances, persons granted international protection are also entitled to social services which are used to provide them with information about their rights within the social-welfare system (the initial social service), to assist individuals and families in overcoming difficulties and developing their personal capacities and a responsible attitude towards themselves, their families and society (counselling and assistance services). The above-mentioned should be considered within the context of administrative functioning of professional services, because some time elapses between the lodging of an application and the adoption of a decision. Furthermore, one should take into consideration differences in the capacities of various stakeholders providing these services. Several persons granted asylum point out that the loss of entitlement to financial support of those who get a job – even if the job is temporary and poorly paid – is demotivating for job seeking.

The situation with exercising health-care entitlements has been estimated similarly in all the local communities, with the unison view that persons granted asylum are provided with adequate health care. But interlocutors warn about the insufficient number of doctors and undercapacity of the health-care system, as well as difficulties with the language. *I believe that the problem doesn't lie with doctors being unwilling to accept them as their patients, but rather with communication, since doctors are probably afraid of taking somebody who they can't communicate with, it would mean taking on the responsibility for that person and his/her medical treatment* (2_2_010). Some interlocutors from various institutions and regions point to the problem of insufficient psychosocial support which would exclusively target persons granted asylum.

Although the majority of persons granted asylum say that they needed no psychosocial support when they arrived in Croatia, most of them mention certain problems which they faced when seeking health-care services. Their complaints regard long waiting time for check-ups, impoliteness of medical staff, feelings of being discriminated against, unequal health-care treatment for the rights holder and members of his/her family, lack of information about the rights of asylum beneficiaries on the part of medical staff (both doctors and professional services), and lack of information among the health-care staff about who covers the costs of medical services provided to persons granted asylum: *My wife has a job, and she has a physician, but our children and I don't. Although I have read and received information that we are entitled to health care, at the expense of the state budget, I don't want to fight with official staff,*

because I believe that they should know, but when they tell me I have no such right, I keep silent (064_1.2.7._1_1).

The main problem with the provision of adequate social welfare and health care, emphasized by all the stakeholders in all the regions, is the institutional undercapacity. They mention the lack of professional staff in social-welfare centres, and especially the lack of doctors, due to the increased workload. Other aggravating circumstances in the provision of social-welfare and health-care services mentioned are communication problems caused by the lack of Croatian-language proficiency, the system's slow pace, lack of information on the part of staff/doctors, shortcomings in the monitoring and contacting of persons granted asylum, lack of clarity regarding the financing of health-care services, and discrepancies among various stakeholders, and these are also cited by persons granted asylum.

Generally speaking, LSGUs and RSGUs do not think they have a role to play in the provision of social-welfare and health-care services, which in their view should be provided by professional institutions. The situation is similar with CSO representatives, who rarely talk about those issues. Only representatives of CSOs based in Zagreb speak more specifically about problems, primarily those relating to health care, and point out difficulties with the system of financing health-care services for persons granted asylum, which are caused, in their view, by the lack of information on the part of doctors, communication difficulties and discrepancies and illogical features of the operation of various stakeholders, as illustrated by this example: *The Ministry of Health sent an instruction to all health centres, dispensaries, hospitals, all health-care institutions, on how to provide services to persons under international protection and to send all invoices and costs directly to the Ministry of Health. That means, not to the CHIF, but to the Ministry of Health, and it would cover all the costs. But that instruction was received by directors of health centres, and they never passed it on to each doctor, paediatrician, dentist, and that is the major problem* (8_14_159).

6.4.3.6. INTERSECTORIAL COOPERATION

The cooperation with other stakeholders in the process of implementation of integration measures has been assessed in relation to the current experiences and possible future activities in this field. Some stakeholders have had no experience and no contact with persons granted asylum, and thus they have not established cooperation with other institutions – for example, some LSGUs and RSGUs from the Eastern and Littoral regions. Other stakeholders describe the current cooperation, identifying to a large extent the same state-administration bodies, professional institutions and CSOs as their current and future collaborators. LSGU representatives point out primarily their current cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior, social-welfare centres, Croatian Employment Service, Croatian Health Insurance Fund, schools, kindergartens and the Croatian Red Cross. In Zagreb, the cooperation with other civil-sector organizations is also important, such as the Stress and Trauma Rehabilitation Centre, Jesuit Refugee Service and Centre for Peace Studies. They have cooperated on some projects. RSGU representatives also mention professional institutions and organizations falling under their competences, such as schools and health-care institutions, but in some local communities of Dalmatia their role boils down only to contacting the relevant institutions, with no further cooperation.

Most professional institutions have established cooperation with nearly all the stakeholders in the integration process. They most frequently mention the relevant ministries, primarily the MoI, Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities, local and regional SWCs, CES, reception centres, schools and health centres, with SWCs being mentioned the most. Stakeholders from professional institutions also emphasize excellent cooperation with civil-society organizations; at the national level, this is primarily the CRC, and in Zagreb important roles are played by NGOs such as JRS, CPS and AYS. Only in the Central Region (including Zagreb) is the existing cooperation with units of local self-government mentioned.

CSOs cite similar partners as representatives of professional institutions. The Zagreb-based CSOs mention a somewhat greater number of existing partners, including LSGUs and the OHRRNM. International organizations such as the IOM, UNHCR and UNICEF are mentioned as partners by representatives of professional institutions in Zagreb and the Eastern Region, and by CSO representatives in the Central Region.

When considering possible future cooperation, nearly all the stakeholders expect to continue their cooperation with all their existing partners, and where there has been no cooperation, they expect it with all stakeholders participating in the integration process. LSGUs and RSGUs expect somewhat more frequently stronger involvement of civil-society organizations, which are, in their estimation, more skilled in developing projects and attracting funding for activities relating to persons granted asylum, or they count on their human resources. RSGUs emphasize in particular that they expect bodies of state administration to inform them in timely fashion about the arrival of persons granted asylum, and to provide them with instructions, protocols and expectations of local communities. In a number of statements this is mentioned as a criticism of the state level. RSGUs also expect to cooperate with units of local self-government, especially in the Littoral and Dalmatian regions.

Professional institutions expect to establish or continue cooperation at all levels, from the state level to specific organizations at the local level. They also highlight stronger involvement of various civil-society organizations, both local and international. Stakeholders from the Central Region also focus on intermunicipal and intercounty cooperation, for example "with other social-welfare centres", with a view to comparing experiences and transferring good practice.

Besides the existing stakeholders, CSOs expect primarily to establish cooperation with units of local and regional self-government. Some stakeholders emphasize that the state and local levels do not make use of the capacities and experience of local CSOs in respect of their communities, and that local CSOs should be involved in the process from the very start, rather than at a later stage through public tenders.

When it comes to assessing the activities and actions of individual stakeholders involved in the process of integrating persons granted asylum, there are some positive remarks, but criticism is much more pronounced. The criticism is directed primarily towards the state administration, and it is shared by all the stakeholders. Firstly, it regards their impression that the state level does not share information in a timely and transparent manner with them, given that the state level is responsible for the entire system. Stakeholders from LSGUs and RSGUs believe that they operate without any specific instructions and decision, and that they are left to improvise. Professional institutions are critical of the fact that legislation and procedures are missing, and they estimate that the measures defined in the Action Plan cannot be implemented in real life in the field, and point to the system's unpreparedness to respond to current challenges and needs (such as providing accommodation and interpreters): *All those Action Plans are full of empty words, those are all empty words. With no disrespect, there is some content in there, but when you get to the field, when you see that there is a person who needs a job, and then you see, as I said, here due to some kind of a tourist boom in Croatia all of a sudden we lack workforce (...) But the policy towards them is linked to a whole range of other policies that are or are not implemented* (25_5_115). There are also warnings about overlapping of the activities of various institutions and organizations, and about transferring responsibility to CSOs. Positive remarks regard primarily fast reactions by certain professional institutions when it comes to accommodating persons granted asylum in local communities.

6.4.4. NEEDS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND THEIR POTENTIAL INVOLVEMENT IN INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES

Local self-government units, regional self-government units, professional institutions and civil-society organizations in all the regions cite similar needs. The most prominent among those is the necessity to have a protocol containing descriptions and instructions for the implementation of various steps in the integration of persons granted asylum. The protocol should define the order in which the integration measures should be implemented, responsible entities, duties and forms of their mutual cooperation. The protocol should specify how integration measures are to be implemented, those that include reception, provision of Croatian-language programmes and their quick availability, provision of accommodation at the expense of the state, methods of accessing social-welfare and health-

care services, and employment. The protocol and instructions would make it possible for LSGUs and RSGUs to invoke those documents in their work and to act in line with what is stipulated in them.

Besides, units of local and regional self-government need the relevant ministries to harmonize their positions and procedures, and to adopt coherent instructions which will be implemented at the local level.

All LSGUs, RSGUs, professional institutions and civil-society organizations emphasize that it is necessary that they receive timely and reliable information on the number and structure of persons granted asylum and the time of their arrival in their area, since this is a precondition for their being prepared for various aspects of their integration. The distribution plan is a document mentioned by all units of self-government as an essential requirement for preparation for the reception of persons granted asylum, in line with the protocol mentioned above.

Some very prominent needs mentioned by all the stakeholders (LSGUs, RSGUs, professional institutions, CSOs) in all the regions are for interpreters and cultural mediators, who would facilitate communication with persons granted asylum who do not speak Croatian. The stakeholders point out that funding should be secured for their work. This need is especially pronounced in situations where there are administrative proceedings regarding the rights of a person granted asylum, or representing a child's best interests, for example, before a social-welfare centre, and also in all services of first contact with persons granted asylum and their families (school, SWCs, employment services, health centres and primary health-care clinics, Red Cross, CSOs, homes in which unaccompanied minors are accommodated). It has been pointed out that interpreters should have professional qualifications, rather than being semi-trained, or members of the family, and especially not children.

Among their priority needs, LSGUs and RSGUs in all the regions emphasize that the state should provide accommodation for persons granted asylum, since local communities have no vacant housing units which they could use. Actually, all the stakeholders see housing as a key requirement for the reception and integration of persons granted asylum, and think that it is a responsibility of the state, and not local communities. In the Eastern Region and Dalmatia, the need to provide suitable accommodation for unaccompanied minors under international protection is particularly highlighted.

Furthermore, all the integration stakeholders believe that administrative procedures important for persons granted asylum should be speeded up (such as the assignment of a personal identification number, which is a requirement of a number of other steps). They have noticed that the gap between what is prescribed by legislation and the implementation of it is caused by technical obstacles (for example, entering children in school e-registers and health registers, access to Croatian lessons, and verification of acquired qualifications and competences, which is a precondition for schooling or employment). Professional institutions and CSOs in all the regions put particular emphasis on the need to make procedures for exercising the rights of persons granted asylum and their inclusion in the community faster and more efficient, which requires good intersectorial cooperation.

Some LSGUs, and a number of CSOs, highlight the need for faster and easier access to Croatian lessons for adult asylum beneficiaries, since they have identified the inability to communicate in Croatian as the main obstacle for inclusion in any form of functioning in the community. The importance of language proficiency for employment is especially emphasized.

Professional institutions in all the regions point to the urgent need to efficiently solve, at the state level, the problem of persons granted asylum having no personal documents, and of the recognition of their previously acquired qualifications and existing

competences, so that they can be included in the education system, or professional training, and their chances of employment increased.

In all the regions, stakeholders in the integration share the same need to prepare their staff directly included in the integration process, raise their awareness and train them for the encounters and provision of services to persons granted asylum. This need is underlined by employees of LSGUs and RSGUs, by a large number of professional institutions, and some of the CSOs. SWCs, health centres, clinics, kindergartens, schools and employment services are mentioned in this context as particularly important. Given that professional institutions are those that are in direct and permanent contact with persons granted asylum, continuous professional development of their staff is needed (for example, special guardians of unaccompanied minors in need of international protection, doctors and medical nurses, social workers and psychologists, staff of educational institutions and employment services). In some professional institutions (in the Central Region), they explain that the training for all stakeholders in the integration should include information about the culture and customs of persons granted asylum, and that it should be based on principles of intercultural communication. In some professional institutions, where staff work directly and intensively with families of persons granted asylum, providing them with counselling, psychological support and such, it is emphasized that continuous attention should be paid to their mental health and stress prevention, through supervision and professional support.

All the stakeholders in the integration in the regions point out the need to prepare the public and increase its readiness to accept persons granted asylum in their communities. One should bear in mind that some of the citizens are particularly worried and oppose the arrival of persons granted asylum in their communities. Some professional institutions in the Eastern Region warn that those communities which are traditionally more closed and where a greater number of immigrants from BiH live, who had to leave their homes because of the war waged against Muslims, are the ones in which stronger opposition to the arrival of persons granted asylum can be expected.

In accordance with their view that the responsibility for all issues relating to the integration of persons granted asylum lies primarily with the state, a number of RSGUs, professional institutions and some CSOs expect the state to cover the related costs, such as material entitlements, increased costs of social welfare, health care and education, accommodation, and language courses for adults. Some RSGUs believe that counties have no role to play in it, and that they also have no funds for any special involvement in the integration process (Eastern Region). In all the regions, LSGUs and RSGUs need additional funds from the state budget, earmarked for the integration of persons granted asylum into the community. RSGUs in Central Region see the opportunity of securing financial resources through applications for EU projects and the drawing of money from EU funds. In Dalmatia, LSGUs expect the state to issue fewer instructions, and take more direct care of persons granted asylum.

RSGUs think that the Action Plan contains no implication of any obligation for the counties, and they have not received any instruction on how to proceed from the competent bodies, either. On the basis of this, they conclude that the main role and responsibility in the integration process falls on towns and municipalities, that is, LSGUs. The instructions mentioned above should clarify the possible role and responsibility of counties in the process of integration of persons granted asylum. Still, they emphasize that this would mean that they had to secure additional staff and resources, because tasks relating to the integration of persons granted asylum require additional time and competences.

Some LSGUs (in Eastern Region) say they need instructions from the state level which would clearly define the relationship between the rights, the community's capacities, and the obligations of persons granted asylum during the first two years of their integration.

RSGUs estimate that they will successfully carry out all the tasks prescribed by law, and the tasks they receive from competent state bodies, and that problems will be solved only once persons granted asylum arrive in their area. Generally speaking, LSGUs and RSGUs expect no problems with the integration of persons granted asylum, thanks to the existing network and high level of cooperation among various services and organizations. In RSGUs of the Littoral Region and Zagreb, our interlocutors believe that the protocol and general procedural plan should allow for some freedom, so that RSGUs can organize themselves in line with their capacities, and delegate certain powers to the local level.

LSGUs expect assistance from the Government of the RoC, primarily from the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the RoC, as the central coordinating body, in meeting the needs of the community during the integration process, and in their activities. In addition, professional institutions also expect assistance from the competent ministries, and also from LSGUs and the non-governmental sector.

LSGUs and RSGUs see the coordination of various participants in the integration process as their primary role, which includes, among others, professional institutions and civil-society organizations at the level of the town or county. Some LSGUs also believe they have a role to play in supporting other stakeholders when they have insufficient capacities during the integration process, and in networking with other institutions within the community. They also highlight their role in the improvement of intersectorial cooperation because they "have good insight into the activities of various services", in providing information to persons granted asylum, and to other institutions. In some LSGUs, their staff is of the opinion that each stakeholder in the integration should be assigned only one person as their main information provider, regarding the modes of rights-exercising by the asylum beneficiaries. SWCs thus emphasize that it is important that the level of information held by all stakeholders in the integration in local communities be improved, because other stakeholders have sent asylum beneficiaries to them for all kinds of information. They also believe that other stakeholders should receive precise information from their superior bodies, and be trained so that everybody understands what responsibilities they have, what rights the asylum beneficiaries have, and where and how they can exercise them (Eastern and Central regions).

Opinions on the necessity to set up a coordinating body at the level of the RSGU are divided. Although all RSGUs underline that their activities will be part of their regular operation, in the Dalmatian and Central regions they estimate that a coordinating body should be established at the county level which would work on issues relating to the integration of persons granted asylum, and a small number of LSGUs also support this idea.

RSGUs say that their most important contribution to integration is public-awareness raising and sharing information about the arrival and integration of persons granted asylum, with full consciousness that some communities are opposed to their arrival. In this context, they emphasize particularly awareness raising through thematic training sessions at schools and kindergartens (Eastern Region). In all the regions but Eastern, RSGUs say they have a role to play in the inclusion of both children and adults in the schooling system and language courses, but this role and responsibility is merely declared, with no indicators on the initiatives undertaken. In the Central and Littoral regions and in the City of Zagreb they believe that experience with proven mechanisms for the integration of socially vulnerable groups – referring to the Roma population – will be helpful in the process of integration of persons granted asylum.

LSGUs in all the regions say that they could contribute to the implementation of awareness raising and information programmes targeting the public and professional services in their communities. In Zagreb, the City has a strategy for the promotion of human rights and the combatting of discrimination, which serves as a platform for such activities.

LSGUs of the Central and Dalmatian regions think that they can provide direct contribution to integration primarily by including children in kindergartens and schools, with financial assistance (for example, payment of kindergarten fee, transport costs, schoolbooks). Some LSGUs in the Littoral Region say that they could be involved in language courses, but give no specific hints of planned-out steps that would realize this task.

LSGUs also see the possibility of their direct support of integration activities in the initial financial support for persons granted asylum, assistance in the process of their reception and accommodation, support in the form of food and toiletries, in the process of inclusion of children in educational institutions, and covering the costs of kindergarten fees (Eastern and Littoral regions, Zagreb). In the Littoral Region, LSGUs also include

assisting in finding employment for persons granting asylum. Some LSGUs point out that they have already adopted decisions whereby access to the social welfare available to the residents of their municipalities is also available under the same circumstances to persons granted asylum who will be accommodated in the territory of their municipality.

LSGUs and RSGUs underline the important role played by social-welfare centres, as parts of a state system which does not fall under their competence, but they do expect direct assistance from the competent ministry to be provided to those institutions in their territories.

Professional institutions point out the need to plan their work under the circumstances of an increased number of beneficiaries, which is also related to the need to hire additional experts and to increased costs, which translates into their need to obtain additional financial resources. This is especially highlighted by SWCs, because their activities relating to the reception and care of asylee families are very labour-intensive, and with the increased number of persons granted asylum, who are beneficiaries of social-welfare services, the workload of their already insufficient staff has been much increased.

Professional institutions will engage in the integration activities within the framework of their regular operation, by offering services to persons granted asylum as they do to all other clients (for example, in schools, SWCs and employment services). This will be facilitated by clearly defined tasks that they regularly perform. In addition to their core activities, SWCs think they could provide counselling and psychosocial services to families of persons granted asylum, when the need arises. In schools, interlocutors believe it would be possible to hold lectures and workshops about persons granted asylum for pupils and their parents, and to include children and their parents in some extracurricular activities which would provide them with opportunities for faster integration. Schools also think they could participate in language-learning programmes for adults. In some schools of the Eastern Region, they estimate that the support they provide to families of persons granted asylum goes beyond the usual educational tasks carried out with pupils (for example, making sure that children receive assistance in a non-stigmatizing way, within some wider humanitarian activities organized by the school).

Professional institutions expect assistance primarily from their competent ministry, and competent bodies at the state level, and from bodies of the LSGUs and RSGUs, and they expect the cooperation of the Red Cross and CSOs in their communities. In the Central Region, SWCs emphasize the necessity to work in synergy with employment offices, to create better opportunities for employment. Employment services underline their possible contribution to integration in the form of assisting persons granted asylum in their active job seeking, development of personal professional plans, drawing up CVs, provision of information and career counselling, as well as IT workshops. They put particular emphasis on finding a job for hard-to-employ asylum beneficiaries, and also the great difficulty of their insufficient knowledge of the Croatian language and missing certificates of their previously acquired qualifications and competences. In all the regions, interlocutors highlight the current practice and necessity of networking with other institutions in their sector and in the community, and with CSOs.

The warning has been voiced (Eastern Region) that persons granted asylum should not have privileged status when it comes to exercising their rights in the field of housing, employment and social welfare, in comparison to other beneficiaries who are in a similar situation.

LSGUs, RSGUs and professional institutions think that the role of CSOs is that of an important complement of services that will be provided to persons granted asylum by professional institutions. Their role includes participating in Croatian-language lessons, in the provision, in a one-stop shop, of all the information persons granted asylum need to be able to exercise their rights, and in setting up a social network of mutual support and learning about one another. RSGUs count on CSOs' human resources, providing the good ties are established at a higher organizational level, such as the county. The organizations most often mentioned are the Croatian Red Cross, Jesuit Refugee Service, and Caritas. Within this context, the opinion has been voiced (RSGU in the Central Region) that the state should provide financial support for the role of volunteering in integration activities.

The majority of CSOs intend to expand their current activities to cater for the specific needs of persons granted asylum. CSOs represent an important integration potential of local communities. In Dalmatia, the civil sector

estimates that their activities to date have been completely sufficient to satisfy the needs of integration of persons granted asylum, and they expect increased involvement from local self-government. In all other regions, CSOs say that they are ready to expand their services, especially in the field of public-awareness raising and information. In addition, they intend to encourage contacts with institutions in the system and local communities with a view to cooperation and coordination. They also mention the possibility of providing psychosocial/psychological support for persons granted asylum and facilitating their involvement in various activities in the community, assisting them in meeting their basic needs and in making first contacts in the community, informing them about their rights, and providing pastoral care in the case of religious communities. With the aim of raising awareness of the public, they are prepared to hold workshops and public lectures in which persons granted asylum should also take part, to present them to the Croatian public, and, on the other hand, for them to learn about Croatian culture. They are also ready to cooperate with the media to present life stories of persons granted asylum. They also mention organizing cultural events, culinary lessons, adaptation of job tasks asylum beneficiaries used to do beforehand to the tasks that could find them employment (for example, as a baker), and similar. Organizations usually engaged in tasks of placing children away from the homes of their parents are prepared to receive unaccompanied minors under international protection. Some CSOs underline the possibility that persons granted asylum be included in their activities as volunteers. Some have the possibility of engaging cultural mediators. Some CSOs highlight their network of volunteers as an important resource for their work with persons granted asylum.

CSOs expect to have closest cooperation with LSGUs, professional institutions, and especially with the Red Cross. But they emphasize that there are no coordinating bodies which are needed in order to network all the capacities that exist in a community, and that this is the reason for the lack of reliable information about existing needs and capacities. They believe that such coordination should be set up at the level of LSGUs and that it should bring together all the stakeholders, including the civil sector, and allow transparent financing of the services provided to persons granted asylum. Furthermore, CSOs accentuate the advantages of the civil sector, which is more flexible and faster in responding to certain needs, which is an important aspect of the synergy with professional institutions and LSGUs.

When it comes to their needs, CSOs in all the regions highlight the engagement of interpreters and cultural mediators, and the training of their staff. Nearly all the CSOs say their activities are limited by their lack of capacities in terms of their staff and finances, and by unstable funding, and they underline the need for the state, LSGUs and RSGUs to regulate their funding better if they count on them to take on some of the tasks and to provide their support for integration.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
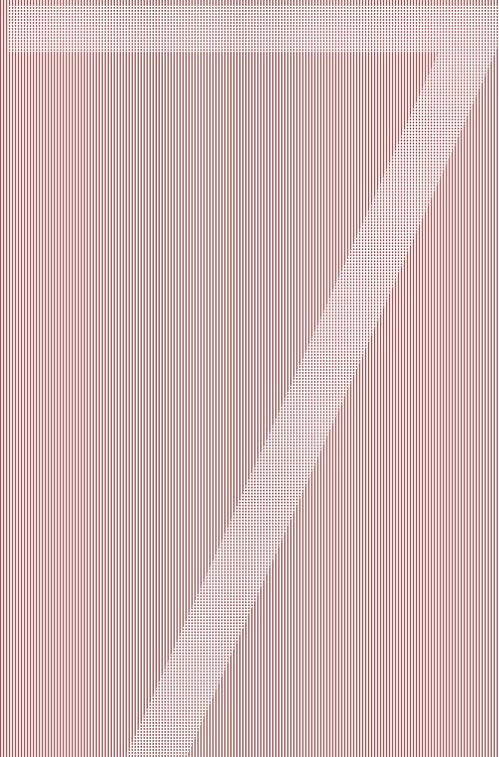
7 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey of the attitudes of Croatian citizens towards the social integration of persons granted asylum carried out on a representative sample of selected towns in four regions, and the qualitative research of the needs and challenges in 30 units of local and regional self-government, has allowed us to come up with a range of recommendations. The recommendations are based on empirical data obtained from various integration stakeholders (citizens, representatives of self-government bodies, professional institutions, civil-society organizations, religious communities, and persons under international protection). The recommendations listed here below allow enhancement of policies and practices of integration of persons granted asylum and persons under international protection, with the aim of facilitating the achievement of goals resulting from the commitments the Republic of Croatia has as an EU member state, laws and action plans of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. However, it is worth emphasizing that the recommendations reflect the current situation and interlocutors' attitudes based on their experience, which are bound to change when persons granted asylum arrive in their communities.

Generally speaking, the attitude of the majority of Croatian citizens towards persons granted asylum is neutral. Such an attitude is associated with the slight presence of the perception of threat posed by the arrival of persons granted asylum, reflected in concerns relating to competition for social resources, and jeopardizing Croatian identity and culture. It is worth underlining that, although the reasons for concern, that is, the citizens' perceptions of threat, are similar to those expressed in previous surveys carried out in Croatia on appropriate samples mostly consisting of students, the results obtained from this representative sample demonstrate that the perception of threat and concern about the preservation of one's culture has risen just slightly. In the context of integration policies, this finding should be treated with due attention, since it indicates that there is room for influencing citizens' attitudes and perceptions, and a well-designed policy should be mindful not to increase the perception of threat among the host population, but rather to point out the benefits and advantages of receiving persons granted asylum in the society. This is also connected with the second important finding, which shows that the majority of Croatian citizens support the integration model of including persons granted asylum in Croatian society, which means that they expect the persons granted asylum to accept Croatian culture and customs, but at the same time approve of their maintaining their own culture. In this context, it is important to underline that the citizens' assessment of the expected negative changes in the community, which could be caused by the arrival of persons granted asylum, is mainly neutral, and that they express slight support for persons granted asylum to exercise their rights. Thus, with a view to avoiding further increase in the perception of cultural differences, which could give rise to a greater feeling of threat (especially symbolic threat) among the citizens, the integration policies should take into account the necessity to include persons granted asylum in well-prepared and profoundly aware communities, and positive outcomes and examples of good integration practice should be emphasized and made widely visible. It is worth underlining that a great majority of citizens receive information about persons granted asylum from the public media, and nearly half of them also from social media, and, for this reason, the media should be used to raise the awareness of the wider public and to disseminate positive examples of integration. Such positive examples can enhance the readiness of the host population to engage in contact with persons granted asylum. This is especially important in light of the finding that the majority of citizens estimate that the portrayal of persons granted asylum in the media has been slightly negative. Although the perception of the media portrayal of persons granted asylum can reveal a high level of

citizens' awareness about the issues pertaining to persons granted asylum (Kalebić Maglica, Švegar and Jovković, 2018), indirectly, it also affects the modalities of reporting on persons granted asylum. Although they have not been analysed specifically within the scope of this research, important aspects of the media portrayal of persons granted asylum include thematic focus, way of reporting and style, as well as arguments presented (cf. Župarić-Iljić, 2013). Therefore, we can assume that citizens can recognize some of these elements and assess them on the offered scale as positive or negative media portrayal. This provides additional insight into elements that can affect creation of attitude and, more generally, the tuning of treatment of persons granted asylum both in specific local communities and at the national level. What follows is that the messages transmitted by the media should be carefully created, and that sufficient media visibility of examples of good practice and successful integration should be ensured. In other words, future research should critically analyse current media practice, and the awareness of the media should be raised, in order for them to correctly report accurate and verified information, given that the media are an exceptionally influential mediator of the level of acceptance of persons granted asylum in the society (cf. Benčić et al., 2005). Institutional stakeholders have recognized the media as the best (and often the only) actor when it comes to reaching to the public.

For the time being, citizens are not ready to engage in closer relationships, but they are ready for neighbourly relations and collaborating at work. The integration policies should exploit this fact as a potential advantage, because those kinds of relationships – among neighbours and encounters in the work environment – will actually be the basic contacts between Croatian citizens and persons granted asylum. Bearing in mind that the cultural pattern of life in relatively well-connected neighbourhood social networks is still present in Croatia, especially in smaller communities, the readiness of Croats to engage in neighbourly relationships with their new fellow citizens can be put to good and beneficial use, and activities can be implemented at the level of neighbourhoods to prepare micro-communities to which persons granted asylum will come for their arrival. In this respect, the first neighbourly contact can play a key role in the development of future relationships, those that will be closer and friendly, which is a well-known finding of the contact theory (e.g. Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011). Similar views have been found

among representatives of some administrative and professional institutions, which consider various possibilities for the accommodation of persons granted asylum in local communities (which would, in their mind, speed up and enhance the integration), rather than in segregated residential areas (e.g. in the Littoral Region). We should bear in mind that nearly half of all the Croatian citizens interviewed have had no contact with persons granted asylum, and those who have assess their encounters with asylum beneficiaries as neutral, neither positive nor negative. This is in conformity with the finding concerning the neutral attitude of Croatian citizens regarding their readiness to engage personally in assisting persons granted asylum during their integration process, and thus it is important to develop diverse and not-too-demanding activities in communities where citizens could follow up on their willingness to help (e.g. donation events).

Overall, the Croatian citizens' attitudes are such that they could potentially turn in either direction, positive or negative, which makes it important to rely on positive attitudes with well-designed, targeted and coordinated policies, to guide those attitudes and provide citizens with opportunities to take part in the integration of persons granted asylum. The results indicate that, in many local communities, the interlocutors believe that the foundations of citizens' positive attitudes lie in the fact that they have themselves been through the experience of being refugees during the Croatian War, or in their experience of coexistence with various national minorities. However, interlocutors from LSGUs and RSGUs, both their heads and professionals from various institutions, often report on negative attitudes, and even prejudices, held by the local population. This impression coming from local communities does not correspond to the results of the survey carried out on a representative sample of Croatian citizens, or to the experience shared in the interviews and focus groups by persons granted asylum. They largely report that they have been received well in local communities, with a very limited number of incidents described.

It was mentioned above that Croatia falls within the circle of eastern countries, according to the Migrant Integration Policy Index, primarily because of the insufficient government support for such policies, and because of discretionary practices in their implementation (Vankova et al., 2014). The results of the survey of citizens' attitudes suggest that the integration potential does exist, so it is up to responsible government policies to exploit that

potential in order to make the integration policies as successful as possible both for the host population and for persons granted asylum. Key effort should be invested in local communities, specifically LSGUs and RSGUs, primarily in their leadership and targeted staff, and then also in the local public.

Some individual characteristics of Croatian citizens have been identified which make it possible to forecast which population categories are more open to the reception and integration of persons granted asylum. Sociodemographic variables are not particularly useful for such a forecast, except for the fact that results sometimes suggest that women's attitudes are more positive. In addition, people who are not practising believers tend to have more positive attitudes and tend to be more prepared to establish contacts with asylum beneficiaries, as do those who affiliate with left-wing political views. Furthermore, residents of Central and North-Western Croatia express more positive views, as do those living in the Littoral Region and Istria, in comparison to the Eastern and Dalmatian regions. The findings of the qualitative part of the research indicate that, when it comes to the perception of local communities as the space for the integration of persons granted asylum, all the stakeholders in all the regions express some kind of concern, with the exception of the Littoral Region, where interlocutors do not expect any difficulties. In other communities, the prevailing expectation is that there will be some form of negative reaction from the host population, especially in smaller communities, as stated by LSGUs and RSGUs in the Eastern and Dalmatian regions, while the general view is that bigger towns would be better prepared to receive persons granted asylum. These findings clearly suggest in which regions it will be necessary to step up the efforts relating to public information and awareness raising.

Besides the fact that attitudes are generally more positive among those Croatian citizens who believe that the number of persons granted asylum should be higher in the future, and among those who advocate integration as an appropriate policy for treating persons granted asylum, the most important determinants of the readiness to establish contacts with persons granted asylum and to engage personally in assisting persons granted asylum are the perceptions of realistic or symbolic threat, and expectation of negative changes in the community prompted by their arrival. In other words, people who believe that the arrival of a certain number of persons granted asylum will jeopardize their vital interests and their cultural identity are also those who will have a negative attitude towards persons granted asylum. These determinants clearly indicate what a suitable action strategy is: all activities should be avoided that lead to an increased citizens' perception of threat and cause the perception of negative changes in the community prompted by the arrival of persons granted asylum (for example, the unannounced distribution of asylum beneficiaries to a community, leaving asylum beneficiaries to fend for themselves, insufficient preparation of the asylum beneficiaries themselves in respect of cultural patterns of the communities to which they are distributed, etc.). Some of the findings are also confirmed by the qualitative study assessing the needs and abilities of local communities; for example, the fear of ghettoization of persons granted asylum, the possibility that there will be new 'social cases' dependent on the institutions, and the possibility that negative attitudes could spread as a result of individual incidents involving persons granted asylum.

Few of the Croatian communities have experience with the reception and integration of persons granted asylum into their social fabric. Data indicate that most of the communities which took part in the research about needs and perception of challenges relating to the integration of persons granted asylum actually do not think about this, nor are they preparing for it. This is evident if we know that practically no community has developed its own plan for the integration of persons granted asylum, and that many of them know little about the *Action Plan* of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, and see no tasks for themselves that would stem from that Plan. Still, stakeholders in the integration in all units participating in this research emphasize that their key need is to receive timely and reliable information about plans for the arrival and distribution of persons granted asylum. In the majority of regions, stakeholders in the integration are convinced that such information, which they expect to receive from the relevant ministries, and primarily from the Office for

Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the RoC, will make it possible for them to initiate preparations for integration activities and possible reception of persons granted asylum.

Finally, it is important to underline that the findings of the quantitative and qualitative research coincide to a large extent in their assessment of the success of integration of persons granted asylum in the local community, and in the dimension relating to public-awareness raising. Although stakeholders participating in the qualitative research (primarily LSGUs and RSGUs) often speak of potential difficulties in local communities relating to the (potentially negative) attitude towards persons granted asylum and their reception, and express concern because of the prejudices the local population has in respect of asylum beneficiaries, the results of the quantitative research do not leave that impression. Indeed, persons granted asylum themselves say that they have been received well in their local communities, while the citizens' attitudes are mainly neutral, and they are ready to accept asylum beneficiaries as their neighbours or co-workers.

In view of the above, our recommendations are as follows:

General recommendations

Organize systematic provision of information for all the stakeholders in local communities about the *Action Plan,* its goals, measures and activities, and the responsibilities of stakeholders in the system.

Appoint a chief contact-coordinator in the OHRRNM, responsible for informing all the levels (from the state level to LSGUs) about the *Action Plan,* and dissemination of all the necessary information so that all stakeholders are familiar with the document that should guide their actions.

Encourage the adoption of local action plans, derived from the national *Action Plan,* at the level of LSGUs and RSGUs, which will specify competences, responsibilities and requirements (material, logistic) for the implementation of integration activities.

Encourage all the integration stakeholders in LSGUs to develop their own integration action plans at the local-community level. The encouragement should come from the LSGU leadership, which should also coordinate activities in the local community. For this to be possible, LSGUs need clear instructions from the relevant state bodies.

Secure additional financial resources for institutions which have increased costs because of the arrival of persons granted asylum.

Provide systematic training and information for all the system stakeholders about the use of correct terminology and the rights that certain categories of aliens in Croatia are entitled to on the basis of laws and ordinances governing this area.

Develop an activity database that will contain information about all the activities implemented by various stakeholders in LSGUs and RSGUs. Expending resources on overlapping activities should be avoided: that is, the tasks should be agreed upon and distributed to develop synergies, where possible.

LSGUs should develop responsibility for long-term integration programmes and activities within LSGUs, and cooperate actively with professional services and the civil sector.

Ensure timely information of all the system stakeholders about every novelty in the legal and institutional framework of international protection at the EU and national levels.

Encourage cooperation of the government and civil sectors by recognizing potential and opportunities for joint action.

Language learning and education

Make the learning of Croatian language and culture more available, with the active participation of LSGUs and RSGUs, and rely on local resources (for example, cooperate with local schools and NGOs).

Allow for preparatory lessons in the Croatian language to be held in schools in a satisfactory manner (for example, without being held at the same time that a child of persons granted asylum attends regular classes) and provide a number of additional lessons, suitable to the individual needs of children.

Provide professional interpreters in schools.

Prepare a Croatian textbook for beginners, and translate it into the three languages most frequently used and understood by persons granted asylum: Arabian, Farsi and Kurdish.

Introduce the possibility of hiring teaching assistants who would work with asylee children.

Secure better implementation of Croatian-language classes for persons granted asylum (both children and adults) at the state level. A higher number of lessons is necessary, as is a better and more fit-for-purpose implementation of public tenders for implementers of language-learning programmes.

Secure more Croatian lessons in schools and financial support for the specific school-related needs of asylee children (excursions, school supplies, textbooks) to facilitate the inclusion of children in the education system.

Plan procedures for specific situations regarding the inclusion of children and youth in the education system (for example, inclusion of children with disabilities, children over 18 years of age who have had no opportunity to complete their schooling, etc.), and resolve the issue of entering asylee children in the e-register.

Provide a sufficient number of teachers trained to teach Croatian as a foreign language.

Encourage efforts to find employment and involvement in activities of the local community with a view to mastering the Croatian language faster through contacts with the local population.

Accommodation and housing

When providing accommodation, take into account other dimensions of integration, such as the possibility of schooling and finding employment in specific local communities.

Increase capacities for the accommodation of persons granted asylum, and react faster when it comes to securing and furnishing the accommodation.

Prepare the community in which persons granted asylum will be accommodated for their arrival, and endeavour to develop the 'next-door neighbour' concept, i.e. a community member who will help persons granted asylum during the first days of their stay in the new surroundings.

Employment

Allow effective identification of previously acquired competences, as a precondition for training for jobs that are in demand in the labour market, in order to avoid a situation in which persons granted asylum can only fill in vacancies for deficient occupations (mostly relating to auxiliary and vocational jobs), which are not wanted or not appreciated by the local population.

Allow re-skilling and training for jobs in demand in the labour market even for persons with low proficiency in the Croatian language.

Allow persons granted asylum a limited period of time (e.g. 6 months) during which they could both work and receive social benefits.

Encourage women to receive professional training and find a job.

Where possible, combine language courses with on-the-job training.

Social welfare and health care

Professionally assess viewpoints which, on the one hand, advocate equal access to social entitlements and services for persons granted asylum as for the host population that is socially needy, and, on the other hand, emphasize the equivalence approach as regards social-welfare goals, because persons granted asylum form multiple-deprivation groups facing specific challenges. Thus, social-welfare goals should be different for different social issues, and accompanied by suitable services and rights. The outcome of such professional and political discussion should be clearly presented in public campaigns targeting the general public and awareness raising among professionals.

Facilitate access to health-care services for persons granted asylum, and make sure that health-care workers and institutions have complete and clear instructions concerning payment for services provided to persons granted asylum, and allow registration of users (patients) in relevant databases.

Provide interpreters in the health-care system, and cultural mediators where necessary.

Ensure that persons granted asylum can obtain a personal identification number (OIB) quickly and easily, since this is a requirement for all administrative tasks.

Introduce a *representation institution* for persons granted asylum, that is, a role of a representative of the social-welfare beneficiary, especially when their rights guaranteed by law have not been exercised.

Intersectorial cooperation

Organize regular periodic intesectorial meetings and flow of information about the adopted conclusions with a view to better linking of various system stakeholders and for integration activities to be more successful.

Set up an effective coordinating body at LSGU and RSGU administrations.

Develop and update an institutional guidebook/manual for the integration of persons granted asylum with contact details for all system stakeholders, which would include examples of good practice, and translate it into English and Arabic.

Awareness raising among professionals and the public

Provide systematic training for staff working in the system of integration of persons granted asylum, and allow networking of the staff.

Raise the awareness of the local community and wider public about the reception and integration of persons granted asylum through the available public media services at the local, regional and national levels.

Provide additional information for the staff of the health-care system about the rights of persons granted asylum and service-provision methods.

Secure supervision and peer support for professionals working directly with a large number of persons granted asylum.

Provide thorough and non-stigmatizing training for the heads and staff of self-government units about the rights of asylum beneficiaries and the obligations of the Republic of Croatia, with a view to fighting prejudices and discriminatory practices at the local level.

Pay special attention within public campaigns to the issue of just distribution of various types of support and exercising the rights of persons granted asylum, and send the message that exercising the rights of persons granted asylum does not go counter to the rights of the host population and will not deprive the host population of their rights. It is also important to inform the citizens about the (small) number of persons granted asylum in local communities and Croatia.

Use public campaigns to stimulate empathy and solidarity with people in distress, and clearly articulate various ways in which persons granted asylum can contribute to the communities into which they come.

Articulate, in public campaigns, the issue of being different, which will not jeopardize the host culture. Experts should be engaged on this issue, and managing differences should not be left to chance or ignored.

LIMITATIONS AND ADVANTAGES OF THE RESEARCH

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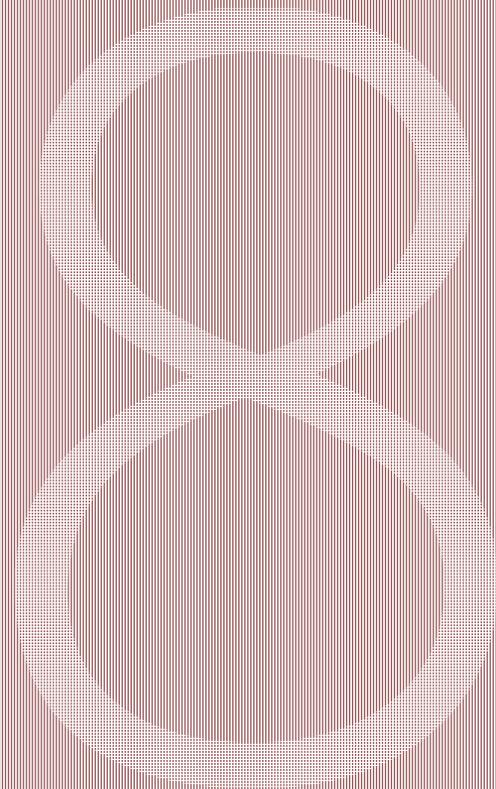
8 LIMITATIONS AND ADVANTAGES OF THE RESEARCH

The research undertaken has some limitations which should be borne in mind when considering its findings and recommendations. The first limitation regards the specific structure of the sample for the survey. The client which commissioned the research defined the available finances and the sample size at 1200 participants in the survey. This size is sufficient to carry out a nation-wide representative survey in the Republic of Croatia, with due attention paid to including all types and sizes of settlements within the country. Such a sample would obviously reflect attitudes of the entire population, and it would make it possible to gain insight into the situation even in very small municipalities and villages in those parts of Croatia in which certainly nobody has any experience of the arrival of persons under international protection, and it is unlikely that there will be such experiences in the forthcoming future. Although, in principle, it may be interesting to establish what the attitude is towards the reception and integration of persons granted asylum among the population of, for example, a very small village in Lika-Senj County, or Dubrovnik County, this research has an action potential, and for this reason a purposive selection of clusters was made, which include 12 counties and 15 towns of diverse sizes. In them, priority was given to those communities in which residents could already have had experience of meeting persons granted asylum and their integration, or where there was a reason to expect that a certain number of people would be distributed to those communities. Although a plan of distribution of third-country nationals under international protection had not been drawn up at the time the survey was carried out, it was clear that some regions of the Republic of Croatia and some towns stand out as gravitational centres because of the possibility of accommodating persons granted asylum in buildings owned by the state, and because of the availability of services necessary for the integration process. For this reason, this survey is not representative at the nation-wide level, in spite of its rigorous probability sampling, and that was not its purpose either. However, this is the first survey carried out on representative populations of large towns, in more than one half of all the Croatian counties, to which persons granted asylum will probably be distributed.

Another possible limitation of the research regards the technique of interviewing residents of the selected towns. The technique applied was computer-aided personal interviewing (CAPI) with participants in their homes, which makes it possible to enter the respondent's answers into the database very quickly, and thus minimizes potential errors by the interviewer and allows control over the quality of data collection and entry. The respondents had before them a printed version of the questionnaire, they read the questions themselves and uttered their answers, which the interviewers entered into a computer (a tablet) with a single click. This kind of individual and clear responding could increase the risk of respondents giving socially desirable answers to some potentially sensitive questions (such as those pertaining to their practising of faith, their political affiliation, etc.). At the same time, when it comes to questions concerning their attitudes, behavioural intentions and opinions about the reception and integration of persons granted asylum, it cannot be clearly established what would constitute socially desirable responses. In the public space, the media and statements given by political elites, there is no recognizable discourse which would suggest to respondents whether they should support the reception and integration of persons granted asylum or not. Taking into consideration that, on average, respondents think that persons granted asylum are

slightly negatively portrayed in the media, it was also unclear in which direction the impact of social desirability on the content variables of this survey could go. As regards the answers about the personal importance of faith and its practising, and about political preferences, a comparison with the survey carried out on a large, appropriate and heterogeneous sample in Zagreb (Ajduković et al., 2017), which used other data-gathering techniques, has revealed nearly identical ratios of respondents' answers to those potentially sensitive questions. This allows us to conclude that the CAPI technique applied in this survey has not led to an increased exposure to socially desirable responding.

A possible limitation of the qualitative part of the research lies in the selection of interlocutors in LSGUs and RSGUs. The client's terms of reference specified that no fewer than five interviews with leading persons be carried out in each selected unit. The selection of units was done in agreement with the client, on the basis of the available data, listed in detail in the methodology description. Once again, we selected those units which were known to have had experience with the reception of persons granted asylum, or where it was probable that they would have such experience in the near future. Given that the goal was to assess the needs and challenges relating to the reception of persons granted asylum, the selection of units for the sample was deliberate and purposive. When selecting potential interlocutors in LSGUs and RSGUs, we focused on key informants who, due to their role in the relevant stakeholders in the integration, have, or should have, good insight into the situation concerning integration activities. These were primarily heads of local and regional self-government units, professional institutions and CSOs, or persons designated by them, probably because activities pertaining to integration fell under their remit. The great majority of interlocutors could provide information about the needs, challenges, expectations and abilities of the community in the process of current or potential integration of persons granted asylum.

The fact that a large majority of LSGUs and RSGUs had no action plans of their own is also a very valuable piece of information with action potential.

The advantage of this research is that it is one of the first, but comprehensive pieces of research on issues pertaining to the integration of persons granted asylum. This probably makes it a point of reference for all future research and monitoring of trends in citizens' attitudes. In the research, the problems of integration and integration policy were approached from various perspectives, taking into consideration experiences, attitudes and needs of several relevant groups of stakeholders, from citizens to various institutions and asylum beneficiaries themselves, which makes for an approach rarely used beforehand. The mixed methodology applied made it possible to encompass various perspectives. The empirical data were used to formulate recommendations for measures and activities at the level of public policies, and with this the research has fulfilled its purpose, which is to serve as the basis for enhancing the system of integration of persons granted asylum.

CONCLUSIONS
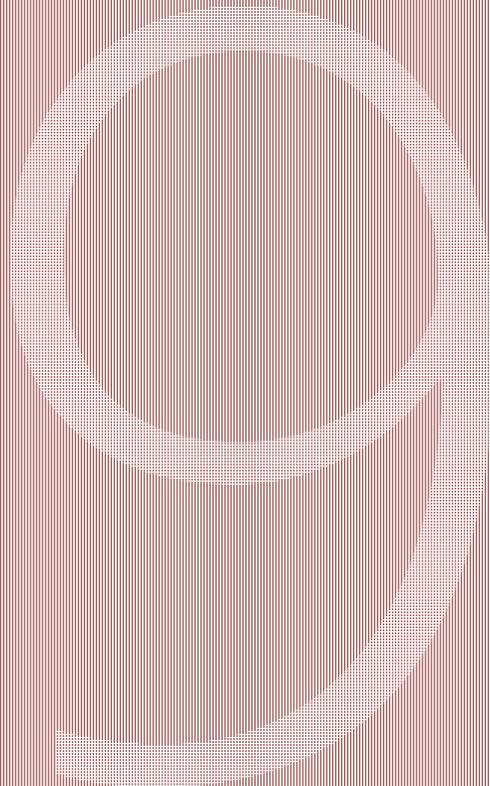
CONCLUSIONS 9

In conclusion, an analysis of regional differences shows that, among stakeholders in Dalmatia, the attitudes towards persons granted asylum are the least positive, perception of persons granted asylum as both realistic and symbolic threat is highest, support for the rights of persons granted asylum is lowest, expectation of negative changes is highest, and readiness to provide assistance is lowest. The next in line is Eastern Croatia, followed by Littoral and Central Croatia, where attitudes are more positive. The frequency of contacts with persons granted asylum is low in all the regions, and it is lowest in the Eastern Region and Dalmatia. However, the quality of contacts displays no regional differences, and it is assessed as neutral in all the regions. Readiness to engage in close contacts is lowest in Dalmatia, followed by Eastern Croatia, and it is highest in Littoral and Central Croatia. In all the regions the population prefers integration as a desirable acculturation strategy, and in Dalmatia the participants are divided between those preferring assimilation and those preferring integration. The estimates of the number of persons granted asylum are not accurate in any of the regions, but while it is overestimated in all other regions, in Eastern Croatia it is underestimated. Furthermore, while residents of Central and Littoral Croatia are keen to keep the number of persons granted asylum on the same level in the future, too, residents of the Eastern Region and Dalmatia would prefer a lower number in the future. These findings clearly indicate where the preparation of the population for the reception and integration of persons granted asylum and their families should be planned and implemented in a particularly sensitive manner.

We can expect a more favourable attitude of Croatian citizens towards persons granted asylum if the citizens see persons granted asylum as less of a threat, that is, if they understand that their arrival will not constitute a threat to their current identity and culture and that it does not jeopardize local communities' resources, if they expect fewer negative changes in their communities as a result of the arrival of persons granted asylum, if they believe that the number of persons granted asylum in the Republic of Croatia should be increased in the future, and if they believe that integration is a suitable acculturation strategy in Croatia. On the basis of this knowledge, it is possible to develop content for the preparation of the population for reception and integration activities, bearing in mind that the current neutral attitude towards persons granted asylum, slight concern that Croatian culture and values could be jeopardized, but also support for the rights enshrined in the law and readiness to establish neighbourly relationships, could tip the balance in an anti-integration or pro-integration direction. Thus, information activities, awareness raising and preparation of the community, as well as the implementation of integration measures, should alleviate the concerns of the local population as regards the arrival of persons granted asylum.

Most local self-government units, regional self-government units, professional institutions and civil-society organizations are insufficiently familiar with the *Action Plan* and have not developed their own plans of action in the field of integration of persons granted asylum. The data show that there are no significant differences between assessments by LSGUs and by RSGUs of their needs and challenges, and for this reason the findings have been interpreted together. The main expectations of LSGUs and RSGUs are associated with better access to information about the distribution plan for persons granted asylum, their structure and the time of their arrival. They also expect the state to cover the cost of integration, because it can be expected that in that case the state would be more proactive in its approach to the preparations for the reception and integration of persons granted asylum.

In view of the fact that most local communities included in the research had not had any experience with persons granted asylum (neither at the institutional and infrastructural level, nor at the individual level), it is important to consider potential consequences of the unsystematic and inconsistent provision of information to all the stakeholders about the possibilities, and also obligations, relating to the integration of persons granted asylum. It is important also to take into consideration the citizens' attitudes towards persons granted asylum, which are now reported as neutral to slightly negative (especially in respect of the perception of a symbolic threat), and the capacities of institutional stakeholders. Therefore, in addition to reducing the perception of a symbolic threat from persons granted asylum to the local culture, it is necessary, as stipulated by the *Action Plan* itself, "to act both preventively and proactively in order to allow for the development of a real legal and social framework for intercultural dialogue and integration of foreigners into Croatian society". In other words, it is necessary to develop complex mechanisms for public-awareness raising which will go beyond mere information (although the provision of information also needs to be changed!) and reduction to the multicultural level, and which will focus on setting up intercultural dialogue and presenting cultural penetration as a positive outcome of the coexistence of people of diverse cultural origin.

Within the implementation of the third research goal, the *Checklist for Assessment and Self-Assessment of Key Needs and Challenges of Integration for Local and Regional Self-Government Units* and the *Checklist for Assessment and Self-Assessment of Key Needs and Challenges of Integration for Persons under International Protection* have been developed. The former is intended for heads of LSGUs and RSGUs and their staff, to help them assess the current needs, resources and capacities of their communities in respect of the planning or implementation of integration activities. The second checklist should serve the heads and staff of local and regional self-government units to gain insight into the views of persons under international protection in their communities, and to complement their assessment of overall needs in their communities. Persons granted asylum can use that checklist to assess the manner and degree to which their needs have been met. This approach makes it possible to compare the information from the perspectives of various and specific stakeholders in the integration policies, measures and activities.

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APPENDICES
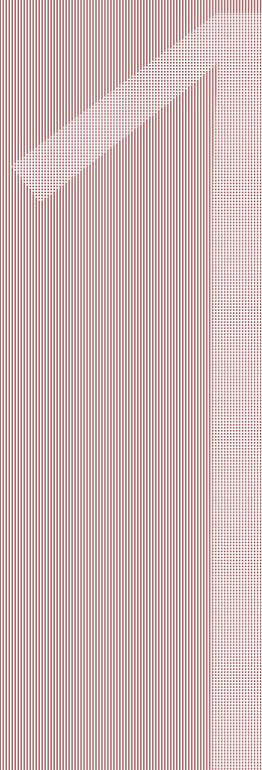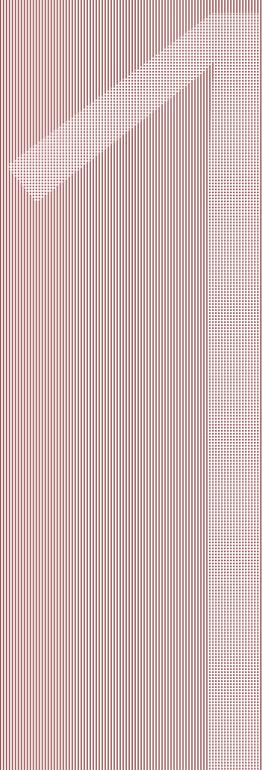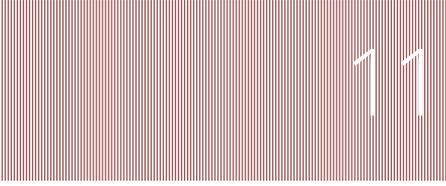
11 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1.
Survey questionnaire

APPENDIX 2.
Correlation matrix of all research variables

APPENDIX 3.
Checklist for Assessment and Self-Assessment of Key Needs and Challenges of Integration for Local and Regional Self-Government Units

APPENDIX 4.
Checklist for Assessment and Self-Assessment of Key Needs and Challenges of Integration for Persons under International Protection

APPENDIX 1

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

University of Zagreb
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Trg Stjepana Radića 3, Zagreb

Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies
Department of Psychology

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey of the opinions people may have about **persons granted asylum in Croatia.**

As you certainly know, many people have left their countries over the last few years fleeing from persecution and war in order to find safety and a better life in European countries. We call them **refugees**. Some of them have, **as asylum seekers**, appealed to the Republic of Croatia to protect them and allow them to stay (temporarily) living in Croatia with their families, while most of them seek to obtain protection in other countries. Those who have been granted **protection and residence** in the Republic of Croatia have obtained **asylum** and are called **persons granted asylum or asylum beneficiaries**.

So, the term **asylum beneficiaries means people who have been allowed to stay in Croatia because they were persecuted in their countries because of their race, religion, ethnicity, political opinion or affiliation with a particular social group.**

This survey is only about those persons, that is, asylum beneficiaries. In this survey, this term is understood to include <u>both men and women</u> who have been granted asylum.

This questionnaire contains a series of statements and we would appreciate it if you could assess to what extent you agree or disagree with each of them or to choose the answer that best describes your opinion. Please read each question carefully, choose only one of the answers offered, and reply honestly and to all questions.

The survey is completely anonymous and we shall never ask you to write down your name or details that could disclose your identity. Furthermore, your responses are fully confidential and can be seen by researchers only.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from it at any time without any negative consequences. However, your opinion is valuable and very important to us and we would appreciate it if you could respond honestly to all questions.

Should you have any query or complaint regarding this procedure, please contact Prof. Dean Ajduković, Ph.D., Research Team Leader, at his e-mail address <u>dean.ajdukovic@ffzg.hr.</u>

If you proceed with the completion of this questionnaire, it shall be understood as a sign of your agreement to take part in this survey, which we greatly appreciate.

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1. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

	Strongly disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Strongly agree
1. I feel uneasy when I see someone I believe to be an asylum beneficiary in the street or on public transport.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Efforts are needed to prevent the stay of an increased number of asylum beneficiaries in Croatia.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I sympathize with asylum beneficiaries for problems they could experience in Croatia.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I would be happy to make friends with an asylum beneficiary.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The Croats have much in common with asylum beneficiaries.	1	2	3	4	5
6. If a Croat and an asylum beneficiary do equal work, it is fair that they receive equal pay.	1	2	3	4	5
7. If I were the owner of a business and if I were to look for a worker, I would favour a candidate from Croatia over an asylum beneficiary.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I would rather cooperate with a fellow worker from Croatia than an asylum beneficiary.	1	2	3	4	5
9. If many asylum beneficiaries were to move into my neighbourhood, I would be most happy to move to another part of town.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I wouldn't feel safe near an asylum beneficiary.	1	2	3	4	5
11. If I had the opportunity, I would help an asylum beneficiary to better find his/her way in Croatia.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I fear that the presence of asylum beneficiaries will lead to a weaker sense of unity among the Croatian people.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I wouldn't like to come into contact with asylum beneficiaries.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Once they settle in Croatia, asylum beneficiaries should relinquish their customs.	1	2	3	4	5
15. As members of the society, we know too little about the problems encountered by asylum beneficiaries in Croatia.	1	2	3	4	5
16. If I had the opportunity, I would enjoy learning about other cultures through contacts with asylum beneficiaries.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Our country can benefit from the cultural diversity of its population.	1	2	3	4	5
18. All asylum beneficiaries had valid reasons to leave their countries.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Too much importance is given to the issue of asylum beneficiaries in Croatia.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I fear that crime rates in Croatia could increase due to asylum beneficiaries.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Strongly agree
21. 21. I fear terrorist attacks by asylum beneficiaries who are in Croatia.	1	2	3	4	5
22. 22. Asylum beneficiaries are generally good for our economy.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Asylum beneficiaries take places at universities or jobs from Croatian citizens.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Asylum beneficiaries should adjust to the customs of our society if they wish to live in Croatia.	1	2	3	4	5
25. Asylum beneficiaries could jeopardize Croatian values and our way of life.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Religious and moral beliefs of asylum beneficiaries are at odds with those of Croatia.	1	2	3	4	5
27. The beliefs of asylum beneficiaries about how society should function are at odds with those of Croatia.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Asylum beneficiaries bring in new ideas that could be beneficial to our society.	1	2	3	4	5
29. Asylum beneficiaries should by no means be returned to the countries they came from if this would endanger their lives or freedom.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Asylum beneficiaries who entered Croatia illegally should not be punished if they were persecuted in their countries.	1	2	3	4	5
31. The families of asylum beneficiaries should be allowed to move into Croatia.	1	2	3	4	5
32. The government should provide free accommodation for asylum beneficiaries who cannot afford it themselves.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Asylum beneficiaries in Croatia should be allowed to find employment.	1	2	3	4	5
34. Asylum beneficiaries should be allowed to use employment incentives (e.g. professional development or reskilling) just like Croatian citizens.	1	2	3	4	5
35. Asylum beneficiaries should have free health care just like Croatian citizens.	1	2	3	4	5
36. Asylum beneficiaries and their families should be entitled to primary, secondary and higher education.	1	2	3	4	5
37. If asylum beneficiaries have no documents to confirm their education qualifications, these should be recognised if they meet assessment requirements by a competent authority.	1	2	3	4	5
38. Asylum beneficiaries should be able to raise their children in accordance with their culture and beliefs.	1	2	3	4	5
39. If asylum beneficiaries donnot have enough money, they should be granted free legal aid.	1	2	3	4	5
40. Asylum beneficiaries should be assisted in their integration into our society (e.g. learning the Croatian language, learning about our culture, psychological and social support).	1	2	3	4	5

41. Asylum beneficiaries should have the same rights as Croatian citizens.	1	2	3	4	5
42. The arrival of asylum beneficiaries in my community will make it a less attractive place to live.	1	2	3	4	5
43. The arrival of asylum beneficiaries in my community will make it less attractive for investment and development.	1	2	3	4	5
44. In my community asylum beneficiaries should be accommodated in peripheral parts of the village/town.	1	2	3	4	5
45. Asylum beneficiaries in my community could have a negative impact on its demographic development.	1	2	3	4	5
46. Vacant buildings available in my community should not be used to accommodate asylum beneficiaries.	1	2	3	4	5

2. Please indicate whether you are prepared to do any of the following by answering on the scale from 1 (definitely not) to 5 (definitely yes).

	Definitely not	Probably not	I'm not sure	Probably yes	Definitely yes
1. I would be prepared to assume temporary care for an unaccompanied asylee child.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I would allow asylum beneficiaries to make temporary use of my property that I don't occupy.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I would bring food and/or other supplies to asylum beneficiaries.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I would be prepared to dedicate some time to assist asylum beneficiaries become involved in our community's life.	1	2	3	4	5

3. How often do you meet asylum beneficiaries in your community?
Please choose one answer only.

a) Never   b) Rarely   c) Sometimes   d) Frequently   e) Very frequently

4. What are these encounters like? Please choose the answer which best describes your personal experience.

a) Generally positive   b) Neither positive nor negative   c) Generally negative

5. Please choose <u>up to three principal sources</u> from which you get information about asylum beneficiaries.

a) Mass media (printed and online editions of newspapers, television, radio)

b) Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)

c) Non-governmental/civil-society organisations

d) Local or central government authorities

e) Personal contacts

f) Other (please specify):

**6. How would you describe the presentation of asylum beneficiaries in the media?
Please choose one answer onl**y.

-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Very negative			Neither negative nor positive			Very positive

7. Please choose *Yes* or *No* to answer whether you would accept the following relationships with a person granted asylum.

1. I would accept an asylum beneficiary as a *family member*.	Yes	No
2. I would accept an *intimate relationship* with an asylum beneficiary.	Yes	No
3. I would accept an asylum beneficiary as a *friend*.	Yes	No
4. I would accept an asylum beneficiary as a *neighbour*	Yes	No
5. I would accept an asylum beneficiary as a *fellow worker*.	Yes	No
6. I would accept an asylum beneficiary as a *Croatian citizen*.	Yes	No
7. I would accept an asylum beneficiary as a *person in transit through Croatia*.	Yes	No

8. Please choose <u>only one</u> statement you <u>most agree with</u>.

Asylum beneficiaries should maintain they original culture and not adopt the Croatian culture.	☐
Asylum beneficiaries should maintain their original culture and also adopt the Croatian culture.	☐
Asylum beneficiaries should relinquish their original culture and adopt the Croatian culture.	☐

9. Please estimate how many persons granted asylum there are presently in Croatia (please choose one answer).

a) less than 50   b) 51–100   c) 101–400   d) 401–700   e) 70 –1,000   f) more than 1,000

10. The number of asylum beneficiaries in Croatia should be (please choose one answer):

a) much lower   b) lower   c) about the same   d) higher   e) much higher

1. How old are you? _____ years

2. Gender: a) Male   b) Female

3. Do you have a spouse/partner and, if so, do you live in the same household?

   a) I have a spouse/partner and we live in the same household.

   b) I have a spouse/partner, but we don't live in the same household

   c) I don't have a spouse/partner.

4. What is your current employment status? Please choose one answer.

  a) employed   b) unemployed   c) retired   d) student

5. How many years of education have you completed? Please add up all your <u>completed</u> years of education since the commencement of primary school to date. Please include only successfully completed years of education, excluding any repeated school years/academic years.

   _____ years

6. Please assess your household's standard of living in comparison to general living conditions in your community. Please choose one answer.

  a) much below average   b) below average   c) average   d) above average   e) much above average

7. Are you a practicing believer? (**Do you attend worship services and live in accordance with your religious beliefs?)**

a) Yes   b) No

8. How important is religion in your life?

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all		Moderately		Very

9. What is your political orientation?

1	2	3	4	5	☐
Left		Centre		Right	I have no political orientation

Thank you for taking the time and effort to complete this questionnaire!

CORRELATION MATRIX OF RESEARCH VARIABLES

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
1	-	-.80**	-.82**	.85**	-.83**	.76**	-.03	.57**	.04	.78**	.51**	-.51**	.02	.67**	.07*	-.06	.15**	-.09**	.13**	.04	-.11**	-.02	-.17**
2		-	.78**	-.68**	.77**	-.58**	.02	-.50**	-.08**	-.64**	-.41**	.41**	.02	-.64**	-.03	.06*	-.10**	.09**	-.15**	-.07*	.10**	.01	.10**
3			-	-.73**	.77**	-.64**	-.04	-.56**	-.04	-.67**	-.51**	.51**	.02	-.63**	-.03	.09**	-.13**	.10**	-.12**	-.03	.13**	.07*	.21**
4				-	-.71**	.73**	-.02	.53**	.06	.72**	.51**	-.51**	.01	.65**	.08*	-.04	.12**	-.07*	.11**	.01	-.13**	-.03	-.19
5					-	-.60**	.08**	-.47**	.02	-.67**	-.43**	.43**	-.04	-.63**	.00	.08**	-.13**	.07*	-.10**	-.05	.10**	.02	.12**
6						-	.15**	.52**	.06	.71**	.45**	-.45**	.02	.60**	.09**	-.03	.18**	.00	.10**	.08**	-.04	.02	-.24**
7							-	.06	.14**	.06*	.10**	-.10**	-.03	.07*	.19**	-.05	-.04	-.02	.05	.04	-.01	-.06*	-.18**
8								-	.11**	.48**	.34**	-.34**	.07	.43**	-.03	-.03	.06	-.05	.05	.04	-.04	-.03	-.13*
9									-	.10**	.14**	-.14**	.02	.07*	.03	.02	-.05	-.02	.00	-.02	-.07*	-.03	-.10**
10										-	.55**	-.55**	.05	.63**	.10**	-.09**	.08*	-.11**	.12**	.04	-.20**	-.11**	-.25**
11											-	-1.0**	.00	.41**	.02	-.05	.08**	-.04	.03	-.03	-.05	.01	-.16**
12												-	.00	-.41**	-.02	.05	-.08**	.04	-.03	.03	.05	-.01	.16**
13													-	-.01	.03	.01	.04	.04	-.03	.04	.02	.00	.00
14														-	.03	-.01	.08*	-.06	.17**	.02	-.15**	-.09**	-.24**
15															-	.00	-.02	-.06*	-.01	.02	-.13**	-.08**	-.13**
16																-	-.05	.27**	-.16**	-.19**	.06*	.10**	.01
17																	-	.03	.08**	.03	.13**	.17**	-.06
18																		-	-.01	.09**	.08**	-.07*	-.08*
19																			-	.27**	-.03	-.04	-.07
20																				-	.08**	.09**	.09*
21																					-	.72**	.44**
22																						-	.49**
23																							-

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; 1 = Attitudes towards persons granted asylum (the higher the result, the more positive the attitude); 2 = Perception of a symbolic threat; 3 = Perception of a realistic threat; 4 = Support for the rights of persons granted asylum; 5 = Perception of negative changes in the community; 6 = Readiness to assist persons granted asylum; 7 = Frequency of contacts with persons granted asylum; 8 = Quality of contacts with persons granted asylum; 9 = Perception of media portrayal of persons granted asylum (the higher the result, the more positive the perception); 10 = Social proximity with persons granted asylum; 11 = Preservation of the migrants' culture; 12 = Preservation of the host culture; 13 = Estimate of number of persons granted asylum (1 = accurate estimate, 2 = inaccurate estimate); 14 = Change in the number of persons granted asylum (1 = reduce, 2 = keep at the same level, 3 = increase); 15 = Degree of urban development; 16 = Age; 17 = Gender (1 = male, 2 = female); 18 = Marital status (1 = single, 2 = in a relationship); 19 = Educational level; 20 = Self-assessment of standard of living; 21 = Practising religion; 22 = Importance of religion; 23 = Political affiliation (1 = left, 3 = centre, 5 = right)

APPENDIX 3

CHECKLIST FOR ASSESSMENT AND SELF-ASSESSMENT OF KEY NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION FOR LOCAL AND REGIONAL SELF-GOVERNMENT UNITS

CHECKLIST FOR ASSESSMENT AND SELF-ASSESSMENT OF KEY NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION FOR LOCAL AND REGIONAL SELF-GOVERNMENT UNITS

This is the Checklist for Assessment and Self-Assessment of Key Needs and Challenges of Integration for Local and Regional Self-Government Units, developed to help units of local and regional self-government **to assess their own needs and capabilities to accept persons granted asylum**. Persons who have been granted asylum are persons under international protection whose residence in the Republic of Croatia has been approved because they were persecuted in the country of their origin for reasons of race, religion, ethnicity, political views or affiliation to a social group.

This questionnaire is intended not to collect personal attitudes and opinions of individual civil servants working in local and regional self-government, but rather to assess the needs, challenges and level of preparedness of the local community to accept persons granted asylum. Therefore, the Checklist should be filled in by an official of the unit of local or regional self-government who is most knowledgeable about the activities currently implemented, those that should be implemented or those that are being planned for implementation, in relation to the integration in the local community of persons granted asylum.

The main dimensions of integration of persons granted asylum have been included in the *Action Plan for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection for the Period 2017-2019*, adopted by the Government of the Republic of Croatia. Those dimensions are: social welfare and health care, accommodation and housing, language learning and education, employment, international cooperation, and public and professional staff awareness raising. A brief description of each of the dimensions, and a reference to legislative acts regulating them, can be found under the name of each dimension. A more thorough description of each dimension, and of goals, activities, measures and responsible entities, can be found in the Action Plan.

It is important that, when filling in this questionnaire, the capabilities and preparedness of the local community for possible reception and integration of persons granted asylum are assessed thoroughly and realistically. The questionnaire should be useful to the units of local and regional self-government themselves, who should use it to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the local system of overall care for persons granted asylum, identify possible partners for cooperation, and generally improve their readiness to receive and integrate persons granted asylum.

At the same time, while considering the most important dimensions of integration included in this questionnaire and recognizing their own strengths and weaknesses, units of local and regional self-government can begin timely preparation in order to have an appropriate response to the challenges of integration of persons under international protection in the future.

Unit of local self-government (name)

_____

Unit of regional self-government (name)

_____

	YES	NO
Is your unit of local/regional self-government familiar with the Action Plan for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection?	☐	☐

	YES	NO
Has your unit of local/regional self-government developed its own plan of activities relating to the integration of persons granted asylum?	☐	☐

	YES	NO
Has your unit of local/regional self-government earmarked funding for the integration of persons granted asylum?	☐	☐

1. Social Welfare and Health Care

Persons granted international protection pursuant to the International and Temporary Protection Act (Official Gazette "Narodne novine" no. 70/15) exercise their right to social welfare within the remit of the Ministry of Demographics, Family, Youth and Social Policy. Furthermore, pursuant to Art. 22(2) of the Social Welfare Act (Official Gazette "Narodne novine" nos. 157/13, 152/14, 99/15 and 52/16), persons granted asylum and aliens under subsidiary protection can exercise all the rights within the social welfare system and to the same extent as other Croatian citizens resident in Croatia. The right to health care may be exercised by persons granted international protection in the Republic of Croatia in line with the Act on Mandatory Health Insurance and Health Care of Aliens in the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette "Narodne novine" no. 80/2013).

Of the rights within the scope of the social welfare system, persons granted international protection most often exercise the right to the guaranteed minimum benefit, one-off benefit, housing-cost support, assistance-and-care support, and fuel-and-food-in-soup-kitchen support. In addition to those financial allowances, persons granted international protection are also entitled to social services, which are used to provide them with information about their rights within the social welfare system (the initial social service), to assist individuals and families in overcoming difficulties and developing their personal capacities and a responsible attitude towards themselves, their families and society (counselling and assistance services). Persons granted international protection are entitled to the same scope of health-care services as persons covered with mandatory health-care insurance, and the costs are borne by the state budget.

		YES	NO
1.1.	Has the social welfare system in your local community adjusted its decision on support management with a view to making it available also to persons granted asylum?	☐	☐

Which forms of support can persons granted asylum get in your local community?	YES	NO
1.2. One-off financial benefit	☐	☐
1.3. Guaranteed minimum benefit	☐	☐
1.4. Local transport costs	☐	☐
1.5. Housing costs	☐	☐
1.6. Supplementary health-care costs	☐	☐
1.7. Costs relating to education	☐	☐
1.8. Food, clothes, shoes, toiletries	☐	☐
1.9. Use of soup kitchen or social supermarkets	☐	☐

1.10.   Anything else. Please specify:

		YES	NO
1.11.	In your local community, are there sufficient family practices/ doctors who can provide suitable health care to persons granted asylum?	☐	☐
1.12.	Are health-care institutions in your local community familiar with the procedure of payment for health-care services by persons granted asylum?	☐	☐
1.13.	In your local community, is it possible to engage an interpreter when health-care services are provided?	☐	☐
1.14.	Are there organizations/institutions in your local community that can provide psychosocial support to persons granted asylum?	☐	☐

2. Accommodation and housing

Persons granted international protection pursuant to the International and Temporary Protection Act (Official Gazette "Narodne novine" no. 70/15) are entitled to accommodation for a period of no more than two years from the day of delivery of the decision granting them international protection, if they do not possess financial resources or items of greater value. The procedure for the recognition of the right to accommodation is launched by the submission of an application to the competent social welfare centre, and the Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing is obliged to provide accommodation. Furthermore, the Republic of Croatia takes part in the EU programme of relocation and resettlement of third-country nationals who meet the requirements for international protection. Accordingly, by the end of 2018, it will adopt an Operational Plan for the Relocation of Persons Granted International Protection in the Republic of Croatia for 2019, in which the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia will also participate. According to the Action Plan, the Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing provides housing units in line with the pace of adoption of decisions granting international protection by the Ministry of the Interior. The Plan will be revised, and recommendations will be adopted in line with the evaluation of the Plan's implementation.

		YES	NO
2.1.	Are there housing units in your local community for permanent accommodation of individuals or families granted asylum?	☐	☐

Are there suitable apartments/houses ready to move into in your local community, available for the accommodation of persons granted asylum:		YES	NO
2.2.	Owned by the state	☐	☐
2.3.	Owned by the town	☐	☐
2.4.	Owned by the county	☐	☐

		YES	NO
2.5.	Are there buildings in your local community that could be repurposed for the housing of persons granted asylum?	☐	☐
2.6.	Are there buildings in your local community that are privately owned, and could be rented for the housing of persons granted asylum?	☐	☐

3. Language learning and education

Pursuant to the Primary and Secondary School Education Act (Official Gazette "Narodne novine" nos. 87/2008, 86/2009, 92/2010, 105/2010-corr., 90/2011, 16/2012, 86/2012, 94/2013, 152/2014) and the Ordinance on the Elements and Criteria for the Selection of Candidates for Enrolment in the First Grade of Secondary Schools (Official Gazette "Narodne novine" no. 49/2015), persons granted asylum, asylum seekers, aliens under subsidiary protection, aliens under temporary protection, and aliens residing unlawfully in the Republic of Croatia are entitled to primary and secondary education. With a view to making their integration into the education system as successful as possible, the same Act prescribes the obligation of schools to provide special assistance for children who have the right to education in the Republic of Croatia but do not speak Croatian, or speak it insufficiently.

With a view to integrating such pupils successfully, the school is obliged to organize individual and group forms of teaching, in order to enable those students to master the Croatian language effectively and catch up on the knowledge they lack in certain subjects.

In your local community:		YES	NO
3.1.	Are there conditions necessary for organizing Croatian language courses for persons granted asylum?	☐	☐
3.2.	Are there trained teachers of Croatian as a foreign language?	☐	☐
3.3.	Can you secure funding for the organization of courses?	☐	☐
3.4.	Is there a person who could help with interpretation (compatriots, persons speaking or being able to understand the language of persons granted asylum)?	☐	☐
3.5.	Is it possible to engage official interpreters in the local community?	☐	☐

3.6. What can **your local/regional self-government unit** do in relation to the organization of Croatian language courses? Please describe:

Is there in your local community:		YES	NO
3.7.	A kindergarten	☐	☐
3.8.	A primary school	☐	☐
3.9.	A secondary school	☐	☐
3.10.	An open university, college, faculty	☐	☐

In your local community:		YES	NO
3.11.	Can Croatian language learning for asylee children be organized within the schools?	☐	☐
3.12.	Can assistance in learning the Croatian language be organized for asylee children outside the schooling system?	☐	☐
3.13.	Are educational institutions familiar with the procedure for inclusion of children in the education system?	☐	☐
3.14.	Have preparatory workshops been organized for teachers / professional staff of schools for working with asylee children?	☐	☐
3.15.	Can the budget of your LSGU/RSGU be used to secure school meals adapted to the needs and culture of the asylee children?	☐	☐
3.16.	Can the budget of your LSGU/RSGU be used to provide financial support for the schooling of asylee children?	☐	☐
3.17.	Can asylee children receive religious education suitable for their religious affiliation?	☐	☐

4. Employment

It is necessary to identify barriers to the integration into the labour market of persons granted international protection who seek a job, and to encourage them to focus on those competences that will most quickly enable them to find employment. This includes primarily drawing up a job profile during an interview and counselling, and a job-seeking plan, whose realization should be monitored by the appointed employment counsellor.

		YES	NO
4.1.	Are there opportunities for employment of persons granted asylum in your local community?	☐	☐
4.2.	Are there any special local reliefs for employers who employ persons granted asylum?	☐	☐

In which sectors are there opportunities for employment of persons granted asylum in your local community?		YES	NO
4.3.	In local industry	☐	☐
4.4.	In agriculture	☐	☐
4.5.	In public works	☐	☐
4.6.	In construction	☐	☐
4.7.	In auxiliary professions	☐	☐
4.8.	In the tourism and hospitality sector	☐	☐
4.9.	In other sectors. Please specify:		

		YES	NO
4.10.	In your local community, are there opportunities for professional development, upskilling and reskilling?	☐	☐

4.11. What are the possible forms of professional development, upskilling and reskilling in your local community? Please specify:

5. Intersectorial cooperation

The integration of persons granted international protection is a process that requires active involvement of all the competent bodies of state administration, and also of bodies of local and regional self-government units, in the provision of support and assistance to such persons in the fields of employment, health care, housing, education, Croatian language learning, and all other rights that are also exercised by all other Croatian citizens. It is very important to develop and systematically strengthen the cooperation between the bodies mentioned above and civil-society organizations and international organizations, and religious institutions regularly engaged in the field of protection and promotion of the rights of persons granted international protection.

Have you already cooperated with institutions/organizations listed below on the implementation of measures aimed at integrating persons granted asylum into your local community?		YES	NO
5.1.	Responsible ministries	☐	☐
5.2.	Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia	☐	☐
5.3.	State Administration Office in your county	☐	☐
5.4.	Local self-government units (for example, other towns)	☐	☐
5.5.	Other regional self-government units	☐	☐
5.6.	Professional institutions (for example, SWC, CEB...)	☐	☐
5.7.	Educational institutions	☐	☐
5.8.	Health-care institutions	☐	☐
5.9.	Civil-society organizations	☐	☐
5.10.	Religious communities	☐	☐
5.11.	Other institutions/organizations. Please specify:		

How would you estimate the cooperation with the listed institutions/organizations to date?	Satisfactory	Partially satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	There has been no need for cooperation
5.12. Responsible ministries	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.13. Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.14. State Administration Office in your county	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.15. Local self-government units (e.g. other towns)	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.16. Regional self-government units	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.17. Professional institutions (for example, SWC, CEB…)	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.18. Educational institutions	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.19. Health-care institutions	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.20 Civil-society organizations	☐	☐	☐	☐
5.21. Religious communities	☐	☐	☐	☐

Whose cooperation do you expect in the future, and in which field, specifically?	YES	NO
5.22. Responsible ministries	☐	☐
In which field:		
5.23. Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the RoC	☐	☐
In which field:		
5.24. State administration office in your county	☐	☐
In which field:		
5.25. Local self-government units (for example, other towns)	☐	☐
In which field:		
5.26. Regional self-government units	☐	☐
In which field:		

Whose cooperation do you expect in the future, and in which field, specifically?	YES	NO
5.27. Professional institutions (for example, SWC, CEB…) In which field:	☐	☐
5.28. Educational institutions In which field:	☐	☐
5.29. Health-care institutions In which field:	☐	☐
5.30. Civil-society organizations In which field:	☐	☐
5.31. Religious communities In which field:	☐	☐
5.32. Other organizations/institutions. Please specify:		

6. Raising the awareness of the public and professionals

Given that it may be expected that possible new migration trends will result in increased prejudice against persons granted international protection, it is important to engage in raising awareness about this issue and various aspects of the post-migration processes, through providing information and raising the awareness of the general public, state officials and public servants about the presence and rights of various categories of aliens in Croatia. The current Anti-discrimination Act (Official Gazette "Narodne novine" nos. 85/08, 112/12) regulates the issue of penalizing such negative phenomena in Croatian society. However, it is necessary to act both preventively and pro-actively in order to allow for the development of a real legal and social framework for intercultural dialogue and integration of foreigners into Croatian society. What follows is that it is necessary to develop and implement a public-awareness campaign focusing on the need to accept persons granted international protection in Croatian society.

		YES	NO
6.1.	Are there any activities in your local community aimed at informing the citizens, raising their awareness and preparing them for the reception and integration of persons granted asylum?	☐	☐

Which organizations/institutions in your local community could use information, awareness-raising and preparation activities for the reception and integration of persons granted asylum?	YES	NO
6.2. Schools	☐	☐
6.3. Social welfare centre	☐	☐
6.4. Health-care institutions	☐	☐
6.5. Staff of the local self-government unit	☐	☐
6.6. Staff of the regional self-government unit	☐	☐
6.7. The media	☐	☐
6.8. Civil sector	☐	☐
6.9. Local public	☐	☐

6.10. Anybody else. Please specify:

In your local community, who is responsible for organizing and implementing information, awareness-raising and preparation activities for the reception and integration of persons granted asylum?	YES	NO
6.11. Local self-government unit	☐	☐
6.12. Regional self-government unit	☐	☐
6.13. Schools	☐	☐
6.14. Professional institutions such as CEB, SWC and health-care institutions	☐	☐
6.15. Civil sector	☐	☐
6.16. Religious communities	☐	☐

6.17. Somebody else. Please specify:

6.18. What forms of information, awareness-raising and preparation activities for the reception and integration of persons granted asylum are needed in your local community? Please describe:

	YES	NO
6.19. Are there local media (broadcasting) stations in your local community?	☐	☐

	YES	NO
Has your unit of local/ regional self-government had experience with the reception, accommodation and integration of persons granted asylum?	☐	☐

	YES	NO
Are there any persons granted asylum living in your local community now?	☐	☐

	Enter a number:
Please estimate the number of persons granted asylum (including children) who could be included in the life of your local community.	

The following questions are intended only for those local communities that HAVE EXPERIENCE of the reception and integration of persons granted asylum and persons under protection:

What is your assessment of the implementation of integration measures in your local community to date, in relation to the following dimensions of integration:	Satisfactory	Partially satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Inclusion in the educational system	☐	☐	☐
Organization of Croatian language courses	☐	☐	☐
Accommodation and housing	☐	☐	☐
Social welfare	☐	☐	☐
Health care	☐	☐	☐
Employment	☐	☐	☐
Public awareness raising and information	☐	☐	☐
Professional-staff awareness raising and information	☐	☐	☐
Intersectorial cooperation	☐	☐	☐

The following questions are intended only for those local communities that HAVE NO EXPERIENCE of the reception and integration of persons granted asylum and persons under protection:

In your view, how successful would integration of persons granted asylum be in your local community if they were to be accommodated here? Please estimate the potential for successful integration for each dimension:	Completely unsuccessful	Mostly unsuccessful	Neither unsuccessful nor successful	Mostly successful	Completely successful
Inclusion in the educational system	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Organization of Croatian language courses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Accommodation and housing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social welfare	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Health care	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Employment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Public awareness raising and information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Professional-staff awareness raising and information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Intersectorial cooperation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

APPENDIX 4

CHECKLIST FOR ASSESSMENT AND SELF-ASSESSMENT OF KEY NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION FOR PERSONS UNDER INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

CHECKLIST FOR ASSESSMENT AND SELF-ASSESSMENT OF KEY NEEDS AND CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION FOR PERSONS UNDER INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for answering the questions contained in this questionnaire, which will help us establish the key needs and challenges that you and other persons granted international protection in the Republic of Croatia are facing. The questions regard your experiences with inclusion in the local community in which you live.

On the basis of your answers, the competent bodies will be able to develop recommendations for improving the procedures for integration of foreigners into Croatian society.

The answers you provide in this questionnaire will not help you directly to resolve your needs, but they could be useful for the provision of future assistance to other people who will be in a similar situation.

Place of residence (please fill in)

When did you arrive in Croatia? (fill in the year)

When was asylum granted to you? (fill in the year)

---

1. Which of the following rights do you think you have as a person under international protection?	YES	NO
1.1. Residence and accommodation	☐	☐
1.2. Croatian language learning	☐	☐
1.3. Education	☐	☐
1.4. Social welfare	☐	☐
1.5. Health care	☐	☐
1.6. Employment	☐	☐
1.7. Right to family reunification	☐	☐
1.8. Freedom of religion	☐	☐
1.9. Free legal aid	☐	☐
1.10. Assistance with integration into society	☐	☐
1.11. Possibility to purchase real estate	☐	☐
1.12. Acquisition of Croatian citizenship	☐	☐
1.13. Anything else. Please specify:		

2. Who has informed you of your rights?	YES	NO
2.1. Police officers (MoI)	☐	☐
2.2. Reception-centre staff	☐	☐
2.3. Social-welfare centre (SWC) staff	☐	☐
2.4. Civil-society organizations	☐	☐
2.5. Religious communities	☐	☐
2.6. Information brochures	☐	☐
2.7. UNHCR staff	☐	☐
2.8. Lawyers or interpreters	☐	☐
2.9. Friends, relatives, other persons granted asylum	☐	☐
2.10. Anybody else. Please specify:		

3. Where do you live?	
3.1.	In a rented apartment or house	☐
3.2.	In an apartment or house I own	☐
3.3.	In a reception centre	☐
3.4.	At my friend's or a family member's home	☐

4. Who has assisted you in finding accommodation?	
4.1.	No one	☐
4.2.	Social welfare centre (SWC) staff	☐
4.3.	Police officers (MoI)	☐
4.4.	Civil-society organizations – for example, Are You Syrious (AYS), Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)	☐
4.5.	Croatian Red Cross (CRC) staff	☐
4.6.	Religious communities – for example, the Islamic Community	☐
4.7.	Anybody else. Please specify:	

5. Is anybody helping you pay the accommodation costs?	
5.1.	No	☐
5.2.	Social welfare centre (SWC)	☐
5.3.	Croatian Red Cross (CRC)	☐
5.4.	Civil-society organization	☐
5.5.	Anybody else. Please specify:	

6. Generally, how satisfied are you with your accommodation?				
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Completely unsatisfied	Partially unsatisfied	Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	Partially satisfied	Completely satisfied

	YES	NO
7. Have you attended a course in Croatian language and culture?	☐	☐

8. What was the duration of the course?		
8.1.	Less than 70 hours	☐
8.2.	70 hours	☐
8.3.	More than 70 hours	☐
8.4.	I don't know	☐

9. Where was the course held?		
9.1.	Local open university	☐
9.2.	Croaticum / Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb	☐
9.3.	Private language school	☐
9.4.	Reception centre (Kutina, Porin)	☐
9.5.	Premises of a non-governmental organization away from the reception centres – Croatian Red Cross (CRC), Jesuit Refugee Service/SOL, Stress and Trauma Rehabilitation Centre (STRC)	☐
9.6.	Primary or secondary school	☐
9.7.	Somewhere else. Please specify:	

10. How good is your Croatian?		
10.1.	Insufficient: I cannot perform even simple activities	☐
10.2.	Sufficient for performing simple daily activities	☐
10.3.	Sufficient for performing more complex activities (for example, administrative tasks)	☐

11. Generally, how satisfied are you with the organization of the Croatian language courses?				
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Completely unsatisfied	Partially unsatisfied	Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	Partially satisfied	Completely satisfied

	YES	NO
12. Does a member of your family attend a kindergarten or school in Croatia?	☐	☐

13. Who does, and which institution?		Kindergarten	Primary school	Secondary school	University
13.1.	You personally	☐	☐	☐	☐
13.2.	Husband/wife	☐	☐	☐	☐
13.3.	Children	☐	☐	☐	☐
13.4.	Brother/sister	☐	☐	☐	☐
13.5.	Other family members	☐	☐	☐	☐

14. Have you encountered difficulties when joining a kindergarten, school or university? Please describe:

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15. Generally, how satisfied are you with your experience or that of a member of your family when joining kindergarten, school or university?

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Completely unsatisfied	Partially unsatisfied	Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	Partially satisfied	Completely satisfied

16. Social welfare and health care		YES	NO	There has been no need
16.1.	Have you received financial social benefits?	☐	☐	☐
16.2.	Are you satisfied with the treatment you received from the social welfare centre (SWC) staff?	☐	☐	☐
16.3.	Have you needed any health-care services?	☐	☐	☐
16.4.	Has any member of your family needed any health-care services?	☐	☐	☐
16.5.	Have you experienced any difficulty regarding the payment for health-care services?	☐	☐	☐
16.6.	Have you experienced any difficulty in communicating with medical staff?	☐	☐	☐
16.7.	Are you satisfied with the treatment you received from the medical staff?	☐	☐	☐
16.8.	Have you sought psychological assistance?	☐	☐	☐
16.9.	Has any member of your family needed psychological assistance?	☐	☐	☐
16.10.	Was the provided psychological assistance satisfactory?	☐	☐	☐

17. Do you need any additional assistance? Please specify:

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18. Employment		YES	NO
18.1.	Do you have a job?	☐	☐
18.2.	Does any member of your family have a job?	☐	☐
18.3.	Does your job correspond to your profession and qualifications?	☐	☐
18.4.	Have you participated in any professional development, upskilling / reskilling?	☐	☐

19. What is your job? Please describe:

20. Your experience of seeking a job has been:				
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Completely negative	Partially negative	Neither negative nor positive	Partially positive	Completely positive

21. What, in your view, is the most important requirement for somebody to find (and hold) a job?		
21.1.	Linguistic competence	☐
21.2.	Recognition of acquired qualifications	☐
21.3.	Re-skilling	☐
21.4.	Contacts with persons who can help with job-seeking	☐
21.5.	Something else. Please specify:	

22. Has anybody helped you in looking for a job?		
22.1.	No one	☐
22.2.	Croatian Employment Bureau (CEB)	☐
22.3.	Social welfare centre (SWC) staff	☐
22.4.	Police officers (MoI)	☐
22.5.	Civil-society organizations – for example, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), Are You Syrious (AYS)	☐
22.6.	Croatian Red Cross (CRC) staff	☐
22.7.	Religious organizations	☐
22.8.	Anybody else. Please specify:	

23. Acceptance in the local community		YES	NO
23.1.	Do you (and your family) feel accepted in the local community in which you live?	☐	☐
23.2.	Have you personally experienced any unpleasantness in the place in which you live?	☐	☐
23.3.	Has any member of your family experienced any unpleasantness in the place in which they live?	☐	☐
23.4.	Have you experienced any unpleasantness in your contact with persons working for state institutions?	☐	☐

24. If you have experienced unpleasantness, what did it consist of?		YES	NO
24.1.	Physical attack	☐	☐
24.2.	Verbal attack and threats	☐	☐
24.3.	Local population is avoiding me	☐	☐
24.4.	People behave as if I am not there. (They ignore me)	☐	☐
24.5.	People who should help me are not doing so, and I have a hard time exercising my rights. (I feel marginalized)	☐	☐

25. What would help your inclusion in the community in which you live?		YES	NO
25.1.	Additional lessons in Croatian language and culture	☐	☐
25.2.	Certificate of my Croatian language competence	☐	☐
25.3.	Better information about my rights and opportunities	☐	☐
25.4.	Better material living conditions (accommodation, job, salary)	☐	☐
25.5.	My openness towards the new environment and my wish and that of my family to stay in Croatia	☐	☐
25.6.	Greater openness of Croats towards us asylum beneficiaries	☐	☐
25.7.	My avoidance of problems and bad habits	☐	☐
25.8.	Better functioning of the reception and integration	☐	☐
25.9.	Different organization of the support system during the first two years of stay	☐	☐
25.10.	Better media portrayal of us asylum beneficiaries	☐	☐
25.11.	Anything else. Please specify:		

26. Generally, how satisfied are you with the functioning of the state institutions in the process of your integration?

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Completely unsatisfied	Partially unsatisfied	Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	Partially satisfied	Completely satisfied

27. How satisfied are you with the support provided by the civil-society organizations?				
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Completely unsatisfied	Partially unsatisfied	Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	Partially satisfied	Completely satisfied

28. Is there any significant cultural barrier to your integration into Croatian society? Please specify:

29. Is there anything you would like to say to the state institutions that could facilitate and speed up the integration of persons granted asylum? Please specify:

This research report and the overall research process constitute a complex, multidimensional and intensive effort by the researchers to discuss a topical, rather pressing, social issue which goes beyond national interests. The authors have endeavoured to capture the individual level of citizens and the level of local communities, cognizant that the matter at hand has a global source and that complex international events dictate its manifestation and development.

This research relies on carefully taken and implemented methodological decisions ensuring that the data are indeed representative, and the findings extensive and valid. Accordingly, this research may provide a sound platform to design public policies and professional practices at the national level in the process of integrating third-country nationals in need of international protection, but also a valuable source of information for professionals and decision makers at the European level.

ANA OPAČIĆ, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

The publication *Challenges of Integrating Refugees into Croatian Society: Attitudes of Citizens and Readiness of Local Communities* is a research work of great value at multiple levels. First and foremost, it represents the first comprehensive research on the issue of integrating persons granted asylum and, more generally, research about the integration of aliens, regardless of the motives for their immigration and their legal status. This research will become a reference point, especially its survey section, for all future research efforts and for monitoring trends in changing attitudes, primarily among citizens. Secondly, this research has addressed the issue of integration and integration policy from different perspectives, taking into account the experiences, attitudes and needs of not just one, but several stakeholder groups, ranging from citizens, through different institutional actors, to immigrants (persons granted asylum) themselves. Such comprehensive approaches to these issues are essential, yet relatively rare. Therefore, we should highlight and commend the application of the mixed method in this research. Thirdly, the research has yielded relevant and applicable recommendations for measures and activities at the level of public policies, whereby it serves its fundamental purpose – to provide a platform for efforts to improve the system of integration of persons granted asylum.

izv. prof. dr. sc. DRAGAN BAGIĆ