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**AND THE SUPPORTING  
HANDBOOK OF GOOD  
PRACTICE EXAMPLES**

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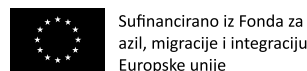
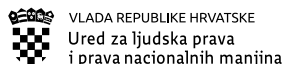
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# 1. Introduction

Integration is a multidimensional process of acceptance and inclusion of migrants and persons granted international protection in the society, which commonly includes the legal, political, social, economic, cultural and religious dimensions as a minimum. The legal and political dimensions of integration include a number of political and status rights such as residence, family reunification, (formal and informal) political participation, and acquisition of citizenship, as well as some more informal options of political participation. The social and economic dimensions of integration focus on the position of persons granted international protection in the labour market, including their right to work and their access to social and other rights, such as healthcare, education and housing. The cultural and religious dimensions concern the cultural and religious rights with respect to the inclusion of persons granted international protection, particularly their perception and the practice of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity in the society of the recipient country. The integration of persons granted international protection<sup>1</sup> in the society of the recipient country occurs primarily at the local level, where national policies are implemented and tested. The success or failure of such policies is apparent in social services in the local communities (schools, healthcare and social institutions etc) where the persons granted international protection live. In the Republic of Croatia (hereinafter: Croatia), integration policy is for the most part developed at the national level of government. Some local authorities have only recently started to develop local actions supporting the national integration policy. A recent study identified the following as the greatest challenges in local integration in Croatia from the perspective of local authorities: (1) the lack of a

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'person granted international protection' refers to two categories: asylees and foreigners under subsidiary protection. The term 'refugee' includes both categories of persons granted international protection in the context of this document.

database on integration actions and the inability to predict the number of immigrants; (2) the absence of a strategic approach to integration at the local level; (3) reliance on central government irrespective of the constitutionally guaranteed local autonomy; (4) a bureaucratic approach to the immigrants, as the available public services are not adjusted to their needs, which undermines the efficiency of integration.<sup>2</sup>

The preparation of a protocol of actions for persons granted international protection is one of the steps that can help overcome these challenges. This is consistent with the conclusions of the evaluation of the migrant integration framework in 2017, which found that the legislative, strategic and institutional integration framework is largely relevant, but that the order, timeline and responsibilities for the provision of social services need to be clearly defined through the establishment of adequate protocols and the adoption of adequate regulations both at individual sector levels and through intersectoral cooperation activities.<sup>3</sup>

The Action Plan for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection for the Period 2017–2019 (hereinafter: Action Plan) provides for the preparation of a Protocol of Actions for Persons Granted International Protection (at the national level).<sup>4</sup>

The preparation of the Protocol of Actions for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection (hereinafter: Protocol) and the Supporting Handbook of Good Practice Examples was planned under the project ‘INCLUDE – Intersectoral Cooperation in the Empowerment

2 Giljević, Teo; Lalić Novak, Goranka. Integration of migrants through a prism of specific sustainable development goals: A perspective of public administration. Sustainable development, 28 (2020), 4; pp. 1002–1009.

3 Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities, Framework for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection at the Local Level, available at <https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/Okvir%20za%20integraciju%20osoba%20kojima%20je%20dobrena%20me%C4%91unarodna%20za%20C5%A1tita%20na%20lokalnoj%20razini.pdf>

4 Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities, Action Plan for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection for the Period 2017–2019, <https://pravamanjina.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumenti/AKCIJSKI%20PLAN%20ZA%20INTEGRACIJU%202017-2019.pdf>

of Third-Country Nationals’ (hereinafter: project INCLUDE). This publication is designed for all stakeholders participating in the integration of persons granted international protection: national authorities, local self-government, civil society organisations, and the persons granted international protection themselves. It is divided into several chapters. The introduction is followed by the second chapter, which outlines the fundamental rights of refugees guaranteed under international law. The third chapter presents the fundamental documents of the European Union (hereinafter: EU) regulating the integration policy and providing guidelines for EU member states in the establishment of national integration systems. The fourth chapter briefly describes Croatia’s integration framework, and the fifth chapter discusses in more detail the legislation regulating specific areas relating to integration (education, employment, social welfare, healthcare and housing). The above introductory chapters of the publication can help stakeholders understand and learn about the legal and policy framework for the integration of persons granted international protection and other migrants into the Croatian society. The sixth chapter sketches the methodology followed in preparing the Protocol, which was based on the principles of participation and partnership of all interested stakeholders. The seventh chapter comprises the Protocol, which was designed as a series of interrelated steps contributing to the integration of persons granted international protection at the local level. In addition to the obligations of central national authorities, mainly ministries and government offices, the Protocol also regulates the steps to be taken at the level of cities as the places where the integration into the society actually occurs. The purpose of the Protocol is to help all authorities and organisations participating in the process to understand the competences, rights and obligations in specific areas of integration. The eighth chapter elaborates on some good practice examples in the integration of persons granted international protection at the local level. They are divided into three

groups. The first group comprises a selection of examples focusing on local integration capacity building: the actions and the role of the City of Karlovac in the integration of asylees from Syria; the adoption of the Action Plan of the City of Zagreb for the Integration of Applicants for International Protection and Persons Granted International Protection for 2022 (hereinafter: Action Plan of the City of Zagreb) and other activities implemented by the City of Zagreb; the preparation of the Local Integration Plan in Osijek, which was organised by the Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights; and an overview of the Framework for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection at the Local Level and the Information Activities Implemented by Local Authorities Regarding the Integration Policy for Persons Granted International Protection and their Roles and Obligations, both of which were organised and implemented by the Office for Human Rights and National Minority Rights. The other group of good practice examples concerns the active role of social services in the integration of persons granted international protection, reflected in the activities of two primary schools (Lipik Primary School and Gustav Krklec Primary School in Zagreb) and the activities of the Ivan Goran Kovačić City Library in Karlovac, focusing on the integration of Syrian asylees. The third group includes examples of civil society organisations' activities aimed at strengthening inclusion and social cohesion: the project 'Information – The First Step to Good Health' by the association FitnessOF Karlovac, recreation and rehabilitation centre; the publication 'Living With Us – Integration of Persons Granted International Protection in Croatia – Examples from Local Communities' by association DKolektiv; and the activities focusing on the integration of Afghan asylees in Rijeka, implemented by association Civis Mundi. Even though there are surely many other good practice examples, the examples described herein reflect the efforts undertaken at the local level that have contributed to more successful integration of persons

granted international protection into the Croatian society. Gender-specific terms used in this Protocol and the supporting handbook of good practice examples refer equally to both the male and the female gender irrespective of the gender they were used in.

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## 2. International framework for the protection of refugees<sup>5</sup>

A number of international documents, conventions and declarations establishing international standards for the protection of human rights, including refugee rights, have been incorporated into Croatia's internal legal system and have primacy over its national law (Article 141 of the Croatian Constitution).

The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (hereinafter: 1951 Convention)<sup>6</sup>, which entered into force on 22 April 1954, is the most important international legal document concerning the protection of refugees, drawn up by the United Nations. The Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees was submitted for accession on 31 January 1967 after having been considered by the UN General Assembly, and entered into force on 4 October 1967. The Protocol changed the definition of refugee to include the victims of events occurring after 1 January 1951. By acceding to the 1967 Protocol, countries commit to implement the material

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<sup>5</sup> This chapter is based on the following papers: Lalić Novak, Goranka, 'Azil: pravni i institucionalni aspekti.' Zagreb: University of Zagreb, Faculty of Law, Study Centre for Public Administration and Public Finance, 2016; Kovač, Anamarija, 'Okvir za integraciju izbjeglica u hrvatsko društvo', in: Giljević, Teo et al. 'Integracija izbjeglica u hrvatsko društvo: pravno uređenje i ostvarivanje u praksi.' Zagreb: Croatian Legal Centre, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Croatia became a party to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees by virtue of the Decision on the publication of multilateral agreements Croatia is a party to on the basis of the notification on succession.



provisions from the 1951 Convention in relation to persons with refugee status as defined by the Convention, but without restricting them to events that have occurred prior to 1951. In spite of its association with the Convention, the Protocol is a standalone document, and accession to it is not restricted to the signatories of the Convention.

The 1951 Convention is a living instrument, which means that its provisions are to be interpreted in the light of present-day conditions, and adapted to different global sociological and political developments. The principles of non-discrimination, *non-refoulement*<sup>7</sup>, immunity from penalties for illegal entry into a country, and the obligation of countries to ensure that refugees can exercise the rights guaranteed by the Convention are the core underlying principles of the 1951 Convention. Fundamental human rights and freedoms are guaranteed to the refugees, such as the right to life, the right to legal personality, the right to physical security (freedom from torture and cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment; freedom from arbitrary deprivation of liberty or detention); the right to a fair trial; the right to basic necessities (such as primary healthcare, freedom from hunger, access to running water, basic hygienic conditions, essential housing etc); the right to property; and the freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

It is important to note that the standards for exercising protection imposed on states under international law are minimal standards, and the states are free to provide a higher standard of protection to refugees by virtue of internal regulations and the implementation of international law documents in practice.

Unlike other aliens, refugees are unable to return to their country of origin owing to well founded fear of being persecuted (Article 1A, Paragraph 2). Given that refugees are

<sup>7</sup> 'No Contracting State shall expel or return (refouler) a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. The benefit of the present provision may not, however, be claimed by a refugee whom there are reasonable grounds for regarding as a danger to the security of the country in which he is, or who, having been convicted by a final judgment of a particularly serious crime, constitutes a danger to the community of that country.' (1951 Convention, Article 33)

in most cases not familiar with the language, culture and customs of the recipient society, and lack sufficient means to start a new life without help, it is important that recipient countries work proactively on their local integration.

The 1951 Convention requires contracting states to facilitate the assimilation and naturalization of refugees as far as possible, and make every effort to expedite naturalization proceedings and to reduce as far as possible the charges and costs of such proceedings (Article 34).

The scope and nature of the rights a refugee will enjoy in the recipient country will depend on the degree of the refugee's attachment to the recipient country. There are four degrees of attachment between the refugee and the recipient country: mere jurisdictional control of the recipient country, without the refugee's physical presence in its territory; physical (*de facto*) presence in the recipient country's territory; lawful (*de iure*) presence in the recipient country's territory; and lawful stay in the recipient country's territory (e.g. asylum). Given the layered structure of the international legal protection system for refugees, the rights of refugees in a relationship of lawful presence also include all rights enjoyed by refugees in a lower degree of attachment with the recipient country, while refugees in a relationship of lawful stay enjoy the widest scope of rights.

Lawful stay is the highest possible degree of attachment between a refugee and the recipient country. The right to lawful stay is decided by the competent judicial or administrative authorities of the recipient country. The difference between a refugee with a lawful stay status and a refugee with lawful presence status is that the former is in principle permitted to stay in the territory of the recipient country until the circumstances that forced him to leave his country of origin cease to exist. Lawful stay grants a refugee the maximum scope of rights guaranteed under the 1951 Convention. Lawful stay can be the result of being granted asylum or any other form of lawful stay (such as temporary protection).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Lapaš, Davorin, 'Međunarodnopravna zaštita izbjeglica.' Zagreb: Croatian Law Centre, 2008.

Given the circumstances in which refugees in most cases leave their country or origin, they very often do not have personal documents such as identity papers or travel documents on their person.

The 1951 Convention guarantees all refugees the right to identity papers if they do not possess a valid travel document (Article 27). Refugees lawfully staying in the territory of the recipient country also have the right to be issued travel documents (Article 28). Under the 1951 Convention, contracting states are obligated to issue travel documents for the purpose of travel outside their territory to refugees lawfully staying in their territory. The recipient country will not issue a travel document if compelling reasons of national security or public order dictate otherwise. Given that the recipient country may impose restrictions on travel documents that it is under obligation to issue, it may restrict the validity of the travel document to a period of one or two years.

The right to work is one of the fundamental human rights guaranteed to refugees lawfully staying in the recipient country under the 1951 Convention. Refugees have the right to engage in wage-earning employment and self-employment, and the right to practice a liberal profession. The 1951 Convention obligates all contracting states to accord to refugees lawfully staying in their territory the most favourable treatment accorded to nationals of a foreign country in the same circumstances, as regards the right to engage in wage-earning employment (Article 17).

Lawfully staying refugees are entitled to practice liberal professions. With respect to the exercise of this right, the 1951 Convention obligates contracting states to accord to refugees lawfully staying in their territory who hold diplomas recognized by the competent authorities of that state, and who are desirous of practicing a liberal profession, treatment as favourable as possible and, in any event, not less favourable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances (Article 19).

In procedures conferring protection in the fields of labour

legislation and social security, the 1951 Convention obligates the contracting parties to accord the refugees lawfully staying in their territory the same treatment that they accord to their own nationals. In labour legislation, this applies to regulations governing remuneration, including family allowances, hours of work, overtime arrangements, holidays with pay, home work, minimum age of employment, apprenticeship and training, women's work and the work of young persons, and the enjoyment of the benefits of collective bargaining.

The remuneration must be appropriate for the work performed by the refugee and must in any case not be based on exploitation. Similarly, contracting states need to ensure stable employment for refugees to count on in order to facilitate as much as possible their integration into the new society. Refugees lawfully staying in the territory of the recipient country are accorded the same treatment as is accorded to nationals of the recipient country in respect of exercising social security rights, including rights in respect of employment injury, occupational diseases, maternity and parental leave, sickness, disability, old age, death, unemployment, and any other social security rights provided by the national legislation of the recipient country (Article 24).

The right to public relief will be of particular importance for refugees who are not fit for work. The 1951 Convention obligates the contracting parties to accord to refugees lawfully staying in their territory the same treatment with respect to public relief and assistance as is accorded to their own nationals (Article 23). This article should be understood broadly to include financial assistance and other forms of assistance during sickness and old age and in the event of any other need.

Given the differences between social security and unemployment insurance schemes in different countries, refugees are considered to be entitled to public relief even when they are not eligible for employment benefit.

Refugees lawfully staying in the territory of the recipient country also have the right to housing. As regards housing,

the 1951 Convention imposes an obligation on contracting states to, insofar as the matter is regulated by laws or regulations or is subject to the control of public authorities, accord to refugees lawfully staying in their territory a treatment as favourable as possible with the purpose of exercising housing rights (Article 21).

In respect of elementary education, the 1951 Convention guarantees to refugees an equal access as that accorded to the nationals of the recipient country, and in respect of other categories of education, equal to that of other aliens (Article 22).

In addition to the above rights, refugees lawfully staying in the recipient country also have the right to protection of intellectual property, and the freedom of expression and association. The protection of intellectual property applies to the protection of industrial property, such as inventions, designs or models, trademarks, trade names, and the protection of literary, artistic, and scientific works. With respect to the protection of intellectual property, a refugee lawfully staying in the territory of the recipient country is accorded the same rights as the nationals of that country (Article 14).

Refugees have an absolute right of access to a court of law, to assistance in legal and administrative matters, and to a fair trial. Refugees lawfully staying in the territory of the recipient country have the right of access to a court of law, including legal assistance and exemption from *cautio judicatum solvi*, under the same terms as its own nationals (Article 16).

Under the right to freedom of expression and association, refugees lawfully staying in the territory of the recipient country have the right to non-political and non-profit-making associations and trade unions under the same terms as other aliens (Article 15).

Refugees have a duty to conform to the laws and regulations of the recipient country as well as to measures taken for the maintenance of public order, and the legal, political and public order of the recipient country.

Refugees are undoubtedly subject to this legal order, not just as holders of rights and obligations, but, just as the nationals of the recipient country, they are also subject to the sanction system of its legal order and are equally held responsible for unlawful acts in the same circumstances, without discrimination.

Refugees are accorded the same treatment as any other person that commits an act in breach of the legislation of the recipient country currently in force.

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### 3. EU migrant integration policy: common framework for EU member states<sup>9</sup>

The development of integration policy at EU level started after the entry into force of the Treaty of Amsterdam (1999), under which one of the EC's/EU's objectives is to maintain and develop the EU as an area of freedom, security and justice, where free movement of persons is ensured in conjunction with adequate measures with respect to external border controls, asylum and immigration, as well as measures to prevent and combat crime.

Under Article 79 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, the European Parliament and Council, acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, adopt measures defining the rights of third-country nationals residing legally in a member state (paragraph 2) and may establish measures to provide incentives and support for the action of member states with a view to promoting the integration of

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<sup>9</sup> This chapter is based on the paper by Lalić Novak, Goranka; Giljević, Teo, 'Pravno i institucionalno uređenje integracije migranata u Republici Hrvatskoj – prema europskom modelu.' *Godišnjak Akademije pravnih znanosti Hrvatske*, 10 (2019), 1; 163–184.

third-country nationals residing legally in their territories, excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the member states (paragraph 4).<sup>10</sup>

Consequently, policy documents (soft law) are adopted at EU level to serve as guidelines supporting member states in designing their integration policies, and the EU launches a variety of financial support programmes to help member states in the integration of migrants. Changes have also been made to parts of the EU acquis concerning the exercise of the rights of certain migrant categories in a national context.

### 3.1. EU policy documents of relevance for the integration of persons granted international protection

Several documents of relevance for integration policy have been adopted at EU level. In European Commission's 2003 Communication on immigration, integration and employment<sup>11</sup>, the EU defined integration for the first time as a two-way process based on mutual rights and corresponding obligations of legally resident third country nationals and the host society which provides for full participation of the immigrant.

The process includes the responsibility of the host society to ensure that the formal rights of immigrants are in place to allow them to participate in economic, social, cultural and civil life in the community, but also to adapt to the norms and values of the host society and participate actively in the integration process, without having to relinquish their own cultural identity.

<sup>10</sup> Consolidated texts of the Treaty on the European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, OJ C 202, 7.6.2016.

<sup>11</sup> Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on immigration, integration and employment, COM/2003/0336 final, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1556895392143&uri=CELEX:52003DC0336>

The Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU<sup>12</sup>, adopted by the Council in 2004 and reaffirmed in 2014, provide the basis for all subsequent EU initiatives in migrant integration. The document comprises a total of eleven principles concerning: 1) integration as a dynamic, two-way process; 2) respect for the basic values of the EU; 3) employment as a key part of the integration process; 4) indispensability of basic knowledge of the host society's language, history, and institutions; 5) education of immigrants and their descendants; 6) access to institutions, public and private goods and services, on a basis equal to national citizens and in a non-discriminatory way; 7) promotion of interaction between immigrants and member state citizens; 8) freedom of religion and culture, unless it conflicts with other inviolable European rights or with national law; 9) participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures, especially at the local level; 10) mainstreaming of integration policies and measures in all relevant policy portfolios and levels of government and public services; 11) evaluation of the success of implementation of integration policies.

The common Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union of 2005<sup>13</sup> proposes a series of measures for the implementation of common basic principles for immigrant integration policy on the European and national level. It underlines the importance of a more coherent approach to integration at EU level while respecting the competences of the member states, which are responsible for defining their own priorities, activities and manner of implementation of the integration

<sup>12</sup> Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU, Council document 14615/04, available at: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_PRES-04-321\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_PRES-04-321_en.htm).

<sup>13</sup> Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – A Common Agenda for Integration – Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union, COM/2005/0389, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=celex:52005DC0389>

measures, respecting national specificities.

The European Agenda for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals<sup>14</sup> of 2011 was adopted based on the Europe 2020 Strategy, recognising the importance of integration of migrants as one of the methods to raise the employment rate in the EU, accomplish the objectives relating to increasing the level of education of young people, and strengthen the social cohesion and reduce poverty.

The programme aims to increase the economic, social, cultural and political participation of immigrants. It emphasizes the importance of a uniform approach to integration in various public policy areas at the local, regional and national levels, and provides an overview of the most important challenges to successful integration of immigrants, and EU initiatives addressing the recognised challenges.

The Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals<sup>15</sup> of 2016 (hereinafter: 2016 Action Plan on Integration) underlines that third-country nationals continue to fare worse than EU citizens in terms of employment, education, and social inclusion outcomes, and stresses the importance of developing effective integration strategies, especially in member states less experienced in immigrant integration. The common policy framework covered by the 2016 Action Plan on Integration should help member states further develop and reinforce their national integration policies, and it also includes a description of the political, operational and financial support the Commission will provide to support member states in this process. The planned measures can be divided into measures implemented prior to departure and measures implemented prior to arrival in the EU, including:

14 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions — European Agenda for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals, COM(2011) 455 final, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52011DC0455>

15 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions — Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals, COM(2016) 377 final, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52016DC0377&from=ES>

1) preparation of immigrants and receiving local communities for integration; 2) education; 3) integration in the labour market and access to vocational training; 4) access to basic services such as housing and healthcare; 5) active participation and social inclusion, including the consultation of immigrants themselves in drafting and implementing integration policies; 6) promotion of exchange with receiving societies; 7) anti-discrimination and promotion of a positive approach to diversity.

Conclusions of the Council on the integration of third-country nationals<sup>16</sup> of 2016 reiterate the importance of integrating immigrants into the European society, call on member states to adopt measures for integration in different public policy areas, and call on the European Commission to support the efforts invested by member states, providing them with professional and financial assistance, and ensure better coordination between the national and European level and the different stakeholders active in the field of integration.

The New Pact on Migration and Asylum<sup>17</sup> proposes a new approach to migration, which consists of building confidence through more effective procedures and striking a new balance between collective responsibility and solidarity. The New Pact acknowledges that no member state should bear disproportionate responsibility, and that all member states should make a continual solidary contribution.

It ensures a comprehensive approach combining migration, asylum, integration and border management policies, taking into account that overall efficiency depends on the progress made in all areas. Smooth, faster migration processes are established, along with stronger policy management in the fields of migration and borders, with the support of modern IT systems and more efficient

16 Conclusions of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States on the integration of third-country nationals legally residing in the EU, Council document 15312/16, available at: <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15312-2016-INIT/en/pdf>

17 Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/new-pact-migration-and-asylum_en)

agencies. The Pact aims to reduce the number of unsafe and illegal routes, and promote sustainable and safe legal routes for persons in need of protection, taking into account that most immigrants are arriving in the EU through legal channels, which should be better aligned with the needs of the EU labour market. The elimination of the existing deficiencies in implementation will promote confidence in EU policies.

The Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027<sup>18</sup> (hereinafter: Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion) aims to promote the inclusion of all, recognition of the important contribution of migrants to the EU, and elimination of potential obstacles impeding the inclusion and participation of all persons of migrant background in the European society (which applies to migrants who have only just arrived in Europe as well as those who have already acquired the citizenship of a member state). It is based on the principle that the person who is integrating and the host community both need to make an effort to ensure an inclusive integration. The Action Plan also presents new measures based on the results achieved by the previous action plan, adopted in 2016.

The Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion proposes targeted and custom support, taking into account the individual characteristics that could pose a challenge for persons of migrant background, such as gender and religious matters. Successful integration and inclusion depend on timely action and long-term commitments.

The planned measures include:

- Inclusive education and training, from early and preschool education to higher education, with an emphasis on simpler recognition of qualifications and continuous language learning, supported by EU funds;
- Better employment opportunities and skill recognition

<sup>18</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027 [COM(2020) 758 final], available at: <https://op.europa.eu/hr/publication-detail/-/publication/bb47d489-a2b1-11eb-9585-01aa75ed71a1>

to fully validate the contribution of migrant communities, especially women, and to help migrants unlock their full potential. The Commission will work with social and economic partners and employers on promoting the inclusion in the labour market and providing support to entrepreneurs, and on easier recognition and assessment of skills for employers;

- Access to healthcare services, including in mental health, for persons of migrant background. In addition to providing targeted funding, the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion aims to inform persons about their rights, and recognise the challenges faced by women, particularly during and after pregnancy. Member states are also encouraged to exchange best practices;
- Access to adequate and affordable housing, with funding under European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund Plus, Asylum and Migration Fund (hereinafter: AMIF) and InvestEU, as well as the funding of platforms designed to facilitate the exchange of local and regional experiences in combatting segregation and discrimination in the housing property market.

### 3.2. EU legal acts impacting the integration of migrants

Since the integration of migrants is a national competence, EU *acquis* in this area is limited to several directives governing migrants' rights. Croatia transposed the directives in question.

Council Directive 2003/109/EC of 25 November 2003 concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents provides that member states may grant long-term resident status to third-country nationals who have resided legally and continuously within their territory for five years immediately prior to the submission of the relevant application, provided that the applicant has stable and regular resources, without recourse to the social assistance system, and sickness insurance, and complies with



integration conditions. Long-term residents enjoy equal treatment with nationals as regards access to employment and self-employed activity, education and vocational training, social security, social assistance and social protection, tax benefits, access to goods and services, and freedom of association and freedom of movement. As of 2010, the Directive also applies to persons granted international protection.

Council Directive 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification lays down the conditions for exercising the right to family reunification for third-country nationals lawfully residing in the territory of member states. EU citizens holding a residence permit issued by a member state for a period of validity of one year or more who have reasonable prospects of obtaining the right of permanent residence have the right to family reunification. The Directive defines a sponsor as a third country national residing lawfully in a Member State and applying or whose family members apply for family reunification to be joined with him. The right to family reunification applies to the sponsor's spouse and minor children, but member states may, under certain conditions, allow family reunification for a foreign national's parents, adult unmarried children, and unmarried partner. The duration of the residence permits granted to family members in principle does not go beyond the date of expiry of the residence permit held by the sponsor. Family members have access to education, employment and vocational training under the same terms as the sponsor.

Not later than after five years of residence, the spouse or unmarried partner and each child who has reached majority are entitled to an autonomous residence permit, independent of that of the sponsor. According to the case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union, member states are required to apply the Directive in accordance with the protection of fundamental rights, mainly the protection of family life and the best interests of the child.

The rights of persons granted international protection

are regulated by Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted. Among other rights, the Directive specifies assistance facilitating integration in the society, requiring member states to ensure access to integration programmes which they consider to be appropriate so as to take into account the specific needs of beneficiaries of refugee status or of subsidiary protection status, or create pre-conditions which guarantee access to such programmes.

Other directives of relevance for the integration of other categories of migrants include: Council Directive 2009/50/EC of 25 May 2009 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of highly qualified employment; Directive 2011/98/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on a single application procedure for a single permit for third-country nationals to reside and work in the territory of a Member State and on a common set of rights for third-country workers legally residing in a Member State; Directive 2016/801 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2016 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au pairing.

### 3.3. Financial assistance to member states

Financial support provided by the EU to member states for the implementation of migrant integration measures is an important lever of EU influence. The European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals for the period 2007 to 2013<sup>19</sup> was the first fund established for this

<sup>19</sup> Council Decision of 25 June 2007 establishing the European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals for the period 2007 to 2013 as part of the General programme Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows, OJ L 168, 28.6.2007.

purpose in 2007. The Fund was designed to provide support to member states in facilitating the integration of migrants into European societies and enable third-country nationals of different economic, social, cultural, religious, linguistic and ethnic backgrounds to fulfil the conditions of residence. A total of 825 million euro was allocated during the Fund implementation period, and the mid-term review showed that the projects financed under the Fund in most member states would not have been implemented without these funds, and that the availability of services, employment and education was improved in member states, including language courses.<sup>20</sup>

As of 2014, financial support to member states has been provided under the AMIF.<sup>21</sup> Funds are also available to member states under the European structural and investment funds: European Social Fund, European Regional Development Fund, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived, European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, ERASMUS+, EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation, and Europe for Citizens.<sup>22</sup>

20 Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 'Ex post evaluation reports for the period 2011 to 2013 of actions co-financed by the four Funds under the framework programme 'Solidarity and Management of Migration Flows', COM(2018) 456 final, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HR/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0456>

21 Regulation No 516/2014 of the European Parliament and Council of 16 April 2014 establishing the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, amending Council Decision 2008/381/EC and repealing Decisions No 573/2007/EC and No 575/2007/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Decision 2007/435/EC, OJ L 150, 20.5.2014.

22 European Commission, EU Funds that include integration for third country nationals, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/financing/all\\_funds\\_integration\\_dg\\_home\\_info\\_day\\_12042017\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/financing/all_funds_integration_dg_home_info_day_12042017_en.pdf).

## 4. Integration policy in the Republic of Croatia

### 4.1. Brief description of the process for granting international protection

The Act on International and Temporary Protection sets forth the principles, conditions and procedure for granting international protection and temporary protection, the status, rights and obligations of applicants for international protection, asylees, foreigners under subsidiary protection and foreigners under temporary protection, as well as the conditions and the procedure for the revocation and termination of asylum, subsidiary and temporary protection.

The process of granting international protection starts with the submission of an application for international protection (Article 34). After noting the application, the official of the Ministry of the Interior as soon as possible undertakes an investigation procedure and enables the applicant to explain all the facts and circumstances of importance for the procedure of granting international protection (Article 35).

The Ministry of the Interior is the competent body for decisions on applications for international protection.

The Ministry of the Interior may decide that the application is founded, approve the application, and grant asylum or subsidiary protection; or it may decide to reject the application if the applicant does not meet the conditions to be approved asylum or subsidiary protection, if the conditions are met for exclusion of asylum or subsidiary protection, if the application is rejected as clearly unfounded, and if circumstances exist for the Ministry to render a decision in an accelerated procedure (Article 38, Paragraph 1). No appeal is permitted against the decision rendered by the Ministry of the Interior, but a claim may be brought before the Administrative Court (Article 38, Paragraph 3).

The Act on International and Temporary Protection provides for two forms of protection that may be granted to



applicants for international protection: asylum and subsidiary protection.

Asylum is granted to applicants who are outside the country of their nationality or habitual residence and have a well-founded fear of persecution owing to their race, religion, nationality, affiliation to a certain social group or political opinion, as a result of which they are unable or unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country (Article 20).

Subsidiary protection is granted to applicants who do not meet the conditions to be granted asylum if justified reasons exist to indicate that, if returned to their country of origin, they would face a real risk of suffering serious harm (death by penalty or execution, torture, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment, and serious and individual threat to the life of the civil population due to arbitrary generalised violence in situations of international or internal armed conflicts) and who are unable, or, owing to such risk, unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country (Article 21).

The status of asylee or foreigner under subsidiary protection is acquired on the day when the decision granting international protection is served (Article 64, Paragraph 1).

#### **4.2. Legislative and policy framework for the integration of persons granted international protection**

The Act on International and Temporary Protection also regulates the rights and obligations of asylees and foreigners under subsidiary protection in Croatia: the right to residence in Croatia, housing, work, healthcare, education, freedom of religion and religious education of children, free legal assistance, social welfare, family reunification, assistance for integration into society, ownership of real property pursuant to the 1951 Convention, and acquisition of Croatian citizenship pursuant to relevant regulations.

The rights of these two groups are regulated identically, with two exceptions: residence permits are issued to asylees

for a period of five years, and to foreigners under subsidiary protection for a period of three years. Also, travel documents are issued to asylees for a period of five years, pursuant to the Annex to the 1951 Convention, and foreigners under subsidiary protection may be issued with a special travel document for foreigners, pursuant to the provisions of the Foreigners Act (Article 75).

Asylees and foreigners under subsidiary protection have the right of residence in Croatia from the day when they have been served with the decision approving international protection. The residence permit serves as proof of this right (Article 65, Paragraph 1).

If the asylee or foreigner under subsidiary protection moves out of Croatia or resides continually abroad for longer than six months without previously informing the Ministry of the Interior of this fact, the decision establishing their right to residence in Croatia will be revoked (Article 65, Paragraph 3). Assistance for integration into society, as a form of integration measure that falls within the competence of the Ministry of the Interior, is one of the rights enjoyed by persons granted international protection. This assistance is provided for a period of three years at the longest and includes the preparation of an integration plan taking into account individual needs, knowledge, competences and skills, provision of assistance to asylees or foreigners under subsidiary protection in the implementation of the prepared plan, and supervision of the plan's implementation.

Furthermore, under the Act on International and Temporary Protection, the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities coordinates the work of all ministries, NGOs and other authorities participating in the integration of these categories of foreigners.

Regarding strategic documents, the Croatian Parliament adopted the Migration Policy of the Republic of Croatia for the Period 2013–2015 in February 2013 as one of the conditions for EU accession and the use of European funds in the field of migration. Even though this document is no longer in force, it provides a framework for Croatia's migration

policy, and has served as the basis for the adoption of certain strategic documents in the field of integration. The declared purpose of the Migration Policy is to ensure that migratory movements in Croatia benefit the economic and social development of the country and the society. The Migration Policy strives to promote migration fostering economic growth and progress in Croatia, and contributing to the implementation of a European migration model. The fundamental objective of the Migration Policy is to ensure that all national authorities and other stakeholders (local and regional self-government units, civil society organisations, public services) work in a timely and coordinated manner to effectively address the positive and negative effects of migratory movements. Measures are defined with respect to visa policy, foreigner status matters, the acquisition of Croatian citizenship, asylum, integration policy, irregular migration, and Croatian emigrants. One of the planned integration policy measures concerned the adoption of an action plan for the integration of foreigners.<sup>23</sup>

Based on the 2013 Migration Policy, in April, the Croatian Government established the Standing Committee for the Implementation of the Integration of Foreigners into the Croatian Society, given the importance of integration for the successful functioning of the community. For the purposes of implementation of the planned tasks and Standing Committee's reporting on the activities and potential difficulties related to the implementation of integration, a Task Force was established within the Standing Committee for the Implementation of the Integration of Foreigners in the Croatian Society. This Task Force prepared an action plan for integration as one of the planned measures from the Migration Policy.

The Croatian Government adopted the Action Plan for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection for

<sup>23</sup> The plan included all categories of foreigners, however, given the particular vulnerability of persons granted international protection and the specific nature of their situations, the measures mostly focused on the regulation of the position of these categories of migrants, and their integration.

the Period 2017–2019 in November 2017. The Action Plan was prepared in order to address the particular vulnerability of persons granted international protection and the resulting need to provide them with protection and help them overcome the difficult situation caused by the refugee and humanitarian crisis of 2015–2016. The Action Plan regulates the following integration areas: social welfare and health-care, housing, language learning and education, employment, international cooperation, intersectoral cooperation, and raising awareness of the issues relating to persons granted international protection.

Croatia is a participant in the European programme of resettlement and relocation of third country nationals or stateless persons who meet the conditions for approval of international protection, and has committed to host 1,583 persons. In 2015 and 2017, Croatian Government adopted two decisions committing to receive 250 persons under the relocation programme.<sup>24</sup> By virtue of a new decision adopted in 2019, Croatia committed to receive another 150 persons on the grounds of relocation and participation in other forms of solidarity with EU member states.

By the end of 2019, 250 Syrian nationals were relocated from Turkey, meeting the quota established by the decisions of 2015 and 2017.

According to the statistics kept by the Ministry of the Interior, 896 applications for asylum and 138 applications for subsidiary protection were approved in Croatia between 2006 and June 2022.<sup>25</sup>

#### **4.3. Evaluation of the 2017 enforcement framework for the integration of migrants**

The Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities initiated the evaluation of the enforcement

<sup>24</sup> The Decision on the Resettlement and Relocation of Third Country Nationals or Stateless Persons Eligible for the Approval of International Protection and the Decision on the Relocation of Third Country Nationals or Stateless Persons Eligible for the Approval of International Protection.

<sup>25</sup> [https://mup.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/stranci/2022/medjunarodna%20zastita%20do%2030\\_6.pdf](https://mup.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/stranci/2022/medjunarodna%20zastita%20do%2030_6.pdf)

framework for the integration of migrants in Croatia with a view to improving the framework for the integration of third country nationals, focusing on persons granted international protection.

This is a good practice example in the preparation of strategic documents and regulations in Croatia. A more comprehensive overview of the evaluation will be given below.

The goal of the evaluation of the enforcement framework for the integration of migrants in Croatia was to establish if the existing enforcement framework is likely to contribute to the integration of migrants in Croatia, with a focus on persons granted international protection, and if so, to what extent.

The targets of the evaluation were to:

- Identify the relevance of the integration framework in relation to the legislative framework at the European and national levels, and to the inclusion priorities from the viewpoint of documents and stakeholders;
- Identify the adequacy of planned resources in relation to the needs of the beneficiaries and the authorities responsible for enforcement, improve how enforcement is monitored, and identify potential obstacles in enforcement and opportunities to improve the integration framework;
- Identify the significance attributed by stakeholders to the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities in the enforcement of the integration framework and the potential for the Office to make a greater contribution to this enforcement.

Qualitative methodology was used in the evaluation. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews and discussions were held in focus groups, with a total of 67 informants from the City of Zagreb and from Sisak-Moslavina, Primorje-Gorski kotar, Split-Dalmatia, Zadar and Šibenik-Knin Counties participating in evaluation activities.

The general findings of the evaluation were as follows:

- 1) The legislative, strategic and institutional framework in

the field of integration is largely relevant in relation to the legislative framework at the international and European levels.

- 2) The integration framework addresses the stakeholders' needs only partially. The Action Plan for the Period 2017–2019 was drawn up by a relatively narrow circle of stakeholders, among whom the representatives of local and regional self-government units and public institutions at the local level were insufficiently represented, and as a result they were insufficiently informed about the rights, obligations and needs of persons granted international protection. The existing integration framework has not provided the staff and the officials of national authorities with adequate monitoring tools and tools for prompt and efficient vertical and horizontal communication. The experiences and recommendations of persons granted international protection also need to be included in the creation process for integration policies and practices. Civil society organisations are facing a number of problems in their activities, and their contribution to integration largely depends on their sustainability, i.e., ability to retain experienced, skilled and highly motivated staff and volunteers, and provide them with the conditions required for the planning, monitoring and evaluation of their work.
- 3) It is difficult to establish to what extent the planned resources (particularly financial resources) meet the needs of the beneficiaries and authorities responsible for enforcement, since there has been no systematic planning and monitoring of integration activities that would also include the monitoring of progress and results for each beneficiary and each beneficiary group. However, a new monitoring tool was developed under this project, designed for the monitoring of the implementation of the migrant integration policy framework, and communication between stakeholders.
- 4) Obstacles impeding the establishment of prerequisites for the attainment of all integration framework goals

have been identified on two levels. The first level concerns the existing institutional and coordination framework, and the second concerns the established channels of communication between the competent authorities and other stakeholders.

- 5) The significance attributed by the stakeholders to the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities in ensuring the enforcement of the integration framework does not match the Office's actual competences in relation to other competent national authorities. A greater contribution to the enforcement of the integration framework is possible in the fields of coordination of operational tasks, creation of conditions for efficient assessment, and monitoring of integration progress, with efficient coordination of social services in integration and evidence-based planning of public policy measures. This will only be possible with capacity building and widening of powers, as well as increasing of the funds allocated for the purpose.

A series of recommendations to improve the integration framework in Croatia was issued based on the evaluation findings, concerning mainly:

- 1) Promptness of exercising the rights arising from the integration framework;
- 2) Establishment of prerequisites for exercising these rights;
- 3) Coordination and communication between stakeholders and with beneficiaries (whom the integration framework applies to);
- 4) Acknowledgement of different individual needs and potentials;
- 5) Overcoming the fragmentation of the integration system;
- 6) Better use of experience and resources.

These evaluation findings were included in the drafting of the Framework for the Integration of Persons Granted

International Protection at the Local Level, which is focused on the establishment of integration measures for persons granted international protection in local and regional self-government units in Croatia.

In addition, the findings and the recommendations of this evaluation served as the basis for the creation of objectives and measures in the draft action plan for the integration of persons granted international protection for the period 2020–2022, whose adoption is in progress. Representatives of competent ministries and government offices, civil society organisations, international organisations and city authorities participated in the preparation of this draft.

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## 5. Overview of regulations governing specific integration areas in the Republic of Croatia

The rights and obligations of persons granted international protection are defined by the Act on International and Temporary Protection and include the right to residence, family reunification, housing, work, healthcare, education, freedom of religion, free legal assistance, social welfare, assistance in integration into the society, ownership of real property, and acquisition of Croatian citizenship (Articles 64–77).

Civil society organisations often provide support in the integration process.

Under an agreement with the Ministry of the Interior, a civil society organisation can implement a project aimed at the inclusion of persons granted international protection into

the Croatian society, and implement activities including:

- Draw up integration plans for persons granted international protection and their family members, taking into account their individual needs;
- Provide support and assistance in performing administrative tasks, as required, in the area of competence spanning internal affairs (registration of residence and issuance of documents), social welfare (assistance with the filing of applications for existing types of benefits and social services), housing, employment (registration of unemployment, counselling, placement), access to educational system (includes assistance in the procedure of recognition of foreign educational qualifications) and Croatian language learning, as well as access to the healthcare system (support at all healthcare levels and assistance with translation, as required) and so on.

Depending on their capacities, other civil society organisations can provide assistance and support in the process of inclusion of persons granted international protection in the Croatian society.

Special integration coordinators at the local level have been appointed in some local government units. Integration coordinators at the local level are appointed by the Director of the Office for Human Rights and National Minority Rights. A total of 18 coordinators were appointed in the following cities by the Decision on the Appointment of Integration Coordinators at the Local Level of 26 May 2020: Slavonski Brod, Duga Resa, Bjelovar, Sisak, Daruvar, Zadar, Zagreb, Lepoglava, Osijek, Karlovac, Koprivnica, Lipik, Varaždin, Zaprešić, Rijeka, Požega, Čakovec and Velika Gorica.

### 5.1. Education

Under the Act on International and Temporary Protection, asylees and foreigners under subsidiary protection have the right to attend primary, secondary and higher education under the same conditions as Croatian nationals, in

accordance with special regulations. Furthermore, asylees and foreigners under subsidiary protection can have their foreign educational qualifications recognised under the same conditions as Croatian nationals. For persons who are, due to justified reasons, unable to provide the necessary documentation proving their foreign qualifications, an assessment will be conducted of their prior learning. The decision to refuse an application for the recognition of foreign professional qualifications cannot be based exclusively on the fact that no official documents exist to prove a specific foreign professional qualification. If the person does not have sufficient financial resources available, the translation of foreign documents for the purpose of recognition of foreign educational qualifications will be provided from the state budget of the Republic of Croatia.

Furthermore, these persons exercise the right to participate in adult education programmes pursuant to the regulations governing adult education under the same conditions as Croatian nationals (Article 70).

Under Article 74, a person granted international protection is obligated to attend a course in the Croatian language, history and culture, for the purpose of integration into the Croatian society. If the person fails to fulfil this obligation, they have to reimburse the costs of the course to the Ministry of Science and Education.

Early childhood education and care in Croatia is regulated by the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care. Early childhood education and care covers education, care, healthcare, food and social welfare programmes for children from six months of age until enrolment into primary school. With the exception of the mandatory preschool programme that children are required to complete in the year before they start primary school, early childhood education and care is not compulsory.

Local self-governments are the founders of institutions that provide early childhood education and care. Depending on their financial capacities, cities, as the founders of nursery schools, may decide to lower the portion of the price of

regular early childhood education and care programmes in the city-owned nursery schools that parents or guardians of children granted international protection are required to cover, or may exempt them from this requirement altogether.

Under Articles 43, 45 and 46 of the Act on Primary and Secondary Education, persons granted international protection and their children have the right to attend primary and secondary education.

Article 43 obligates schools to provide special assistance to children who have the right to education in Croatia, but do not speak Croatian or are not proficient enough in it. The school organises preparatory and supplementary individual and group classes, where teachers work with these students directly to help them efficiently master the Croatian language and catch up on whatever knowledge they may be lacking in some school subjects. Preparatory classes are designed for students who are insufficiently proficient in Croatian, and include an intensive course in the Croatian language for a maximum duration of one school year. These classes follow a special curriculum, and the county's competent administrative authority or the competent city office decide in which school they will take place. Students who take the preparatory classes may also take regular classes at the school they are enrolled into in a reduced scope in subjects where limited proficiency in the Croatian language is not a major impediment to following the classes. Supplementary classes are organised in subjects in which they may be needed, and are attended by students in addition to the regular classes.

Subject to an approval from the Ministry of Science and Education, schools plan the number of preparatory and supplementary classes depending on actual needs.

The following regulations provide for Croatian language, history and culture learning for the purposes of participation in the Croatian educational system or inclusion in the Croatian society:

- Ordinance on the manner of implementing the

programme and tests of knowledge of applicants for asylum, asylees, foreigners under temporary protection and foreigners under subsidiary protection, for the purpose of accessing the education system of the Republic of Croatia

- Decision on the programme of Croatian language, history and culture for applicants for asylum and asylees
- Decision on the Croatian language programme for preparatory classes for primary and secondary school students who do not speak Croatian or are insufficiently proficient in it
- Decision on the Croatian language curriculum for applicants for asylum, asylees and foreigners under subsidiary protection over the age of 15 for the purpose of accessing the secondary school system and adult education system
- Ordinance on the implementation of preparatory and supplementary classes for students who do not speak Croatian or are insufficiently proficient in it and of the classes in the students' mother tongue and the culture of their country of origin
- Decision on the programme of Croatian language, history and culture for asylees and foreigners under subsidiary protection for the purpose of inclusion in the Croatian society.

Under the Higher Education and Scientific Research Act, the provision of higher education in Croatia is the responsibility of higher education institutions, which, under Article 47, include universities, faculties and art academies operating within universities, universities of applied science, and colleges of higher education. Croatian Constitution grants universities an autonomy in deciding about their structure and the performance of their services in accordance with the law. Whenever the autonomy of a university is restricted (which usually occurs by amending laws), the constitutionally guaranteed right of universities to autonomy must be respected. Persons granted international protection enrol



into universities under quotas for foreign nationals. Foreign nationals enrol into study programmes under the same conditions granted to Croatian nationals, but, subject to a decision issued by a competent national authority or higher education institution, they may be required to pay the tuition fee for the study programme in part or in full (every higher education institution may adopt a special decision exempting the person granted international protection from paying the tuition fee).

## 5.2. Employment

Under the Act on International and Temporary Protection, persons granted international protection may work in Croatia without a residence and work permit or a work registration certificate.

They also have the right to attend adult education and professional training in connection with their employment, and gain practical work experience under the same conditions as Croatian nationals (Article 68).

Asylees and foreigners under subsidiary protection in Croatia, as well as their family members, have the same rights and duties as Croatian nationals, as defined by the Labour Market Act, and may register with the Croatian Employment Service (Article 10).

Under the Act on the Recognition and Assessment of Foreign Educational Qualifications, asylees, foreigners under subsidiary protection, and foreigners under temporary protection, as well as family members of asylees, foreigners under subsidiary protection, and foreigners under temporary protection, who are lawfully residing in Croatia, and have the same rights and duties as Croatian nationals, may apply for assessment of foreign educational qualifications for the purposes of joining the labour market or continuing their education at the same or higher level. The competent authority (Education and Teacher Training Agency, Vocational Education Agency, Agency for Science and Higher Education) may not reject the application for the assessment of foreign educational qualifications

submitted by a person granted international protection on the sole grounds that the applicant is not in possession of official documentation proving their foreign educational qualifications, or official documents issued by their country of origin proving their nationality (Article 20). For persons granted international protection who are, due to justified reasons, unable to provide documentation proving their foreign educational qualifications, the agency responsible for conducting the assessment for the purpose of joining the labour market is required to perform the assessment as per the available data, and draw up an informational document on the foreign educational qualification (Article 21). For persons granted international protection who are, due to justified reasons, unable to provide documentation proving their foreign educational qualifications for the purposes of continuing their education or education period, the education institution or higher education institution will perform an assessment of prior learning in accordance with the provisions of the Act on the Croatian Qualifications Framework, the Act on Adult Education, and the Ordinance referred to in Article 15 of the Act on the Recognition and Assessment of Foreign Educational Qualifications, regulating the recognition and assessment criteria.

## 5.3. Social welfare

Under the Act on International and Temporary Protection, persons granted international protection exercise the right to social welfare (Article 73).

Under the Social Welfare Act, foreigners under subsidiary protection, asylees and their family members who are lawfully residing in Croatia are eligible for benefits and services provided by the social welfare system under the conditions defined by the Social Welfare Act and the Act on International and Temporary Protection (Article 19).

Welfare benefits comprise: guaranteed minimum allowance, housing allowance, energy allowance for vulnerable citizens, personal needs allowance, one-time allowance, allowance for funeral expenses, allowance for regular

higher education, payment of the costs of accommodation in a student dormitory, personal disability allowance, care and assistance allowance, and parent caregiver or caregiver status (Article 21).

The Social Welfare Act also defines social services that include activities designed to identify, prevent and address the problems and difficulties faced by individuals and families, and improve the quality of their life in the community (Article 70). Social services comprise: initial social welfare service; comprehensive assessment and planning service; counselling; expert assessment; psychosocial counselling; social mentorship; family mediation; psychological and social care to help prevent violent behaviour; psychosocial support; early development support; assistance for the purposes of inclusion in regular education programmes; home attendance services; day care, organised housing (Article 71).

Persons granted international protection may benefit from child care allowance under the Child Care Allowance Act, as well as from the rights defined by the Maternity and Parental Benefits Act. The rights applied to persons granted international protection are also applied to their family members lawfully residing in Croatia.

Under the Social Welfare Act, Departments of Social Services ceased to operate on 31 December 2022, and their functions were taken over by the Croatian Institute of Social Welfare as of 1 January 2023.

#### 5.4. Healthcare

Persons granted international protection are entitled to receive healthcare in Croatia under the Act on Compulsory Health Insurance and Health Care of Foreigners in the Republic of Croatia.

Under Article 21, an asylee, a foreigner under subsidiary protection, a foreigner under temporary protection, and a foreigner who is a family member of an asylee or foreigner under subsidiary protection or foreigner under temporary protection is entitled to the same scope of healthcare that

is accorded to persons insured under compulsory health insurance, which is financed from the state budget.

Persons exercise the right to receive healthcare, based on a valid document issued by the Ministry of the Interior, at healthcare institutions and at private healthcare practitioners in the public healthcare service network in accordance with the general acts issued by the Croatian Health Insurance Fund. The competent police department or police station is required to inform the Ministry of Health that a person has been granted asylum, subsidiary protection or temporary protection within eight days at the latest of the date when the decision to approve asylum, subsidiary protection or temporary protection becomes enforceable.

Healthcare expenses are charged to the Croatian state budget from the position of the Ministry of Health.

Since persons granted international protection are not insured by the Croatian Health Insurance Fund, a by-law needs to be adopted to provide these persons with access to healthcare. The conditions for the adoption of such a by-law were established by adopting the Act Amending and Supplementing the Act on Compulsory Health Insurance and Health Care of Foreigners in the Republic of Croatia. This by-law, however, has not yet been adopted.

Healthcare professionals use the Croatian Central Health Information System (CEZIH) to access information about the status of persons granted international protection.

#### 5.5. Housing

Under the Act on International and Temporary Protection, a person granted international protection is entitled to housing for a maximum of two years after the date when they were served with the decision granting them international protection, if they do not possess financial resources or assets they could use to participate in covering their housing expenses (Article 67).

The procedure for recognising the right to housing is initiated by submitting a request to the competent Department of Social Services. If the Department of Social Services



establishes that the asylee or foreigner under subsidiary protection possesses financial resources or assets they could use to participate in covering their housing expenses, the decision on recognising this person's right to housing will state that the asylee or foreigner under subsidiary protection will participate in covering their housing expenses.

The right of asylees and foreigners under subsidiary protection to housing ends in the following cases provided by the Act: upon the expiry of two years; upon personal request; if the person refuses the housing offered without a justified reason; if the person fails to reside at the registered address for an uninterrupted period longer than 30 days without a justified reason; if it is established that the person does not fulfil the conditions required to be recognised the right to housing; if it is established that the person fails to take due and responsible care of the housing provided; if it is established that the person is using the housing provided for purposes other than those designated.

Pursuant to the decision recognising the person's right to housing, the Central State Office for Reconstruction and Provision of Housing is required to provide housing to persons granted international protection in housing units that are the property of the Republic of Croatia or housing units that the Office has the use of under lease agreements entered into with third parties (Article 67.a, Paragraph 1).

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## 6. The methodology for preparing the Protocol of Actions for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection and the Supporting Handbook of Good Practice Examples

Given the objective and the purpose of the Protocol and the Supporting Handbook of Good Practice Examples, the methodology that was used in their preparation was based on the principles of participation and partnership. The participatory process ensured that the views of local authorities, public services and civil society organisations were taken into account. This resulted in increased transparency and responsibility in making decisions of public significance, while respecting the principle of subsidiarity, in line with the principle of multilevel governance.

The protocol was prepared in several interconnected phases.

### 6.1. Collection of information from the participants of seminars delivered under the INCLuDE project

In the first phase, information, ideas and suggestions were collected from the participants of seminars delivered under the INCLuDE project. Seminar participants included public servants (representatives of county coordinations for human rights and integration coordinators at the local level, psychologists, social workers and social pedagogues in early childhood education and care and primary education,

healthcare organisations and departments of social services, teachers in early childhood education and care and primary education, Croatian Employment Service staff, primary healthcare providers and family and general practitioners, outpatient clinic staff) and representatives of civil society organisations from the local self-government units.

The roadmap of actions in the integration of persons granted international protection at the local level with respect to the initial reception and the mid- and long-term integration into the local community was discussed with the participants at the seminar held within the second module, focused on developing and strengthening intersectoral cooperation in local self-government units.

The following was taken into consideration: social circumstances/environment to account for when planning the integration of persons granted international protection at the local level; strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in our local government units with regard to the possible arrival of persons granted international protection in larger numbers; reasons for the adoption of a decision on the relocation of persons granted international protection to specific local government units; circumstances at the level of individual/person granted international protection (whether it is an individual or a family; in the latter case, the number and age of children, care, education, healthcare); health (the need for healthcare and specialist care); ability to work and qualifications.

Participants also discussed the capacities of local government units in the following areas:

- Housing – availability of accessible, habitable and furnished state-owned housing units at the disposal of the Central State Office for Reconstruction and Provision of Housing, housing units of appropriate characteristics that are available for lease in the free market, taking into account the amount of the monthly rent;
- Work and employment – unemployment rate in local government units, employer demand for workers with specific qualifications and opportunities for the

employment of persons granted international protection in these jobs, shortage occupations in the local government units; reskilling opportunities for persons granted international protection;

- Availability of public services – number and availability of schools capable of accepting students and organising preparatory classes, availability of institutions for early childhood education and care, availability of healthcare institutions, availability of social services, transport connections in the local and/or regional government unit, opportunities for the organisation of Croatian language courses in the local government unit;
- Local community capacities – existence of civil society organisations, opportunities for the inclusion of representatives of religious communities, number of residents in the local government unit, possibility of housing several persons granted international protection in the same local community (to prevent the dissipation of integration resources and make integration easier for recipients), the experience of the local community in accommodating refugees and displaced persons, and working with marginalised groups.

With respect to the initial receipt of persons granted international protection, participants discussed the steps that need to be taken before the persons arrive in the local community (the relationship between the central and city government, timely communication with authorities and public institutions at the local level, housing, preparation of public service staff, inclusion of civil society organisations, coordination at the local level) and after their arrival in the local community (providing persons granted international protection with information about accessing various services, the obligation to provide services, mediation and escort to persons during their visits to public services, the specific characteristics of the relocated persons, awareness-raising among the local residents).

With respect to the mid- and long-term integration of

persons granted international protection, the participants discussed the following steps: ensuring financial self-sustainability/labour market integration of persons granted international protection at the local level; training of persons granted international protection for shortage occupations depending on their qualifications and competences; development of social entrepreneurship and self-employment programmes; employment and general social inclusion of women granted international protection; opportunities for inclusion in higher education levels; prevention of social exclusion and possible discrimination (inclusion of persons granted international protection in the local community, prevention of poverty, prevention of possible discrimination of persons granted international protection, building of competences of local officials and professionals working for local public services, prevention of ‘ghettoization’), preventive healthcare activities (health literacy, women’s health and women’s healthcare).

Discussions in smaller groups at the seminars held under the second module, focusing on developing and strengthening intersectoral cooperation in local self-government units, provided conclusions about the steps that the participants felt were needed for successful integration at the local level.

## 6.2. Preparation of the draft Protocol of Actions for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection

In addition to the conclusions from the seminar, relevant experts used the following sources in preparing the draft protocol:

- Croatian regulations and policy documents (Act on International and Temporary Protection, Action Plan for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection for the Period 2017–2019, Action Plan of the City of Zagreb for the Integration of Applicants for International Protection and Persons Granted International Protection for 2022, Framework for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection

- on the Local Level); EU policy and strategy documents (Common Basic Principles on Integration of 2004, A Common Agenda for Integration — Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union of 2005, European Agenda for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals of 2011, EU Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals of 2016, New Pact on Migration and Asylum, Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion for 2021–2027); and international conventions and interpretations by relevant international organisations (1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, UNHCR’s conclusions and opinions)
- Available research papers published in Croatian and international journals
- Documents issued by relevant international and regional organisations (UN, Council of Europe, OECD, IOM etc)
- Studies of good comparative practices (obtained through networks such as EWSI – European Web Site on Integration, IRH – Integration in Croatia, etc).
- In this preparatory phase, relevant experts also consulted the facilitators hired as leading key experts to facilitate trainings in specific areas (education, healthcare, social welfare, employment, cooperation with civil society organisations) under the INCLUDE project.

## 6.3. Consultations with the Task Force responsible for the preparation of the Protocol of Actions for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection and the preparation of the final version

The Task Force responsible for the preparation of the Protocol of Actions for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection (hereinafter: Task Force) was established in the third phase by virtue of the decision adopted by the Standing Committee for the Implementation of the Integration of Foreigners in the Croatian Society at its third meeting, held on 10 June 2022. Danijela Gaube of the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities was appointed as the Head of the



### 7.1. Actions prior to the relocation of persons granted international protection to specific cities

- 1) After the applicant is served with the decision granting them international protection, the Ministry of the Interior is required to issue the following documents in the shortest possible timeframe: the Ministry of the Interior's certificate of the person's status in Croatia, the certificate of registered residence in Croatia, and an identity document (residence permit). If the asylee or foreign national under subsidiary protection was not assigned a personal identification number (OIB) while the person had the status of applicant for international protection, they will also be served with a certificate of their OIB. Ministry of the Interior informs the competent national authorities (ministries of education and health) that the person was granted international protection. During the process of approving their status, the Ministry of the Interior informs persons granted international protection about their integration rights and ways to exercise these rights.
- 2) An individual integration plan is prepared for the person/family granted international protection and adopted by the Ministry of the Interior or the civil society organisation with whom the Ministry has entered into an agreement on the provision of integration support services. The individual plan may include the following: (a) description of the person's situation in life (basic social history); (b) assessment of their needs with respect to their rights and services in the social welfare system, material status, housing status, medical condition of the person and their family members, work activation (training, reskilling, employment), education and language learning, family relations; (c) short-term and long-term integration targets; (d) activity plan and coordination of services required to achieve the targets with respect to their material status, housing conditions, medical condition of the person and their family members, work activation/employment, education and lan-

- guage learning, family dynamics and relations, inclusion in integration programmes in the community; (e) model for tracking and evaluating achievements. Upon being granted their status, the person gives the Ministry of the Interior their consent to work with a civil society organisation with which the Ministry entered into an agreement on providing integration support.
- 3) If the person granted international protection exercises their right to housing and submits an application to this effect, provided that the person meets the legal requirements, the Department of Social Services issues a decision on the person's right to housing.
  - 4) In cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior, the Central State Office for Reconstruction and Provision of Housing issues a decision on the choice of local self-government units that the persons granted international protection will be relocated to on the basis of integration plans and the assessment provided by the Department of Social Services, if applicable; the available state-owned housing units at the Office's disposal; and the administrative capacities of the local authorities in question.
  - 5) Central State Office for Reconstruction and Provision of Housing informs the local self-government units where the persons granted international protection will be relocated to of this fact (within an appropriate timeframe or as soon as possible).
  - 6) If persons granted international protection do not exercise the right to housing under the Act on International and Temporary Protection, choosing instead to find their own housing in a certain city, they have to make their own arrangements for accessing integration rights and services.
  - 7) After the Ministry of the Interior has informed the competent central authorities (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Science and Education) that persons have been granted international protection status, the competent central authorities inform the local authorities and institu-

tions (schools, nursery schools, outpatient clinics) of the fact as soon as possible.

- 8) Upon the receipt of the written notice of relocation from the Central State Office for Reconstruction and Provision of Housing, the Ministry of the Interior informs the civil society organisation that the Ministry has entered into an agreement with for the provision of integration support to persons granted international protection, or the person(s) granted international protection (if there are no current agreements with a civil society organisation), about the local self-government unit they will be relocated to, and the housing unit that has been assigned to the person/family. After the person/family has moved into the housing unit, the Office submits a copy of the signed lease agreement to the Ministry of the Interior, the Department of Social Services, and the local self-government unit.
- 9) At the beginning of each month (by the 10th), the Ministry of the Interior submits to the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities the data about the number of international protections granted (asylums and subsidiary protections), structured by age and gender, for the previous month.
- 10) The Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities regularly monitors and evaluates the implementation of measures for the integration of persons granted international protection that have been provided by the Action Plan.

## **7.2. Preparatory actions for the reception and integration of persons granted international protection at city level**

- 1) City authorities choose an appropriate instrument for coordinating and monitoring the integration of persons granted international protection at the local level. In large cities, in addition to the already appointed integration coordinator at the local level, an intersectoral task force can be appointed, and a liaison officer designated

for individual administrative districts.

- 2) City authorities/integration coordinator at the local level map all stakeholders at the local level who are involved in integration (in education, employment, healthcare, social welfare, including civil society organisations and religious communities).
- 3) City authorities/integration coordinator at the local level choose an appropriate method of communication to inform local stakeholders who are involved in integration activities for persons granted international protection (regular meetings, email etc).
- 4) City authorities/integration coordinator at the local level analyse and align the general city documents concerning the integration of persons granted international protection, including both the documents regulated by the Act on International and Temporary Protection, and documents defining above-standard rights (e.g., Decision on Social Welfare).
- 5) The city authorities plan the funds for the implementation of additional integration activities in the local community in the local budget on an annual level by announcing public calls for funding or in some other way (preferably at the local level) by civil society organisations (mediation and escort when exercising rights to healthcare, employment, social welfare, education, additional Croatian language learning, social mentorship, peer support and learning, arrangements for quality leisure time activities).
- 6) City authorities/integration coordinator at the local level inform the local self-government/city district authorities in the parts of the city where the persons granted international protection will be housed, and the tenant representatives in apartment buildings where persons granted international protection will be housed.
- 7) City authorities/integration coordinator at the local level design common integration activities in cooperation with regional self-government units (counties).
- 8) City authorities/integration coordinator at the local level



el encourage intermunicipal cooperation in providing local integration measures.

- 9) City authorities/integration coordinator at the local level involve representatives of religious communities (Catholic, Islamic and others) in the provision of individual integration support to persons granted international protection, but also in the provision of assistance that is required to overcome the barriers between the majority population and the members of their communities on the one hand, and persons granted international protection on the other.
- 10) City authorities/integration coordinator at the local level plan integration activities in culture and sports to foster closer bonds and develop a sense of belonging to the local community (e.g., definition of special programme areas within public calls and tenders for the financing of civil society organisations).
- 11) City authorities/integration coordinator at the local level communicate with the local media, informing them about the process of integration of persons granted international protection.
- 12) City authorities/integration coordinator at the local level closely cooperate with the regional development agency by providing professional assistance in preparing and implementing development projects of interest for the development of the city where persons granted international protection are housed, especially projects co-financed by EU funds (especially AMIF, ESF+, ERDF).
- 13) City authorities/integration coordinator at the local level inform the Ministry of the Interior about the inclusion of persons granted international protection in educational institutions.

### 7.3. Education

#### Croatian language learning for adults

- 1) Ministry of Science and Education ensures a continual delivery of Croatian language, history and culture learn-

ing programmes for persons granted international protection.

- 2) Ministry of Science and Education ensures that persons granted international protection attend language courses as soon as they are settled in a city.
- 3) City authorities should consider ensuring/financing additional Croatian language learning courses in educational institutions at city level or through forms of informal learning delivered by civil society organisations, particularly if the official course is not available immediately or in a reasonable time.
- 4) Civil society organisations may organise/ensure funding for various forms of additional Croatian language learning in accordance with their capacities and abilities.

#### Preschool education

- 1) In cooperation with city-founded nursery schools, the competent administrative city authority for education disseminates detailed information about the procedure for enrolling children – persons granted international protection.
- 2) If nursery schools have any available spots, they should allow the child to enrol anytime during the school year, in accordance with enrolment rules.
- 3) The principal of the nursery school informs the school’s administrative and educator councils that children – persons granted international protection have enrolled into and will start to attend the nursery school.
- 4) When enrolling a child with developmental disabilities, they have to request medical documentation from the child’s parent/guardian, and if they do not have it, refer the child to an evaluation or assessment, at the proposal of a primary healthcare provider, to determine the type and degree of the child’s developmental disabilities and the adequate conditions that are required for the care, education and protection of children with developmental disabilities at the nursery school.
- 5) Children with developmental disabilities can be en-

rolled into regular early childhood education and care programmes that are adapted to the developmental needs of the children and their abilities and competences, or early childhood education and care programmes for children with developmental disabilities that are organised under special conditions and special curricula.

- 6) Depending on their financial capacities, city authorities may decide to lower the portion of the price of regular early childhood education and care programmes that parents or guardians of children granted international protection are required to cover, or may exempt the parents from this requirement altogether, at the city-owned nursery schools. The same applies to after-school care for primary school children.

#### **Preparatory Croatian language classes**

- 1) The founder may choose one primary school where the preparatory Croatian language classes will be held for the entire city/county area.
- 2) Based on an opinion provided by the school's committee of experts, the competent administrative authority in the county / city office responsible for education / City Office for Education, Sport and Youth of the City of Zagreb adopts the decision on the inclusion of students in preparatory Croatian language classes. Having obtained the consent of the competent administrative authority in the county / city office responsible for education / City Office for Education, Sport and Youth of the City of Zagreb, students may attend preparatory Croatian language courses at the secondary school they are enrolled into.
- 3) The school that will deliver preparatory Croatian language classes is required to obtain an approval from the Ministry of Education and Science for the delivery of preparatory Croatian language classes (70 school periods). The school is required to deliver a list of students, including required information, and a decision on the delivery of preparatory Croatian language courses.

- 4) The school develops an individualized programme for the student, taking into account the student's individual needs (prior learning, developmental age, cultural and social environment that the student came from and arrived in). Preparatory Croatian language classes are delivered based on such an individualized plan.
- 5) The school continually monitors the student's progress and achievements, and adapts and modifies the learning and teaching methods and strategies as may be required.
- 6) Upon the completion of the preparatory Croatian language classes, the school's committee of experts holds a written and oral examination to test the student's knowledge of the Croatian language, and decides if the student should attend the preparatory Croatian language learning classes again.
- 7) If the committee finds that the student has not met the conditions required for inclusion in the regular education system, the competent administrative authority in the county / city office responsible for education / City Office for Education, Sport and Youth of the City of Zagreb issues the decision that the student will take the preparatory Croatian language classes again, or take supplementary Croatian language classes (35-70 periods a year).
- 8) Students who take the preparatory Croatian language classes may also take regular classes at the school they are enrolled into in a reduced scope in subjects where limited proficiency in the Croatian language is not a major impediment to following the classes. Such students are monitored, and records are kept about their socialization and language learning. They are not graded.
- 9) If a student changes the primary or secondary school they attend while taking the preparatory Croatian language classes, the school that the student is leaving sends a notice to the new school that the student is enrolling into, informing the new school about the student's attendance of preparatory Croatian language



classes, or the student's certificate of completion of the preparatory Croatian language classes, specifying the number of periods that the student has attended.

- 10) If a student is attending regular classes in a reduced scope, at the end of the school year, the subjects that the students attended will be labelled 'extended education' in the electronic student records (e-Matica). When such a student enrolls into the next school year, this will not be considered as enrolment into the same grade for a second time.
- 11) Having completed the preparatory Croatian language classes, students start to attend regular classes, and are entitled to attend supplementary Croatian language classes, and supplementary classes in other subjects as may be required.

#### **Attendance of regular classes in the primary education system**

- 1) Pursuant to the notice delivered by the city authorities, informing them about the settlement of persons granted international protection in a specific city, the competent county administrative authority / city office responsible for education / City Office for Education, Sport and Youth of the City of Zagreb issues the decision on the school that will deliver the preparatory Croatian language classes, and may also define the school that the student will be enrolled into, in cooperation with the city authorities / integration coordinator at the local level.
- 2) Students are usually enrolled into primary schools that they are assigned to depending on their area of residence.
- 3) The factors to consider when choosing the primary school to enrol the students into include the distance between the school and the student's place of residence, and the school's capacity to provide support for the integration into the education system.
- 4) The competent county administrative authority / city

office responsible for education / City Office for Education, Sport and Youth of the City of Zagreb reviews the documentation about the student's prior learning or the notarized statement made in case that the student has no documentation about prior learning, and decides which school the student will be enrolled into.

- 5) The student provides the school's administration with the documentation about their prior learning or, lacking such documentation, the notarized statement referred to above. The statement is made by parents or guardians on the students' behalf.
- 6) Depending on the results of the students' enrolment examination, the student is placed into a grade, or enrolled into a grade as a regular student.
- 7) Schools may request an opinion from the Education and Teacher Training Agency to aid with the procedure of recognition of foreign qualifications for the purpose of continuing primary education.
- 8) The school is required to draw up an internal protocol of actions (roadmap) and keep records of the students' progress. At the end of the school year, or in shorter time intervals, as may be required, the school informs the city authorities / integration coordinator at the local level about the student's progress in integration.
- 9) The Principal informs the School Committee, the Teachers' Council, the Parents' Council, and the Students' Council that a student granted international protection was enrolled into the school and will start attending classes.
- 10) Students who have completed preparatory Croatian language classes and who are attending regular classes are monitored and graded like all other students.
  - 1.1) When necessary, the school organises supplementary classes for students in need of learning assistance.
  - 1.2) The school establishes cooperation with a local civil society organisation working on the integration of persons granted international protection.
  - 1.3) For students with developmental disabilities who have

been granted international protection and who have been enrolled into primary school, the school's committee of experts initiates the procedure to establish the student's mental and physical condition in order for the student to exercise their right to an appropriate programme and form of education, and appropriate assistance in education. Until the decision on an appropriate education programme is made, the school is required to provide the student with the necessary professional support and didactic and pedagogic adaptation, and include the student in preparatory Croatian language classes.

- 1.4) For students with major developmental disabilities who have been granted international protection, and who require a teaching assistant or a specialist communication intermediary, the school requests an assistant or intermediary from its founder.
- 1.5) Primary education for students aged 14 or above who have not completed primary education will be organised in accordance with the adult education programme.
- 1.6) City/county authorities define scholarship conditions for students.

#### **Attendance of regular classes in the secondary education system**

- 1) Competent county office for education / City Office for Education, Sport and Youth of the City of Zagreb reviews the documentation about the student's prior learning or the notarized statement made in case that the student has no documentation about prior learning.
- 2) Based on the above, the competent county office for education / City Office for Education, Sport and Youth of the City of Zagreb makes the decision to refer the student to a certain secondary school, consulting the Croatian Employment Service's occupational guidance department, if required.
- 3) The choice of the school depends on the education programme the student had previously attended in their country of origin, and if such a programme does not ex-

ist in Croatia's education system, the student has the right to continue their education in the closest equivalent programme.

- 4) Schools may request an opinion from the Education and Teacher Training Agency to aid with the procedure of recognition of foreign qualifications for the purpose of continuing secondary education.
- 5) The school enrolls the student based on the decision made by the Teachers' Council.
- 6) The school draws up an internal protocol of actions (roadmap) and keeps records of the students' progress.
- 7) The Principal informs the School Committee, the Teachers' Council, the Parents' Council, and the Students' Council that a student granted international protection was enrolled into the school and will start attending classes.
- 8) Students who have completed preparatory Croatian language classes and who are attending regular classes are monitored and graded like all other students.
- 9) When necessary, the school organises supplementary classes for students in need of learning assistance.
- 1.0) The school establishes cooperation with a local civil society organisation working on the integration of persons granted international protection.
- 1.1) For students with developmental disabilities who have been granted international protection and who have been enrolled into a secondary school, the secondary school's Teachers' Council initiates the procedure to establish the student's mental and physical condition in order for the student to exercise their right to an appropriate programme and form of education, and appropriate assistance in education. Until the decision on an appropriate education programme is made, the school is required to provide the student with the necessary professional support and didactic and pedagogic adaptation, and include the student in preparatory Croatian language classes.
- 1.2) For students with major developmental disabilities who

have been granted international protection, and who require a teaching assistant or a specialist communication intermediary, the school requests an assistant or intermediary from its founder.

- 13) City/county authorities define scholarship conditions for students.

### **Participation in the higher education system**

- 1) Enrolment takes place in the National Information System of Applications to Higher Education Institutions <https://www.postani-student.hr/>.
- 2) All information on applying for enrolment and enrolling into higher education institutions is available at <https://www.studij.hr/sve-o-prijavama>. Information for persons who completed their secondary education abroad and the instructions for the recognition of foreign secondary school qualifications are available under the menu: I graduated from secondary school abroad / Asylees and persons under subsidiary protection.
- 3) In cooperation with higher education institutions, the Ministry of Education and Science publishes detailed information about the procedure for enrolment and the recognition of earlier qualifications for persons granted international protection. The Ministry of Education and Science regularly exchanges information with higher education institutions about the exercise of the right to higher education by persons granted international protection.
- 4) If a person granted international protection is enrolled into a higher education institution, a contact person is designated to provide this person with support in the course of their studies.
- 5) Full-time students enjoy standard student rights: subsidised housing, subsidised meals, transport for students with disabilities, state scholarship, and employment through student centres.
- 6) The higher education institution releases information about scholarship options.

- 7) Universities delivering preparatory Croatian language courses will offer enrolment into the existing language learning programmes. Universities not delivering preparatory Croatian language courses that persons granted international protection have enrolled into may organise preparatory Croatian language courses.
- 8) If persons granted international protection enrol into a higher education institution, a peer advisory system is to be introduced in cooperation with the student associations to have senior year students provide advice as an additional form of support in course of their studies.
- 9) City/county authorities define scholarship conditions for students.

## **7.4. Employment**

### **Integration into the labour market**

- 1) The single authority responsible for the examination of capacity to work undertakes an objective evaluation to determine the capacity to work of persons granted international protection who have declared that they are incapacitated for work. Applications for an evaluation of the capacity to work are submitted to the Croatian Pension Insurance Fund.
- 2) The person granted international protection registers with the Croatian Employment Service, by themselves or with the support of a civil society organisation, depending on their place of residence and address. The person can apply for registration with the Croatian Employment Service by email or in person, by visiting the closest Croatian Employment Service office, depending on their place of residence. Personal identification number (OIB) is required for registration. Following their registration in the register of unemployed persons, each person is assigned a counsellor to guide them and provide support throughout the job search procedure. The scope and pace of this support is agreed between the person and their counsellor.
- 3) Following their registration in the register, the regional

office of the Croatian Employment Service assigns an employment counsellor who is responsible for persons granted international protection. The first consultation is scheduled within 15 days of the person's registration in the register of unemployed persons.

- 4) At the individual consultation session, the assigned employment counsellor interviews the unemployed person, and they together draw up a professional plan defining the activities and obligations of the person granted international protection. The professional plan is drawn up with a view to the qualifications of the person granted international protection, their previous work experience, and the needs of the labour market. Based on the interview and the consultation, the employment counsellor draws up an employment profile and job search plan, and keeps track of the person's progress in materializing the plan.
- 5) If there is no information on the profession, occupation and/or work skills and competences of the person granted international protection, the employment counsellor orders additional procedures to evaluate the work potential and skills of the person granted international protection, with a translator in attendance if required. The employment counsellor will refer persons who have valid documentation proving their education level to the competent authority for the recognition of qualifications (Education and Teacher Training Agency, Vocational Education Agency, Agency for Science and Higher Education, competent chamber).
- 6) Depending on the professional profile of the person granted international protection, the employment counsellor informs the person about the opportunities for participation in active employment policy measures and the types of measures available to them, depending on the target group they belong to. The employment counsellor also informs the person about self-employment options and gives them information about the opportunities to start their own business, receive co-financ-

ing for their entrepreneurial idea, and get the support in preparing a business plan to ensure the materialization of their entrepreneurial idea, with a translator in attendance if required.

- 7) The employment counsellor holds individual consultations with the unemployed person granted international protection as set out in the professional plan, with a translator in attendance if required.
- 8) If a larger number of persons granted international protection arrives at a regional office of the Croatian Employment Service, the office organises a collective information session about active employment policies, the needs of the employers in the labour market, inclusion in education activities, and seasonal employment opportunities.
- 9) As required, the regional office of the Croatian Employment Service organises workshops aimed at the development of career management skills, specially adapted for persons granted international protection (especially workshops where they learn how to compose job applications and resumes, prepare for job interviews, and learn about the self-assessment of their professional capacities).
- 10) As required, the employment counsellor organises career guidance for persons granted international protection to help them identify their potentials, interests and competences, and to help them make decisions on their future education and employment.
  - 11) The regional office of the Croatian Employment Service provides the translation of the application for unemployment benefit and registration form to several languages.
  - 12) Depending on their capacities, civil society organisations can provide translation services for persons granted international protection while they exercise their employment rights.
  - 13) The civil society organisation that has an agreement with the Ministry of the Interior to provide assistance

in the integration of persons granted international protection provides the services of mediation to persons granted international protection and accompanies them to appointments to help them overcome language and cultural barriers while they exercise their employment rights.

- 14) The head of the regional office of the Croatian Employment Service is required to inform all staff members about the protocol of actions (roadmap).
- 15) The head of the regional office of the Croatian Employment Service is required to arrange training for professional staff in the integration of persons granted international protection, and in the cultural specificities of their countries of origin.
- 16) The head of the regional office of the Croatian Employment Service is required to appoint a coordinator for persons granted international protection at the Service's regional offices in areas where the persons granted international protection reside.
- 17) Croatian Employment Service is required to establish contact and cooperation with the civil society organisation that provides integration assistance to persons granted international protection under an agreement with the Ministry of the Interior, or with other organisations.

### **Recognition and evaluation of foreign educational and professional qualifications and enrolment into adult education programmes**

- 1) In addition to the application for the evaluation of foreign educational qualifications for the purposes of accessing the labour market in professions not included in the list of regulated professions in Croatia, persons granted international protection who have the required documents have to submit: an original or certified copy of a public document proving their foreign educational qualification, with a certified translation into Croatian or English; an original or certified copy of a supple-

mentary document on their studies or a supplementary document accompanying their certificate in English, if available, with a certified translation into Croatian or English; a copy of a travel document or other appropriate document proving the identity of the holder of the foreign educational qualification.

- 2) The application for the evaluation of foreign educational qualifications for the purposes of accessing the labour market is submitted to the Education and Teacher Training Agency for foreign educational qualifications of completion of primary and secondary education in general, grammar school and art programmes; to the Vocational Education and Adult Learning Agency for foreign educational qualifications of completion of secondary education in vocational programmes and of completion of programmes at post-secondary school level other than higher education; and to the Agency for Science and Higher Education for foreign educational qualifications of completion of higher education.
- 3) When it completes the evaluation procedure, the competent agency issues an opinion on the level, scope, profile and quality of the foreign educational qualification within 45 days of receiving the application for evaluation at the latest.
- 4) Based on the opinion on the evaluation of their foreign higher education qualification issued by competent agencies, the person granted international protection can be employed in a position that is not included in the list of regulated professions in Croatia.
- 5) If the person granted international protection is unable to deliver the required documentation, the competent agency for the evaluation for the purposes of accessing the labour market will draw up an information document containing the information on the institution of education or higher education issuing the qualification, and information on the profile, level and assessment of the scope of qualification.
- 6) In regulated professions, persons granted international

protection are employed pursuant to a decision on the recognition of their foreign professional qualifications issued by the competent authority for the profession (competent professional organisations, state administration authorities that have competence over certain regulated professions, or other competent authorities or organisations authorized by relevant regulations to perform procedures and establish conditions for the recognition of foreign professional qualifications, as well as the competent authorities of other member states).

- 7) Persons granted international protection may participate in adult education programmes in order to gain the competences required for work and employment. Funds have been allocated in the Croatian state budget for the inclusion of persons granted international protection in primary education programmes and for the training of these persons for simpler jobs.
- 8) In order for adult persons granted international protection to participate in other education programmes, their employment counsellor / civil society organisation is required to check if funds have been allocated for this purpose in the state budget and the budgets of local and regional self-government units, or if funding is available from employers or other sources.
- 9) If an adult education programme is financed by public funds, the person granted international protection who attends such a programme is not under obligation to cover education costs.
- 10) The employment counsellor / civil society organisation is required to examine if there is a possibility to finance or co-finance the costs of transport and equipment needed for the participation in education programmes for persons attending adult education programmes.
- 11) Persons granted international protection are exempted from paying the fees for the costs of procedures of evaluation of their foreign educational qualification for the purposes of accessing the labour market, and the recognition of foreign educational qualifications and the du-

ration of their education for the purposes of continuing their education.

- 12) Persons granted international protection may ask the Ministry of Science and Education to cover the costs of translation of the documents required for the evaluation and recognition of foreign educational qualifications.

## 7.5. Social welfare

- 1) The competent Department of Social Services issues the decision on housing depending on the place of residence of the person granted international protection.
- 2) A qualified employee of the Department of Social Services evaluates the needs of the persons granted international protection based on an interview (identification of difficulties, problems and challenges, first contact with beneficiary, collection and evaluation of data).
- 3) A qualified employee of the Department of Social Services systematically plans social services and rights required by the person granted international protection.
- 4) A qualified employee of the Department of Social Services informs the person granted international protection about social welfare benefits and services available to them, and the conditions that must be fulfilled to gain access to these benefits and services.
- 5) With the help of a translator, a qualified employee of the Department of Social Services informs persons granted international protection about their social welfare rights (the initial social service).
- 6) In cooperation with the beneficiary, a qualified employee of the Department of Social Services defines what is necessary to help the individual or family overcome their difficulties, and develop their personal potentials and a responsible relationship with themselves, their family and the society (consulting and assistance service).
- 7) A qualified employee of the Department of Social Services issues a decision regarding access to benefits in the social welfare system depending on the needs of the per-



- son granted international protection (guaranteed minimum allowance, one-time allowance, education-related allowances, personal disability allowance, care and assistance allowance, parent caregiver or caregiver status).
- 8) The city provides the benefits in the social welfare system pursuant to the Social Welfare Act (housing allowance) and may provide additional benefits as well (family packages, right to financial assistance for the beneficiaries of the care and assistance allowance and the beneficiaries of the personal disability allowance, right to financial assistance for persons who have been recognised as having parent caregiver or caregiver status, the right to temporary housing, the right to use soup kitchen services).
  - 9) A qualified employee of the Department of Social Services informs the person granted international protection about their options for accessing services in the social welfare system (initial social service, comprehensive assessment and planning service, counselling, professional assessment, psychological and social counselling, social mentorship, family mediation, psychological and social care to help prevent violent behaviour, psychological and social support, early developmental support, help with enrolment in education and regular education programmes, home attendance services, day care, organised housing and accommodation).
  - 10) A qualified employee of the Department of Social Services informs the person granted international protection about their options for exercising their right to child care allowance. Under the conditions stipulated by law, to exercise this right, the person files an application for child care allowance to the regional office of the Croatian Pension Insurance Fund. A qualified employee of the Department of Social Services informs the person granted international protection about their options for exercising their right to maternal and parental benefits. Provided that they are employed, these persons are not subject to the conditions of Croatian nationality and

- the length of their temporary or permanent residence in Croatia. Under the conditions stipulated by law, to exercise this right, the person files an application to the regional office of the Croatian Pension Insurance Fund.
- 1.1) A qualified employee of the Department of Social Services informs the person granted international protection about their options for exercising their right to benefits in kind (family packages, food banks/social supermarkets).
  - 1.2) A qualified employee of the Department of Social Services informs the person granted international protection about their options for exercising their right to use soup kitchen services.
  - 1.3) The director of the Department of Social Services appoints a coordinator for persons granted international protection at every Department of Social Services and every office of the Croatian Institute of Social Welfare. The director shares the contact information of the appointed coordinator for persons granted international protection at the competent Department of Social Services or office of the Croatian Institute of Social Welfare with the city authorities / integration coordinator at the local level.
  - 1.4) A qualified employee of the Department of Social Services reaches out to and establishes cooperation with the civil society organisation that provides integration assistance to persons granted international protection under an agreement with the Ministry of the Interior.
  - 1.5) Working together with the coordinator, a qualified employee of the Department of Social Services provides assistance to the person granted international protection who has not been given access to integration support provided by the civil society organisation that has an agreement with the Ministry of the Interior for the provision of integration assistance to persons granted international protection.
  - 1.6) A qualified employee of the Department of Social Services continually monitors the delivery of social welfare

benefits and services, and works with the beneficiary to plan any changes that may be required.

- 17) The director of the Department of Social Services is responsible for informing all qualified employees of the Department about the protocol of actions (roadmap) for dealing with persons granted international protection.
- 18) The director of the Department of Social Services is required to arrange training for qualified employees in matters related to the integration of persons granted international protection, and in the cultural specificities of their countries of origin.

### 7.6. Healthcare

- 1) The Ministry of the Interior informs the Ministry of Health that a person has been granted international protection within eight days at the latest of the decision granting international protection entering into force.
- 2) The Ministry of Health provides healthcare institutions (primary, specialist, consultant and tertiary healthcare) operating in the area of residence of persons granted international protection with detailed instructions on how to provide healthcare services to these persons, including the fact that the persons have been registered in the CEZIH.
- 3) Primary care providers / family (general) practitioners, gynaecologists, paediatricians, and dental practitioners provide primary healthcare services to persons granted international protection.
- 4) The director of the healthcare institution informs the staff that persons granted international protection will be using their primary healthcare services.
- 5) The director of the healthcare institution organises a themed meeting/workshop for the staff about the specificities of working and communicating with persons granted international protection.
- 6) When persons granted international protection use healthcare services, the health professional examines the person's residence permit to determine their right to

healthcare. If the health professional is unable to determine the person's right to healthcare as described above, they check their status with the Ministry of Health.

- 7) To help overcome language and cultural barriers, civil society organisations that provide integration assistance to persons granted international protection under an agreement with the Ministry of the Interior, or other organisations, can act as mediators for persons granted international protection and escort them when they are using healthcare services.
- 8) Depending on its capacities, a civil society organisation providing integration assistance to persons granted international protection under an agreement with the Ministry of the Interior, or another organisation, may provide the following services as well: find a primary care provider; provide support in communicating with family physicians and when making appointments for specialist examinations that the beneficiaries have been referred to; interpret and translate documentation for beneficiaries with the aid of a translator; monitor the condition of persons suffering from serious illnesses; provide transport services for persons suffering from serious illnesses; provide assistance with getting medicines and in contacts with pharmacies; finance medical and orthopaedic aids that are not financed from the health insurance fund; and provide beneficiaries with psychological and social support.



# 8.

## Good practice examples in the integration of persons granted international protection at the local level

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The good practices in the integration of persons granted international protection at the local level have been selected on the basis of inputs from the participants of seminars held under the INCLUDE project. After the seminars, the attendants were invited to prepare good practice examples for inclusion in this handbook. The written inputs provided by the attendants of the seminars have been included in the handbook in integral form, specifying their authors.

### 8.1. Local integration capacity building

#### 8.1.1. The actions and role of the City of Karlovac in the integration of asylees from Syria<sup>26</sup>

After the humanitarian refugee crisis broke out in 2015, Croatia committed to receive and integrate 400 persons under the relocation programme. The first families from the refugee camps in Turkey arrived in Karlovac in late 2019. Immediately prior to their arrival, the city authorities were informed by the Jesuit Refugee Service (hereinafter: JRS)<sup>27</sup> that they would have to receive and house the refugees that were coming to Karlovac. The city authorities invited all institutions whose support and partnership were essential to the integration of the refugees into the community to the first meetings with the JRS. They exchanged the required information, discussed roles and responsibilities, and agreed on a roadmap of actions to provide these people with adequate support during their relocation and settlement.

Nine families arrived in Karlovac at the time, comprising a total of 43 people, including 22 adults (12 men and 10 women) and 21 juveniles (14 boys and seven girls). The City Council adopted the required amendments to the social

<sup>26</sup> Prepared by: Renata Kučan, Head of the Department of Education, Associations, Sports and Social Welfare in the City of Karlovac, and Nikoleta Poljak, DKolektiv. The text was published in the publication 'Living With Us – Integration of Persons Granted International Protection in Croatia – Examples from Local Communities'.

<sup>27</sup> Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is the organisation that provided support to refugees, in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior, during their reception and settlement in Croatia at the time.

programme to allow the persons granted international protection to exercise the rights included in the social programme under the same conditions as all other citizens of Karlovac. Assistance and subsidies were also provided relating to children (school meals, school trips, attendance of nursery school programmes, and one-time financial assistance). As soon as they arrived, they were registered with the local police to be issued residence permits, and healthcare and social welfare arrangements were made. Adults were also registered with the Croatian Employment Service. For example, nine men from the relocated families took advantage of training options provided by the Croatian Employment Service. Sixteen children were enrolled into three primary schools in the City of Karlovac, and one juvenile was enrolled into a vocational secondary school.

According to Renata Kušan, Head of the Department of Education, Associations, Sports and Social Welfare in the City of Karlovac, who has a BSc in teaching, the process was not simple, and the first days following the arrival of the families from Syria presented particular challenges. They had to solve problems dealing with furnishing the apartments, heating and electricity, a variety of breakdowns, and inadequate number of beds at the apartments. Officials from a number of the city authorities' departments were on standby the entire time. At the initiative of the Mejlis of the Karlovac Islamic Community, a get-together and lunch were organised for the newly arrived Syrian families, the citizens of Karlovac, and the representatives of local institutions, associations and media. The event was jointly organised by the Mejlis of the Karlovac Islamic Community, the Islamic humanitarian organisation Zirat, the Jesuit Refugee Service, and City of Karlovac authorities.

Volunteers were very helpful in the integration process. Initially, about ten citizens volunteered providing support as social mentors/assistants and friends to the families they were assigned to. Schools soon got involved too. Fifteen secondary school students from the Karlovac Grammar School provided studying support to the school-age

children. Assistance in Croatian language learning was of particular importance. Parents, teachers and children at the primary schools also soon joined in the effort and launched their own initiatives to raise donations of clothes and shoes, hygiene supplies, school supplies, books etc.

A number of intercultural events, conferences and meetings were organised in Karlovac that were important for building connections and cooperation on matters of importance for successful integration. For instance, activities were organised on the premises of the Karlovac Jamaat (Masjid) to promote interactions between the asylees and the locals. Ahead of the World Refugee Day on 20 June, the conference 'Integration of Refugees – New Learning Opportunities' for relevant institutions and organisations was held at the Grabrik Youth Centre on 15 June 2020.

When refugees arrive in Croatia, a Croatian language course is immediately organised for them. However, this is not enough for effective communication, especially not for tracking the educational process for children attending school. Renata Kučan gave us the following description of their communication with the refugees: *'We had some help from translators. Sometimes we had to communicate with hand gestures, but mostly we communicated with smiles.'* During the summer, civil society organisations organised additional Croatian language workshops for women and children from the asylee families, which the city authorities were happy to support, giving them the use of a space at the Youth Library. However, in spite of all efforts invested by the local self-government, associations, citizens and volunteers, language remains a substantial barrier, especially for adults.

Six families (a total of 33 persons) reside in Karlovac and its surroundings at present. The men are employed at local companies. Most women are not employed and are staying home to care for the children. Twelve children are successfully attending primary school, three are attending secondary school, two are in nursery school, and there are two newborns in Karlovac.

The City of Karlovac provides services for these families

through the city social programme, and keeps track of how they are doing in their everyday lives. City authorities are in constant touch with the schools, inquiring about the socialisation and the progress the children made in mastering the language and other subjects. The city authorities' information indicates that the families have fit into the local community, and that the children are successful at school and participate in a number of activities in and outside of their schools, such as sports clubs and the Karlovac Music School. Their closest neighbours have become their friends, helping them not only financially, but also providing support at these difficult times, when everyone is struggling with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

At this moment, the question of housing for the asylees is the primary concern for the city authorities. After two years, these persons no longer have the right to housing because they are considered sufficiently integrated to be able to live on their own, find their own housing, and pay their own utility bills. However, their reality does not exactly fit this expectation, and the Karlovac city authorities, the Department of Social Services, and the competent ministries have joined forces and managed to get their housing leases extended for a while. Even though the City of Karlovac, like many other self-government units in Croatia, is not in possession of available apartments to house the asylee families, it has planned other forms of assistance in its social programmes to help make things easier for these families. In addition, the city authorities are actively working with the Karlovac Department of Social Services, the Central State Office for Reconstruction and Provision of Housing, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Labour and Pension System, Family and Social Policy to find longer-term housing for these families.

When we asked Renata Kučan what was essential for the successful integration of these people, and what the community and she personally gained from this experience, she told us:

*'Perhaps this is simply the kind of community we are. The City*

*of Karlovac suffered greatly during the war in the 1990s. This emotion, this feeling that we had once been in a similar situation, forced to flee our homes and afraid for our lives, has certainly left an impression on us and made us feel more empathy for other people who found themselves in this situation. When we received the invitation, we all got involved because we felt it was important for us all. I wondered if we were going to do everything right, if we made the right call when we decided to enrol the children into three schools rather than just one, as some other communities had done, and how they would be accepted by their fellow students and neighbours. I really cared about all these people, and I wanted them to make the best of things. We have a good atmosphere going on at our office, which was definitely an asset and helped us get the hang of things more easily. After some time, I realised that we made the right decisions, because the children, their parents, the schools, and the neighbours have all done well. The most important thing was that it was a two-way process, with both sides eager to establish contact and communication. These people brought a new positive spirit into our community, new experiences, knowledge and customs... Personally, I met new people and learned about their culture, learning and growing every day...'*

### 8.1.2. The Action Plan of the City of Zagreb for the Integration of Applicants for International Protection and Persons Granted International Protection for 2022<sup>28</sup> and other activities implemented by the City of Zagreb

The City of Zagreb recognised the importance of integrating foreigners and including integration in all its competences, joining the project CONNECTION – CONNECTING Cities Towards Integration action. European cities network Eurocities is the project promoter, and 13 European cities and the organisation Migration Work CIC, which provides professional support to the cities in the implementation of

<sup>28</sup> Prepared by: Jana Radić, Head of the Department for the Promotion of Human Rights and Civil Society, City of Zagreb.

project activities, are the project partners. The project is financed under the AMIF.

Within this project, the City of Zagreb was required to adopt an integration action plan. EUR 50,000.00 was set aside for this purpose. Accordingly, in January 2022, the Zagreb City Assembly adopted the Action Plan of the City of Zagreb for the Integration of Applicants for International Protection and Persons Granted International Protection for 2022 (hereinafter: Action Plan of the City of Zagreb).<sup>29</sup> The Action Plan of the City of Zagreb was adopted for 2022 because the CONNECTION project ended in 2022, and many of the activities were financed from this source.

By adopting the Action Plan of the City of Zagreb, this city became the first local self-government unit whose representative authority adopted a document comprising activities, implementation schedules, indicators and planned funds.

A mayoral workgroup, a committee consisting of representatives of the city's administrative authorities and civil society organisations, was set up for the purpose of drawing up the Action Plan of the City of Zagreb and monitoring its implementation. Consultations with the interested public about the draft action plan were organised from 16 June to 17 July 2021. The competent national authorities, ombudsperson offices, civil society organisations dealing with integration, and integration coordinators at the local level were informed about the public consultations. Recommendations and proposals from the Framework for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection at the Local Level (see more under 8.1.4) were used in the preparation of the Action Plan of the City of Zagreb.

A total of 102 remarks and proposals were submitted during the public consultations by three government institutions and nine civil society organisations, many of which were

<sup>29</sup> Action Plan of the City of Zagreb for the Integration of Applicants for International Protection and Persons Granted International Protection for 2022, [http://web.zagreb.hr/sjednice/2021/sjednice\\_skupstine\\_2021.nsf/0/C12586DF003A998EC12587C00048F0A9/\\$FILE/02%20Prijedlog%20akcijskog%20plana.pdf](http://web.zagreb.hr/sjednice/2021/sjednice_skupstine_2021.nsf/0/C12586DF003A998EC12587C00048F0A9/$FILE/02%20Prijedlog%20akcijskog%20plana.pdf)

included in the final draft of the action plan. Replies were sent to all 102 remarks and proposals. The report on the public consultations is available on the City of Zagreb's website, under 'closed public consultations'.

After the public consultations, applicants for international protections were included in the measures outlined in the Action Plan of the City of Zagreb wherever possible under the Act on International and Temporary Protection. So as to not interfere with the competences of the Ministry of the Interior, an opinion and an agreement with the proposals was sought from the Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection. As per the Centre's reply, applicants for international protection were included in the measures that the Centre granted its agreement for.

The Action Plan of the City of Zagreb covers the following thematic areas: social welfare, healthcare, language learning and education, labour and employment, local integration capacity building, cooperation between cities and international cooperation.

The first four thematic areas include the following activities: dissemination of information using the dedicated website and informational leaflets on the rights and the availability of services provided by the City of Zagreb to applicants for international protection, persons granted international protection, and later to persons under temporary protection (displaced persons from Ukraine). The information was translated into English, Arabic, Farsi and Ukrainian. Activities also include hiring translators and providing persons with mediation and escort while they exercise their rights and use the services provided by the City of Zagreb. The activities in question were financed under the CONNECTION project.

Other activities financed under the CONNECTION project concerned providing packages of household and hygienic supplies (which were handed out to persons when they were relocated to their own housing units); delivery of additional Croatian language learning workshops for students and adults; delivery of art and IT workshops

for the empowerment of women; organisation of lectures and workshops dealing with tradition, culture and cultural patterns in Croatia; holding public discussions and using local media to raise public awareness of integration for the purposes of inclusion in the local community (celebration of International Migrants Day, World Refugees Day, presentation of different cultures); providing support to persons enrolled into adult education programmes in the sense of delivering practical classes in cooperation with employers and small businesses; strengthening the competences of city administration officials and employees of city-owned institutions responsible for integration, with an emphasis of dealing with persons who are exposed to multiple forms of discrimination; and, finally, external evaluation of the implementation of the Action Plan of the City of Zagreb.

Regarding local integration capacity-building and the role of the City of Zagreb in integration, the importance of establishing intersectoral cooperation was underlined with respect to setting up a city coordination for integration. Integration contact points were set up in the city administration authorities responsible for integration (social welfare, healthcare and education), and a central contact point was set up as well (public authority responsible for the promotion of human rights, which coordinates all areas). Preparations are in progress to establish a register of translators. Cooperation with civil society organisations is promoted through the implementation of the Action Plan of the City of Zagreb, and city district and local committee councils are encouraged to get involved in integration activities as well.

Free legal aid has been ensured under an agreement between the City of Zagreb and the Law Clinic of the Zagreb Faculty of Law. Seminars are organised with the aim of raising public awareness for the purposes of including foreigners in the local communities, and awareness-raising activities are organised for children and youth to help them accept diversities (lectures and workshops at schools and libraries that are designed to raise awareness among

children and young people about the cultural and traditional specificities of the countries of origin of the children applying for asylum). Participation in cultural and sports activities is encouraged, along with property leases in the free market. The potential of the City of Zagreb is reinforced and promoted by strengthening its financial capacity in the sense of EU projects, competence building for city officials, and closer cooperation with other local and regional self-government units, as well as with international organisations, initiatives and networks.

The funds for the implementation of the Action Plan of the City of Zagreb were secured when the plan was adopted. The actions contained in the Action Plan of the City of Zagreb are implemented in cooperation with civil society organisations that have been chosen in the public call for expression of interest by civil society organisations in participating in the implementation of the CONNECTION project. Pursuant to the public call, the City of Zagreb entered into cooperation agreements with eight civil society organisations for the implementation of integration actions. For those measures for which funding was not planned under the CONNECTION project, funds were planned in the 2022 budget of the City of Zagreb, proportionally with the promoters of the actions.

Finally, the City of Zagreb launched the website [integracija.zagreb.hr](http://integracija.zagreb.hr), where information is available about the reception and integration of applicants for international protection, persons granted international protection, and displaced persons in the City in Zagreb, in Croatian, English, Arabic, Farsi and Ukrainian.

The new action plan for the future period will be drawn up under the new project, UNITES – UrBaN InTEgration Strategies through co-design, which is also led by the Eurocities network, with Zagreb as one of the partner cities.

### 8.1.3. Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights – the preparation of the Local Integration Plan in Osijek

The Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights in Osijek initiated the preparation of the plan for the integration of third-country nationals in Osijek.<sup>30</sup> The City of Osijek recognised the importance of local integration of third country nationals, and participated in the preparation of the plan.

The local integration plan was prepared through a participative process at an integration lab workshop titled ‘Preparation of the Local Integration Plan for Third Country Nationals in the City of Osijek Area’. Goals and targets in selected areas (education, healthcare and social welfare, employment and housing, local capacities, security, and awareness-raising among citizens) were defined at the workshop, along with two possible scenarios, actions and performance indicators, and activities were proposed for the achievement of the objectives and the implementation of integration actions for third country nationals in Osijek. Representatives of City of Osijek authorities, the regional Ombudsman’s Office, Croatian Employment Service, Red Cross, civil society organisations, and religious communities participated in the integration lab workshop.

The primary purpose of the local integration plan was to support the City of Osijek authorities in drafting the future city strategy and action plans for the integration of third country nationals.

### 8.1.4. Framework for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection at the Local Level

The Framework for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection at the Local Level was prepared

30 The plan was prepared under the project INTEGRA – Integration of Third Country Nationals through Urban Partnership (2018–2019), implemented by the Centre for Peace and Nonviolence in partnership with organisations from Bulgaria (Sofia Development Association, RiskMonitor Foundation), Czechia (Integration Centre Prague), Italy (Research Centre on Security and Crime) and Slovakia (ETP Slovakia – Centre for Sustainable Development). The project was aimed at improving the long-term integration of third country nationals in five EU member states by exchanging knowledge and experiences between cities.

under the project ‘Support to the Implementation of Migrant Integration Policy’, financed under the EU’s IPA 2012 instrument. The framework was prepared to support local and regional self-government units in the preparation of local strategies and action plans for the integration of persons granted international protection.

The framework was prepared through a participative process involving the work of a designated work group composed of the representatives of the Task Force for the Operative Implementation of Tasks of the Standing Committee for the Implementation of the Integration of Foreigners into the Croatian Society, representatives of a number of offices from Croatia’s four largest cities (Zagreb, Split, Rijeka i Osijek), representatives of (then) state administration offices in counties, and representatives of civil society organisations. The Task Force met four times, and each meeting lasted for two days. A variety of European and Croatian good practice examples in integration were presented at the first meeting. The second meeting was used as an opportunity to define goals and targets, and performance indicators for integration. At the third meeting, the Task Force proposed activities for the attainment of goals and the performance indicators. The draft integration framework was discussed at the fourth meeting, when activities were finally defined.

The Framework focuses on the following strategic integration areas at the local level: labour and employment, promotion of inclusion and social cohesion, housing, social welfare and social services, local capacity building and cooperation.

Furthermore, the Framework states that the local integration strategy should include an introductory analysis that will cover: the demographic situation, the economic situation, the network of social services, the administrative capacities of the local self-government units, active civil society and religious communities, local specificities, and other information of importance about the local community.



The Framework was presented to the local authorities at meetings held at the initiative of the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities (see below), and a recommendation was made that they should use the Framework to build their institutional capacities, and develop and adopt local integration strategies.

The City of Zagreb used the Framework for the Integration of Persons Granted International Protection at the Local Level in the preparation of its Action Plan of the City of Zagreb for the Integration of Applicants for International Protection and Persons Granted International Protection for 2022, which is a good practice example.

#### 8.1.5. Informing local authorities about the integration policy for persons granted international protection and their role and obligations

Six meetings were held with representatives of local and regional self-government units under the project ‘Supporting the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in Need of International Protection’, co-financed by the AMIF, with the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities acting as the project promoter.

The purpose of these meetings was twofold: firstly, they were held to inform the local authorities about the refugee integration policy and their roles and obligations going forward; and secondly, to discuss the possible criteria for the relocation of persons granted international protection to certain self-government units. The intention was to ensure that the positions of local and regional authorities are taken into account during the preparation of the Relocation Plan<sup>31</sup> through a participative process, thus increasing the level of transparency and responsibility in making decisions of public significance, while respecting the principle of subsidiarity, and in a partnership with the

<sup>31</sup> The Action Plan provides for the adoption of a Relocation Plan for Persons Granted International Protection in Croatia annually in accordance with the defined needs of persons granted international protection for relocation, and the existing capacities. The Relocation Plan, even though prepared, was not adopted at the national level.

central government in the creation and implementation of integration policies in line with the multilevel governance principle.

Eight meetings were held in the following cities: Zadar, Sisak, Slavonski Brod, Karlovac, Varaždin, Rijeka, Osijek and Požega. Representatives of the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities, Ministry of the Interior, and Central State Office for Reconstruction and Provision of Housing attended all meetings. The Chief-of-Staff at the Zadar Mayor’s Office at the time attended the meetings in Sisak, Slavonski Brod, Karlovac and Varaždin as a team member, sharing Zadar’s experiences with the reception of the first group of refugees who were relocated to Croatia from Turkey, and settled in the City of Zadar. The first meeting, held in Zadar on 22 March 2018, was attended by the representatives of City of Zadar authorities (Chief-of-Staff at the Zadar Mayor’s Office, Head of the City Office, and the representatives of the local sectors crucial for the integration of persons granted international protection – healthcare and social welfare, education, business and crafts), representatives of the Zadar County (Chief-of-Staff at the County Prefect’s Office and Assistant Chief-of-Staff at the County Prefect’s Office, representatives of the crucial county sectors for the integration of persons granted international protection – economy, infrastructure and EU funds, healthcare, social welfare, education, culture, sports, information), representatives of the State Administration Office in the Zadar County (Heads of the Department of General Administration and Social Services), County Development Agency ZADRA NOVA (Director), Education and Teacher Training Agency, Zadar County Health Council (President), Zadar County Social Welfare Council (members) and Zadar County Patients’ Rights Committee (member).

The second meeting, held in Sisak on 9 April 2018, was attended by the representatives of the City of Sisak authorities (representatives of the city authority sectors crucial for the integration of persons granted international protection

– healthcare and social welfare, education and economy), representatives of the Sisak-Moslavina County (representatives of the crucial sectors for integration – healthcare, social welfare, economy), and representatives of the State Administration Office in the Sisak-Moslavina County (Head of the Office and the heads or representatives of the departments and offices of general affairs, social services, economy).

The third meeting, held in Slavonski Brod on 19 April 2018, was attended by the representatives of the City of Slavonski Brod authorities (representatives of local sectors crucial for the integration of persons granted international protection – healthcare and social welfare, education and economy), representatives of the Brod-Posavina County (representatives of the crucial sectors for integration – healthcare, social welfare, economy), and representatives of the State Administration Office in the Brod-Posavina County (Head of the Office and the heads of the departments and offices of general affairs, social services, economy, agriculture, forestry, reconstruction and provision of housing). Representatives of the CTR Development Centre, Brod-Posavina County Development Agency, and City of Slavonski Brod Development Agency provided an added value to the meeting, learning about the opportunities to use EU funds for the integration of persons granted international protection.

The fourth meeting, held in Karlovac on 10 May 2018, was attended by the representatives of the City of Karlovac authorities (Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and representatives of the local sectors crucial for the integration of persons granted international protection – healthcare and social welfare, education and economy), representatives of the Karlovac County (representatives of the crucial county sectors for integration – healthcare, social welfare, education, culture, legal and general affairs), representatives of the Karlovac County Development Agency KARLA (Director), and representatives of the State Administration Office in the Karlovac County (Head of the Office and the heads or representatives

of the departments and offices for economy, legal and property affairs, social services, and common functions).

The meeting in Karlovac was opened by Karlovac Mayor Damir Mandić, who welcomed the participants on his own behalf and on the behalf of the City of Karlovac, voicing their preparedness for cooperation in order to make the integration process easier for persons granted international protection. The presence of the highest-ranking local officials – Mayor and Deputy Mayor – provided an added value to the meeting in Karlovac, underlining the preparedness of the local authorities to receive persons granted international protection, and their understanding of the importance of this topic at the local level.

The fifth meeting, held in Varaždin on 24 May 2019, was attended by representatives of the Varaždin City authorities (Deputy Mayor, Head of the Administrative Department for the Mayor’s and City Council’s Affairs, and Assistant Head for Social Welfare, Local Self-Government, and Civil Society), representatives of the Varaždin County (representatives of the county sectors crucial for integration – health and social welfare, education, economy), and representatives of the State Administration Office in the Varaždin County (Head of the Office and heads of the departments and offices for economy, legal and property affairs, social services, common functions).

The sixth meeting, held in Rijeka on 7 June 2018, was attended by the representatives of the City of Rijeka authorities (local sectors important for integration – education, healthcare and social welfare, property management, entrepreneurship), representatives of the Primorje-Gorski kotar County (Head of the County Office and representatives of the crucial county sectors for integration – education, healthcare, economy), and representatives of the State Administration Office in the Primorje-Gorski kotar County (head of departments and offices of general administration, social services, and education). An added value was provided by a number of initiatives launched by the City of Rijeka, focusing on the integration of persons granted international

protection and other migrants in the local community. The seventh meeting, held in Požega on 10 September 2018, was attended by representatives of the City of Požega authorities (Deputy Mayor, Chief-of-Staff at the Mayor's Office, Head of the City Office, and representatives of local sectors crucial for the integration of persons granted international protection – healthcare and social welfare, education, businesses, crafts), representatives of the Požega-Slavonija County (Deputy County Prefect and representatives of the crucial county sectors for the integration of persons granted international protection – economy, infrastructure and EU funds, healthcare, social welfare, education, culture, sports, information), representatives of the State Administration Office in the Požega-Slavonija County (Heads of the Department of General Administration and Social Services), Požega Department of Social Services, and representatives of the local public services (primary schools operating in the City of Požega area). The presence of high-ranking local and regional officials – Deputy Mayor and Deputy County Prefect – provided an added value to the meeting in Požega, underlining the preparedness of the local authorities to accept persons granted international protection, and their understanding of the importance of this topic at the local level.

The eighth meeting, held on 21 September 2018 in Osijek, was attended by representatives of City of Osijek authorities (representatives of the city sectors crucial for the integration of persons granted international protection – health and social welfare, EU programmes), representatives of the Osijek-Baranja County (representatives of crucial sectors for integration – education and culture, healthcare and social welfare, administrative and legal affairs, economy, regional development agencies), representatives of the State Administration Office in the Osijek-Baranja County (Head of the Office and heads of the departments and offices of general affairs, social services, economy), Osijek Department of Social Services, and representatives of local public services (primary schools) and civil society

organisations. The proactive approach taken by all key stakeholders in the City of Osijek and the Osijek-Baranja County (City of Osijek, County, State Administration Office, civil society organisations) in addressing key issues related to integration and preparedness for the receipt of persons granted international protection provided an added value to this meeting. Closer cooperation was established at this meeting between stakeholders at the national and local levels, and the possibilities for cooperation with other local government units that will require additional support were considered (for instance, a civil society organisation from Osijek could open a branch in Požega, which does not have such an organisation).

At all meetings, local officials and public servants were informed about the rights of persons granted international protection and the importance of their local integration into the society, and the local authorities were involved in drafting the criteria for the preparation of the Relocation Plan.

At the meetings, selected cities were informed about the expected arrival of persons granted international protection (mostly on time, with the exception of Zadar and Slavonski Brod), which helped them better prepare for local integration. Furthermore, these activities ensured a participative process in the preparation of the Relocation Plan, through which the local authorities, as per the European Charter on Local Self-Government, were asked for their input in the process of preparation and adoption of decisions that concern them directly. This ensured that local communities actively participated in the development of actions at the national level, which may contribute to their more efficient implementation in practice.

These activities are therefore a good practice example in dealings between the central and the local (regional) level of government.

## 8.2. Active role of social services in the integration of persons granted international protection

### 8.2.1. Lipik Primary School<sup>32</sup>

After attending the project seminars, attendants from the Lipik Primary School applied to an Erasmus+ call for proposals for 2022 in Key Action 1, dealing with general education, with a project focusing on the integration of children – persons granted international protection. The project ‘Similarity in Differences – Integration of Refugee Children into Life at School’ received 94 points, occupying the fourth place out of the total of 58 approved applications. A grant of 20,800.00 euro was approved for the project. Spain, Sweden and Turkey were the partner countries.

According to Sanda Ivanović, the integration of children – persons granted international protection into the school systems is a major challenge for all European countries, and the Lipik Primary School recently found itself facing this challenge as well. Unaccompanied refugee children from Afghanistan have been enrolled into the Lipik Primary School as students. These children are living at the Lipik Children’s Home.

The arrival of 16 unaccompanied girls was announced in 2021. It did not come to pass, but it drew attention to the challenges the teachers would have encountered in the integration of these girls into the education system. Sanda Ivanović underlines the following challenges in particular:

- Insufficient training for working with children – persons granted international protection, especially unaccompanied children, which would help with cultural and language preparations to work with students – persons granted international protection, domicile students and teachers
- Emotional vulnerability and the language, religious and cultural differences between domicile children and children – persons granted international protection

<sup>32</sup> Prepared by Sanda Ivanović, Lipik Primary School.

- Insufficient support provided by teachers and specialists who have experience dealing with this type of challenge, which could help overcome differences, improve teaching techniques and quality, and help children integrate into the school and the community as easily as possible
- New digital tools, handbooks and teaching resources and aids are needed to work with the foreign language speaking children; teachers could make these themselves, but they require additional training to be able to do so
- There is no action plan for the receipt of refugee children, and no school curriculum that would include new extracurricular activities and workshops for children and parents that would help the children learn about and integrate into their new environment as easily as possible
- This vulnerable group of students, who often experienced trauma in the war and have travelled a long way before they reached Croatia, needs psychological and social support
- New forms of cooperation with the local community need to be introduced to raise awareness in the public about issues related to working with students – persons granted international protection.

The primary objectives of the project ‘Similarity in Differences – Integration of Refugee Children into Life at School’ were planned based on the above challenges:

- Build a multicultural environment in the school
- Promote the values of inclusion, diversity and tolerance, social and emotional learning
- Modernise and innovate the teaching process.

Under the project, four participants were going to attend four seminars and workshops dealing with the integration of children – persons granted international protection into the educational system, and ten teachers were going to visit three schools that have been successfully

implementing the integration of children – persons granted international protection for some time in Turkey, Spain and Sweden. During their visits to these schools, teachers from the Lipik Primary School were going to spend five days observing their colleagues in the host schools perform their daily activities, taking notes, and making a record of the ways how they include the children – persons granted international protection in the daily activities. Their objective was to define the challenges faced by the teachers in the host schools, and the instruments they use to address these challenges successfully. Furthermore, they were going to identify the forms of psychological and social support provided to the students and teachers, and learn about new forms of teaching and progress tracking using new digital tools, teaching resources and aids, including a starting handbook that is used to teach students – persons granted international protection. They were also going to consult their colleagues regarding the best possible ways to prepare the students and parents for the receipt of children – persons granted international protection. They were going to observe their work in extracurricular activities and workshops that are used to facilitate the successful integration of children – persons granted international protection.

The planned activities with the stakeholders would help them develop better competences with respect to teaching children – persons granted international protection, and train them to work with this vulnerable group of students. Among other things, the participants in the project were going to:

- Learn how to assess the educational needs of children – persons granted international protection more easily in order to integrate them successfully into the education system and the society;
- Learn to better understand the practices, policies and systems in education, training, and working with refugee students;
- Improve the competences needed to initiate changes in the receipt and integration of children – persons granted

- international protection into the school system;
- Learn how to better prepare students – persons granted international protection for vocational training and labour markets;
- Gain the competences needed to develop a new curriculum, digital tools and teaching methods;
- Learn to recognise and acknowledge the needs of students with fewer opportunities;
- Perfect their knowledge of foreign languages and develop better digital competences;
- Learn how to increase the motivation and satisfaction of the teachers and students in their daily activities.

### 8.2.2. Gustav Krklec Primary School, Zagreb

Since 2017, Gustav Krklec Primary School, located in the district of Travno in Novi Zagreb, has served as the primary education point for children applicants for international protection who are housed at the nearby Porin Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection. Children whose parents are granted international protection status often continue their education at this school, and as a result the school has gained a substantial experience in integrating this category of children into the education system over the years. The internal protocol that the school has developed for working with children who have applied for or who have been granted international protection is a good practice example worth mentioning.

In school year 2021/2022, the school implemented the project ‘Integration of refugee children into the Croatian educational system’, with the school’s principal, support staff, primary education teachers, and subject teachers as participants.<sup>33</sup>

Two local campaigns were implemented in the community under the INCLUDE project in April and May 2022 to bring the locals and the third country nationals closer together: ‘Social and Cultural Activities in Travno’ and

<sup>33</sup> Source: [http://os-gkrkleca-zg.skole.hr/?news\\_hk=1&news\\_id=2575&show=290#mod\\_news](http://os-gkrkleca-zg.skole.hr/?news_hk=1&news_id=2575&show=290#mod_news)

‘No Differences in Sports’. Seventh-grade students and campaign coordinators worked together to design and implement the activities, in which they then participated together. The project involved parents, students, school staff, applicants for asylum from the Porin Reception Centre for Applicants for International Protection, asylee parents and students at the primary school, and residents of the Travno district. The local activities were financed under the AMIF.

Within the local campaign ‘Social and Cultural Activities in Travno’, painting workshops were organised under the motto ‘Home In Me, Home Around Me’, where asylee and asylum applicant parents and children spent time with local residents (children and their parents). The focus was on spending time together, getting to know one another, and sharing experiences. An exhibition of the paintings by students, parents, and school staff was staged at on 25 May 2022 at the school’s playground in honour of the 45th anniversary of the school’s establishment. During this exhibition, the facilitator of the workshops designed a participatory performance where interested participants were asked to paint pictures of childhood games that they used to play on paper plates. Cookies were then offered to passers-by on the painted plates to encourage the sharing of experiences regarding childhood games.

This performance was designed to make people understand that children everywhere play similar games, albeit under different names.

Students, parents, school staff, and guests were served traditional treats from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Mexico, Ukraine and Russia at the International Traditional Desserts Festival that was organised at the school garden. The desserts were made by parents, students, and school staff.

An external associate from the Centre for Peace Studies facilitated an experiential workshop about human rights – the right to education, where the importance of creating equal education conditions for every child was underlined,

along with the importance of creating opportunities for students to learn about tolerance, togetherness and acceptance of diversities by interacting with other cultures.

Badminton, football and volleyball tournaments featuring parents, children and school staff were organised under the local campaign ‘No Differences in Sports’. Medals and diplomas were handed out at the conclusion of the tournament. The dance workshop ‘Dancing Brings Us Together’ was facilitated by a dancing professor from the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Kinesiology.

### 8.2.3. Activities implemented by the Ivan Goran Kovačić City Library in Karlovac to aid the integration of Syrian refugees<sup>34</sup>

Nine Syrian families arrived in the City of Karlovac in late 2019. They were settled in Karlovac under a relocation programme in which Croatia committed to receive and integrate 400 persons. According to Miroslav Katić and Vedrana Kovač Vrana, the Ivan Goran Kovačić City Library in Karlovac very soon became one of the stakeholders that helped the Syrian families integrate into the Croatian society faster and more easily. Social mentors brought the Syrian families and the City Library staff together. In the first months, the staff worked with the new beneficiaries informally, mostly in the form of organising occasional Croatian language courses for young people on the Library premises. Aiming to organise systematic activities and learn more about working with refugees, the Ivan Goran Kovačić City Library in Karlovac applied for Erasmus+ with the project ‘Unlocking Library Potentials Through Inclusion’. The project was co-financed by the EU under Erasmus+, Key Action KA104 (adult learning). The key objectives of the project included developing the library staff’s competences through mobility in European countries, and learning new skills and gaining new experience to aid in working with

<sup>34</sup> Prepared by Miroslav Katić, MSc, Senior Librarian and Head of Business Library; and Vedrana Kovač Vrana, Senior Librarian, Head of the Central Library of Slovenians in Croatia.



disadvantaged social groups. The skills and knowledge thus gained were going to be used to improve the quality of the existing services for vulnerable groups, but also to develop new services and programmes for asylees and migrants. Among the three mobility activities that they applied with and that were financed under Erasmus+, the first dealt exclusively with working with migrants.

The first activity took place at the City Library in Ljubljana, Slovenia on 4–10 October 2020. Participants acquired new knowledge and skills to reinforce the Library's existing services that include working with asylees and other vulnerable groups, and develop new ones. When the mobility activity was concluded, the implementation of the newly acquired skills started in the Library's work with asylees. The objective of this project was to position the library as a recognisable centre for working with vulnerable groups of adult beneficiaries in order to integrate them into the social and economic life. The programme included carefully designed creative and educational programmes and activities, including innovation in working with migrants:

- 1) Croatian language learning. Our ability to communicate impacts every area of our life where interaction with others is required. Language learning is essential for education, employment, and the performance of simple daily tasks, such as shopping for food. We are actively working on improving the ability of our beneficiaries to express themselves in the Croatian language, and to understand it. Additional learning assistance is provided to beneficiaries who come across minor or major difficulties in learning the Croatian language and culture.
- 2) Programmes promoting entrepreneurship and financial literacy. The Business Library of the Ivan Goran Kovačić City Library in Karlovac is the first library of this kind in Croatia. So far, the Business Library's services were focused on promoting entrepreneurship and financial literacy among young people. Now the Library has expanded its services to other vulnerable groups as well (with a particular focus on migrants, applicants for

asylum, and women in a disadvantaged position). Migrants contribute to the economic growth of their recipient countries in a number of ways, introducing new skills and competences, and helping alleviate workforce shortages. In addition, raising awareness of the positive role migrants can play as entrepreneurs contributes to a balanced perception of immigration in the public.

- 3) Digital/ICT literacy. The training was designed to give the attendants the basic knowledge of ICT skills. Attendants were taught how to use computers for basic purposes such as writing personal/business correspondence, searching for information online (laws, human rights, job opportunities etc), sending e-mails, preparing presentations, managing their finances, etc.
- 4) Individual support. Individual support ensures the inclusion of beneficiaries in the community, helps them find jobs or study programmes to enrol into, provides access to all library services, and presents lifelong learning opportunities provided by the library.
- 5) Cultural competence sharing. Experiences, customs and values from their country of origin are shared with the new group of beneficiaries in order to overcome existing stereotypes, promote tolerance and interculturalism, and contribute to social integration.

There are six Syrian families living in Karlovac at the moment, three Kurdish and three Arabic ones. They number a total of 34 people, 22 of whom are children. The implementation of programmes and activities for the families from Syria started in July 2021. Before organising the trainings for adult beneficiaries, an initial survey was carried out to find out about their needs and areas of interest, and a learning plan was drawn up based on this information. Even though the library is an informal education institution, in preparing the Croatian language courses for asylees, the Library follows the Decision of the Ministry of Education and Science on the Croatian language, history and language learning programme for asylees and

foreigners under subsidiary protection for purposes of inclusion into the Croatian society, taking into account the recipients' previous learning, and adapting the programme to their conditions, needs etc.

During the summer, the programme was organised every Saturday morning at the Youth Library. Children came to the Youth Library together with their parents, where volunteers from the Karlovac Grammar School helped them with their school tasks (homework, repetition, learning for exams...). Taking into account the wishes and interests expressed by programme participants, two educational tourist tours of the old Karlovac city centre were organised during the summer in cooperation with licensed tourist guides. The tours were an excellent way to teach the families from Syria about the cultural, historic and tourist heritage of Karlovac.

Between September and December 2021, the courses continued at the Library's central building. Active Croatian language and culture learning courses continued. The families were provided with assistance and support in finding jobs and handling other life situations, and individual support was provided outside of the planned courses on Saturdays. Another, Advent-themed tour with licensed tourist guides was organised for the families during the Advent period.

Children of the families from Syria were involved in the project 'Paint Karlovac' in cooperation with the association DRONE for social development and informal education, which implements the project. Project activities included painting and decorating walls in Karlovac, erasing hate speech and hateful graffiti, and designing art motives. The purpose of these activities was to raise awareness in the public about gender-based violence. The children were given an opportunity to actively participate in the programme, which was beneficial for their integration into the community.

As of 14 January 2022, the workshops are scheduled three times a week because the participants expressed an interest

in learning Croatian to be able to communicate more easily in their workplaces. The Library also provides individual support for doctor's appointments or administrative errands as needed, which is not included in the number of workshops specified below. In addition to the Syrian families, an Italian national who moved to Karlovac after marrying a local, and an Egyptian national who is studying in Karlovac for one year have also joined the courses.

Having seen stories about the Library in local media and on local TV, librarians from the Library of the Zagreb Faculty of Philosophy started a campaign to collect and donate Croatian language learning books and books to add to the collection of the Central Library of Slovenians in Croatia to the Ivan Goran Kovačić City Library. Foreign Croatian and Slovenian language learners were granted the access to and use of the donated books at the Library.

In June 2022, the Dialogue Culture Centre, in cooperation with the Ivan Goran Kovačić City Library, prepared a presentation of Syrian customs, culture, food, and in particular the children's successes, titled 'Dialogue with the Orient – Getting to Know Syria', under the project 'New Neighbours'. The Syrian families living in Karlovac today are an example of good integration of refugees, having been accepted wonderfully by the locals. The event was designed as a meeting place for the new arrivals from Syria and the locals from Karlovac. Little Syrians showed how well they learned the Croatian language, presented their taekwondo skills, and demonstrated the progress they have made in learning to play musical instruments. This all goes to show that, in addition to attending regular education, they like to participate in sports and fun activities, and have made the first step in their assimilation into the Croatian society by themselves.

There are between five and eight adult attendants at the courses, depending on how the families are able to organise their time. The attendants continue to show an interest in learning and spending their free time at the Library. Continuous support has been secured, and conditions for

permanent implementation of this programme have been established.

A total of 18 workshops were held in 2021, plus another 66 by the end of June 2022.

### 8.3. Strengthening inclusion and social cohesion

#### 8.3.1. Project 'Information – The First Step to Good Health', association FitnessOF Karlovac, recreation and rehabilitation centre<sup>35</sup>

The project 'Information – The First Step to Good Health' by association FitnessOF Karlovac, recreation and rehabilitation centre was chosen for funding in a City of Karlovac public call for associations, which defined persons granted international protection as particularly vulnerable and in a specific situation.

The objectives of the project were to:

- a) Run a local awareness-raising campaign for the parent community and the general population regarding obesity, especially among children, and implement a number of activities to draw attention to exercise, healthy diet, and lifestyle changes as ways to protect our health;
- b) Run a specialised educational campaign for refugees from Ukraine about human anatomy in connection with exercise and movement, and teach them the words for parts of human anatomy in Croatian to help them get adequate and targeted healthcare at the doctor's office;
- c) Use persons who already exercise regularly to organise activities aimed at the integration of the refugees into the society, and create a safe and pleasant environment where experts will help them deal with their stress, depression and loneliness.

The project develops and empowers a civil society organisation to work on implementing healthcare activities and

a public health policy, also empowering the association to continue the activity after the end of the project (sustainability), and helps improve the position of extremely vulnerable groups in the society through awareness-raising, learning, socialisation and integration.

The association targeted the local community with intensive activities designed to raise awareness of the increasingly important problem of obesity, especially among children. Obesity is caused by very bad diets that people increasingly become used to in the hectic everyday life, and by bad leisure activity choices, including abuse of mobile phones, computers, TVs, and game consoles, which leads adults and children in particular to neglect exercise and active lifestyle even more. Disastrous statistics from the Croatian Institute of Public Health indicate that Croatia is among European countries with the worst obesity problem.

The project will include a round table discussion featuring a variety of health experts, kinesiologists, physiotherapists, educators, and other professionals, along with similar associations that work in this field or are able to help address this problem, who will discuss the pertinent topics. The media are an important stakeholder and will participate in the project as its partners to help raise awareness in the local community.

The second part of the project focuses on healthcare for refugees who have fled the war in Ukraine. The language barrier makes integration into the society more difficult for these persons, including in job search, participation in organised forms of sports and exercise, and especially doctor's appointments. The ability to explain their problem to a doctor is one of the most important abilities for a person facing a medical issue, and this ability requires, at a minimum, a basic knowledge of terms in Croatian dealing with anatomy, movement and sensations. The project will use persons who already exercise regularly and professionals to implement activities teaching refugees about the names for parts of human anatomy in Croatian, basic

<sup>35</sup> Prepared by: Ana Hajdin, association FitnessOF Karlovac, recreation and rehabilitation centre.

positions and movements, and teaching them to explain the sensations of pain and pleasure, to help them prepare for integration into the society, but also to help them get the best possible care during a doctor's appointment. A higher level of awareness, as well as time spent with the citizens, will improve their socialisation and integration, reduce their feeling of loneliness, and help lower their stress and depression levels. Specialised educational materials and equipment will be bought for this activity that the association will keep for its use permanently, allowing it to continue the activities even after the end of the project.

### 8.3.2. Publication 'Living With Us – Integration of Persons Granted International Protection in Croatia – Examples from Local Communities', association DKolektiv<sup>36</sup>

The publication was prepared under the project 'Living With Us', implemented between April 2020 and March 2022 by Dkolektiv – organisation for social development, Osijek City Organisation of the Red Cross, Law and Information Centre Slavonski Brod, Creative Development Association SLAP, Local Democracy Agency Sisak, City of Osijek, and City of Slavonski Brod. The project was co-financed from the European Social Fund.

The publication presents the personal stories of persons granted international protection in Croatia, and good practice examples of a variety of stakeholders who have participated in the process of their integration. It is based on interviews with persons granted international protection, as well as with representatives of the local self-governments, schools, employers, and associations that are actively supporting integration at the local level.

Ruba Nadaf (Syria), Twana Rasul (Iraq), Ali Mohammad Shuryabi (Iran), Inayatullah Jiskani (Pakistan) and Aymen Aheem Abd Ali Al-Mimar (Iraq) have shared their personal

<sup>36</sup> The publication is available at <https://www.dkolektiv.hr/public/storage/documents/publications/zivjeti-s-nama-integracija-osoba-s-odobrenom-medunarodnom-zastitom-u-hrvatskoj.pdf>

stories in the publication.

The City of Karlovac presented its experiences regarding the integration of families from Syria who were relocated to Croatia pursuant to the Croatian Government's Decision on the Relocation of Third-Country Nationals or Stateless Persons Eligible for International Protection.

A total of 13 children attended the Gustav Krklec Primary School in Zagreb in the year 2021/2022, four of whom have been granted international protection, and the others have the status of applicants for international protection, or are still awaiting the decisions of the relevant institutions. This is one of the Croatian schools that have the most experience with the integration of refugee children into the school system (since 2017).

Five civil society organisations – Local Democracy Agency Sisak, Are you Syrious?, Centre for Peace Studies, Centre for Dialogue Culture, and Croatian Red Cross – presented their experiences and their work with the refugees in Croatia.

Finally, the publication includes the experiences of several employers who have hired persons granted international protection or persons of migrant background (IKEA Hrvatska d.o.o., Yellow Submarine d.o.o. and Tonino Barbieri j.d.o.o.).

This publication provides a very valuable overview of integration activities at the local level from the perspective of persons granted international protection, and stakeholders who participate actively in the integration process.

In addition to personal stories and an overview of the activities of a range of organisations, the publication can also serve as a useful tool for lobbying and influencing policy processes at the local level, especially in local self-government units that have no experience with the integration of persons granted international protection.

### 8.3.3. Afghan asylee integration activities implemented by association Civis Mundi in Rijeka<sup>37</sup>

Rijeka-based association Civis Mundi provides integration support to two Afghan families who arrived in Rijeka in late 2021.<sup>38</sup>

They organised an intensive Croatian language course in cooperation with University of Rijeka, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Croatian Language Studies. A Croatian teacher worked as a volunteer to provide additional Croatian language classes for the two families who were illiterate. Civis Mundi is also organising creative workshops designed to provide illiterate women with future employment opportunities and help them complete their primary education in cooperation with the employees of the Croatian Employment Service and the Art Academy. To assess the individual needs of their beneficiaries in their integration into the new environment, the association's staff (psychologist, social worker, cultural mediator) visit these families on a weekly basis, providing them with support in socialisation, and helping improve their mental and physical well-being. This support consists of including these persons in sports (Football Club Halubjan, Football Club Lokomotiva, Swimming Club Kantrida), and accompanying them to individual consultations at the Croatian Employment Service, doctor's appointments, shopping trips, visits to museums and libraries, etc.

Seminars/workshops are organised at Rijeka's primary schools and service centres, titled 'Integration of Persons Granted Protection and Persons Under Temporary Protection in the Local Community', to strengthen inclusion and social cohesion.

All of these activities are implemented in cooperation with other civil society organisations active in the City of Rijeka (Dialogue Culture Centre, Red Cross, Jesuit Refugee

Service, IOM, UNHCR, EMN). Initial contacts have been established, and cooperation agreements made with these organisations.

<sup>37</sup> Information prepared by Project Leader Petra Babić.

<sup>38</sup> Civis Mundi provides integration support under the project 'Improving the Integration Process', financed under the AMIF.

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- 4) Decision on the Croatian language curriculum for applicants for asylum, asylees and foreigners under subsidiary protection over the age of 15 for the purpose of accessing the secondary school system and adult education system (Official Gazette 100/12, 70/15)
- 5) Decision on the resettlement and relocation of third country nationals or stateless persons eligible for international protection (Official Gazette 78/15)
- 6) Decision on the resettlement of third country nationals or stateless persons eligible for international protection (Official Gazette 99/17)
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- 9) Decision on the Croatian language programme for preparatory classes for primary and secondary school stu-

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- 10) Decision on the programme of Croatian language, history and culture for asylees and foreigners under subsidiary protection for the purposes of inclusion into the Croatian society (Official Gazette 154/14, 70/15)
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- 19) Act on Compulsory Health Insurance and Health Care

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