



The third workshop in the transnational programme for the Arrival Cities network took place in Thessaloniki in May 2017. Delegates from all the 10 partners took part in a programme that focused on the sub-theme of Reception Services.

This was an issue that members of the Urbact Local Groups (ULG's) created by each partner had identified as one of the key issues that they wished to explore through a process of transnational exchange of practice and learning.

This report captures the work of this workshop. The report is designed to support the ULG's in the deliberation and development of their Local Action Plans. In addition the report seeks to provide useful resources for wider dissemination beyond the Arrival Cities network.

The report is structured into the following sections:

- **Section One** provides an overview of reception services (legal context, issues and challenges)
- **Section Two** provides examples of case studies undertaken to provide reception services at a local level.
- **Section Three** provides some useful links and other resources related to the theme.
- **Section Four** provides details of the workshop in terms of agenda, presentations, and list of participants.

## **Section One: Reception Services: An Overview**

### **The context**

The number of migrants is growing and migration flows are increasingly complex. The ongoing conflict in Syria, the instability in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Yemen Lebanon and other countries in the Middle East and different parts of Africa is very likely to force more and more people to seek asylum in Europe which could bring along even larger migration flows in the future.

In addition, the demographic and economic factors especially in Sub-Saharan African countries as well as high poverty and unemployment rates in the Western Balkans may further aggravate this challenge. Also, the situation is deteriorating for the large number of refugees in many of the

countries in the neighbouring areas of the conflict zones like Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt where the lack of overall aid, education options and rising unemployment are pushing the refugees to continue their search for asylum in Europe. Furthermore, climate change suggests the need to prepare for significant refugee flows in the coming decades.

The rapid growth in inflows towards Europe, the large variety of routes, the diversity of countries of origin and underlying motives for displacement make the current refugee flow particularly complex to address. Asylum applications are growing in numbers and many of the countries that have been accepting refugees are beginning to implement more restrictive policies, which shift the pressure towards the southern borders of Europe.

In short, the new normal will be a continuous and growing pattern of migration. Given this context, then the need to provide accessible, appropriate and accountable reception services is a fundamental issue that many cities have to face.

### **Is there a difference between a migrant and a refugee?**

A migrant is a person who leaves home to seek a new life in another region or country. This includes all those who move across borders, including those doing so with government permission, i.e., with a visa or a work permit, as well as those doing so without it, i.e., irregular or undocumented migrants. The member states of the European Union agree that EU citizens and their families have freedom of movement within the EU and the European Economic Area—these citizens are privileged migrants because they don't require individual permission from officials as other migrants do. A refugee is someone fleeing war, persecution, or natural disaster. Refugee status is defined in international law, which requires states to protect refugees and not send anyone to a place where they risk being persecuted or seriously harmed. States hold primary responsibility for the protection of refugees. [The UN counted 21.3 million refugees worldwide at the end of 2015.](#) "Asylum" refers to the legal permission to stay somewhere as a refugee, which brings rights and benefits. Not every asylum seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee, but every refugee is initially an asylum seeker.

**What is the European Union's asylum policy?** The EU Common European Asylum System (CEAS) is a set of EU laws, completed in 2005. They are intended to ensure that all EU member states protect the rights of asylum seekers and refugees. The CEAS sets out minimum standards and procedures for

processing and deciding asylum applications, and for the treatment of both asylum seekers and those who are recognized as refugees. Implementation of CEAS varies throughout the European Union. A number of EU states still do not operate fair, effective systems of asylum decision-making and support, leading to a patchwork of 28 asylum systems producing uneven results.

Asylum seekers have no legal duty to claim asylum in the first EU state they reach, and many move on, seeking to join relatives or friends for support, or to reach a country with a functioning asylum system. However, the [“Dublin” regulation](#) stipulates that EU member states can choose to return asylum seekers to their country of first entry to process their asylum claim, so long as that country has an effective asylum system. EU countries in the north, the desired destination of many refugees, have sought to use this Dublin system to their advantage, at the expense of the south, where most refugees first arrive. Yet these efforts have been obstructed by failures of asylum systems in the south. Domestic and European courts have ruled against asylum seekers being returned to Greece, notably in [a landmark case](#) in 2011 that found Belgium in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights for exposing an Afghan national to detention, harsh living conditions and risks arising from shortcomings in Greece's asylum system after a return.

To address the uneven application of CEAS and the problems of the Dublin system, a reform of the CEAS was proposed in 2016. Among [the proposed reforms](#) is one that risks endangering the right to asylum in the EU, with an obligation to verify first if asylum seekers could find protection outside the EU. Some EU countries have already voiced opposition to some of the reforms, notably the obligation to take refugees from other EU countries.

### **Are asylum seekers and migrants still attempting to reach Europe?**

The majority of arrivals to the European Union in 2016 have come via the Mediterranean. Since the beginning of the year, more than [4,600 people](#) have died or gone missing while attempting to reach Italy from the North African coast. This is the highest recorded number of deaths in the Mediterranean to date.

The highest number of migrants arrive in Greece and Italy, often after a perilous journey across the sea. In Greece, around 62,000 people are [waiting to have their asylum applications processed](#), with about 11,400 of them held in facilities on the Greek islands. Each month, less than 1,000 asylum

decisions are given, with more than that number of asylum seekers arriving. In Italy, [over 11,000 people per month applied for asylum in 2016](#), and on average between 6,000 and 8,000 are processed every month. Faced with this unprecedented situation, both countries have struggled to provide decent reception facilities with even basic services.

### **How has the European Union responded to refugee movements?**

In 2015, high numbers of migrants, many of them Syrians fleeing conflict, continued to move. Some European states, led by Germany, recognized that their strategy of seeking to block refugees moving across borders was unrealistic and harmful. Countries worked together to allow migrants to move onwards to the places they wished to reach. This allowed reception countries to focus their resources on supporting asylum seekers and considering claims.

By early 2016, support for this policy began to wane, with increased hostility towards migrants entering the political discourse. Certain countries along the migrant route began to close their borders. The situation further deteriorated when the EU's decision to transfer 160,000 asylum seekers from Greece and Italy to other European member states was met with widespread resistance. [In the end, a small percentage of the needed transfers actually took place.](#)

In response to the failure to adequately process asylum claims, the EU set up "hotspots" in Greece and Italy. Hotspots identify, register, and fingerprint incoming migrants, and redirect them either towards asylum or return procedures. In practice, many hotspots are turning into [overcrowded and understaffed detention and expulsion centers](#), with little external oversight.

In March 2016, the EU announced a deal in which Turkey would try to stop people from moving onward into Europe; in return, Turkey was promised financial assistance, visa-free travel to the EU for Turkish citizens, and faster negotiations for EU accession. But the EU-Turkey deal failed to close the border, and thousands of migrants continued to travel irregularly using smugglers. Since the deal, only 750 asylum seekers have been sent back from Greece to Turkey, because [Greek officials and courts consider Turkey to be an unsafe country](#).

This deal is one example of a controversial practice, in which the EU links development aid or economic incentives to commitments by states to stem and manage the movements of people from their territory. Similar deals are being approved with a number of third countries including Libya,

Egypt, Sudan, and Nigeria. In June 2016, the European Commission proposed a new “Partnership Framework” with third countries in the Middle East and Africa, leading to criticism by [a broad range of actors](#) for deal-making with countries with poor human rights records, and for conflicting with international protection frameworks, including the right to leave one’s own country.

The EU also continues to support refugees in host countries like Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan—where the majority of Syrian refugees are hosted—including through funding for UN agencies working in the field such as the [UNHCR](#) or the [WFP](#).

### **The legal context**

Asylum seekers flee their country because they have a “well-founded fear of being persecuted” (UN 1951: s.n.) due to their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. They apply for refugee status under the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugee (Refugee Convention).

EU legislation seeks to comply with the requirements of the 1951 Convention. The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) has made the EU competent to create a common asylum policy. According to article 78 TFEU, the EU shall develop a common policy on asylum, subsidiary and temporary protection for those in need of international protection. It is set out in paragraph two of this article, that the EU can create common standards concerning the conditions for reception for asylum seekers. Article 78 TFEU has served as the legal basis for many EU asylum policy directives.

In EU law, it is the **Recast Reception Conditions Directive (2013/33/EU)** which laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection This incorporates:

- **Recast Directive on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection (2013/32/EU)**
- **Qualification Directive (2011/95/EU)** 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.

- **Dublin Regulation 604/2013** establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or stateless person.

The [Reception Conditions Directive](#) aims at ensuring better as well as more harmonized standards of reception conditions throughout the Union. It ensures that applicants have access to housing, food, clothing, health care, education for minors and access to employment under certain conditions.

The current Reception Conditions Directive was adopted in 2013. It replaced Council Directive 2003/9/CE on minimum standards for the reception of asylum seekers. The deadline for Member States to transpose the Directive into national law was 20 July 2015.

In addition to the above mentioned provisions, the Directive also provides particular attention to vulnerable persons, especially unaccompanied minors and victims of torture. Member States must, *inter alia*, conduct an individual assessment in order to identify the special reception needs of vulnerable persons and to ensure that vulnerable asylum seekers can access medical and psychological support.

In short, the following categories of applicants for international protection are entitled to reception conditions under EU law:

- Asylum applicants under the Dublin II Regulation, in admissibility procedures, in accelerated procedures,
- vulnerable persons,
- unaccompanied minors ( including those who have exhausted the asylum procedure),
- asylum applicants who have lodged an appeal procedure or have applied for a subsequent procedure;
- those who have received a positive decision as well as rejected applicants

## The reality on the Ground

Providing accessible and responsive services to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers is critical if they are to settle effectively into a new country, rebuild their lives and contribute socially, economically, intellectually and culturally to the host community. The economic, social and personal costs of not being able to access relevant services to meet basic health, education and other needs are high for both individuals and the community. For example, prior to their arrival, refugees and asylum seekers may have experienced some or all of the following:

- Forced displacement
- Prolonged periods in refugee camps or marginalisation in urban settings
- Exposure to violence and abuse of human rights, including physical torture and gender and sexual-based violence
- Loss and separation from family members
- Deprivation of cultural and religious institutions and practices
- Periods of extreme poverty, including limited access to safe drinking water, shelter and food
- Severe constraints on access to health, education, employment and income support
- Prolonged uncertainty about the future.

As a result, settlement and reception needs for refugees and asylum seekers are significant and complex. This is reflected in the fact that the organisation of reception facilities differs greatly amongst Member States. Differences exist in the type of facilities and in the actors involved in the provision of reception. Such differences are not only apparent between Member States but also occur within some Member States at sub-state level. Unequal treatment between and within Member States has resulted, in some cases, in sub-standard reception conditions.

A number of reports have highlighted serious concerns regarding the quality of reception facilities and failure to respect human rights legislation.<sup>1</sup>

---

• <sup>1</sup> Several reports have highlighted serious problems in the provision of reception services. “The Organisation of Reception Facilities for Asylum Seekers in different Member States” European Migration Network, 2014. Available from the EMN



The large numbers of asylum seekers have created problems in the reception centres . Overcrowding is a major problem which also leads to violence in reception centres. There is not sufficient access to health care because the demand is too high. Overcrowding leads to a lack of privacy, lack of living space and a lack of sanitary facilities. This can create a dangerous situation for women and children. In addition, there is a lack of interpreters available, information is insufficiently provided and the asylum procedure is very lengthy. Another problem is that children cannot always go to school. Furthermore, cases of sexual violence against women and children have been reported.

More specifically, the reports cited above raise the following specific issues in respect to hotspots.

- There is legal uncertainty with certain aspects of the hotspot function, particularly regarding the role of the different actors, especially EU agencies in relation to national authorities.
- The functioning of the hotspots currently presents a number of risks to respect for fundamental rights through practices and standards that are either inadequate or contrary to the EU asylum and immigration acquis.
- Reception conditions are inadequate and often below standard. Conditions in the hotspots do not fulfil the demands for safety, health and hygiene, including basic amenities and security of the place.
- Detention, disguised as restriction of freedom of movement of persons, is widely applied as standard practice in the hotspots. The recast Reception Conditions Directive defines any confinement of a person to a specific place where he or she is deprived of his or her freedom of movement as “detention”. This consequently leads to the understanding that reception and detention should be different policies, but in the case of the hotspots these two are blurred.

---

website; The implementation of the hotspots in Italy and Greece A study , ECRE 2016 For a discussion of this beyond Greece and Italy, see AIDA, Wrong counts and closing doors: The reception of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe, March 2016, available at: [goo.gl/xXH818](http://goo.gl/xXH818).

- The provision of information in a language that refugees understand, and at all stages of the process, as per the Reception Conditions and Asylum Procedures Directives, still remains problematic.
- One of the biggest problems that require an immediate and effective solution is the handling and identification of persons belonging to vulnerable groups. According to the applicable laws, vulnerable groups are: a) unaccompanied minors; b) persons with disability or suffering from incurable or serious disease; c) the elderly; d) women during pregnancy or puerperium; e) single-parent families with minor children; f) victims of torture, rape or other serious form of psychological, physical or sexual violence or exploitation, persons with post-traumatic stress disorder, especially survivors and relatives of shipwreck victims, and g) victims of human trafficking. Despite the fact that the existing laws include a provision on special care for these persons, implementation is particularly difficult, due to the significant shortcomings in the screening procedures, in combination with the inadequacy of suitable facilities for the provision of services to persons belonging to vulnerable groups.

Cities located in arrival, transit and destination countries in Europe are finding themselves in an especially critical position with regards to the social, humanitarian and financial consequences of the refugee flow. Regardless of specific competences at different governance levels, it is typically up to municipalities to ensure that asylum seekers settle in well for the duration of their stay, however short or long it may be. This situation requires systematic and coordinated efforts at local level involving a range of stakeholders.

Local authorities are supposed to manage this temporary reception of asylum seekers in front-line and transit cities. They need to offer asylum seekers temporary accommodation until a decision has been taken about their status. Once the asylum seeker has received a status, either as a refugee or as a person receiving humanitarian protection, local authorities play a role in ensuring housing and starting with the integration processes of the beneficiary into the host society. In general, regional and local authorities do not only have to implement national policies, but often have to develop ad hoc measures. Here a key issue in improving the local responses are better coordination, more knowledge and exchange of practices, including initiatives taken by local NGOs.

## Issues and Challenges in access to specific services

In looking at access to specific services it is important to remember that the EU has established The Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy (2004) and the vehicle for its implementation, the Common Agenda for Integration (2005) as the basis upon which migrant integration in the EU is formulated, and view integration as comprising the following:

- a two-way, dynamic process;
- implying respect for EU values;
- employment forms a key part of integration and is central to participation;
- knowledge of the receiving society's language, history, and institutions is integral to successful integration;
- education, which is critical for active participation;
- **access to institutions, goods and services on the same basis as nationals is fundamental to integration; interaction between migrant/citizen;**
- practice of diverse cultures and religions to be safeguarded;
- participation in the democratic process;
- mainstreaming integration policies;
- clear goals, indicators and evaluation mechanisms to adjust integration policy.

## Health services

Findings from research<sup>2</sup> confirm that health issues can be a fundamental obstacle to integration, as they affect virtually all areas of life and shape the ability to enter employment, learn the host country's languages or interact with public institutions. The British Survey on

---

<sup>2</sup>UNHCR study recommends paying adequate attention to refugee-specific issues of trauma and gender related health issues whereas an OECD study also recommends to identify mental and physical health issues early by mainstreaming mental health assessments into standard health checks

Refugees (2005-2009) found, for example, that those who described themselves as being in good health were more likely to be employed than other refugees. Poor health was also associated with slower improvement in English language skills overtime. Hence, the healthcare needs of refugees should be addressed before other objectives, such as language learning and entry into employment, can be achieved.

The above cited reports and others<sup>3</sup>, highlight the following barriers to access and effective use of health care systems:

- Migrants experience legal, psycho-social and economic problems in accessing health care.
- Language barriers are an obvious problem, so too is the cost of health care where even very small co-payments for a migrant on a low income provides a significant barrier.
- Irregular migrants and asylum seekers waiting for their applications to be processed face legal barriers to care in many countries.
- In addition the public health services are often not in a position to cater for the specific health problems of migrants and lack the sensitivity and skills needed to deliver health care successfully to people who may have significant differences in their concepts of health and differing attitudes towards illness, pain and death, as well as other ways of voicing symptoms, coping with illness and expressing expectations towards the physician.
- The organisation of disease prevention and health promotion for migrant populations is often inadequate. This is not only true for prenatal examinations, but also for vaccination programmes and other kinds of prevention and early detection, including screening. So far, prevention programmes have rarely used culture-sensitive approaches to reach the various migrant groups.

---

<sup>3</sup> ECCRE Good practice guide on the integration of refugees in the European Union: Health Available at: <http://www.eccre.org/component/downloads/downloads/187.html>

1.1.8 The high prices of certain healthcare services and the cost of medicines are a heavy burden for most migrants. These factors may result in treatment not being sought early enough or prescribed treatment measures not being followed or medicines not taken. This causes an incalculable increase in individual human suffering and the overall economic costs to society.

### **Education Services**

A key report<sup>4</sup> by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights assesses asylum seekers' and refugees' opportunities to access early childhood education, primary, secondary and tertiary education, and adult education in 14 Member States. It provides an overview of the legal framework, policies, practices, and statistics, and identifies available support measures, as well as challenges and possible areas for improvement. The report highlights the following main issues:

- In nine Member States, children in immigration detention have no access to any form of education. The main reason stated for this is the short length or the exceptional nature of their detention.
- The main challenges concerning access to early childhood education include long waiting periods, language barriers, accessibility in terms of distance, insufficient guidance for families, lack of information and the treatment and integration of traumatised children.
- Once enrolled in school, asylum seeker children generally benefit from the same services as national children and in some Member States are also eligible for additional support for language learning or to overcome disabilities. Some countries also offer financial allowances for school supplies.
- Only few Member States specifically address educational needs arising from irregular school attendance before children's arrival in the country.
- Many Member States report difficulties with regard to education of children who are above the compulsory school age, including challenges to "force" them to attend

---

<sup>4</sup> •Current migration situation in the EU: Education, FRA 2017

classes for younger age groups and the absence of programmes providing access to vocational training.

- A key obstacle to adults' access to tertiary education and employment is that it is impossible or complicated to recognise diplomas from learning institutions in the asylum seeker's country of origin.
- Support in some Member States depends on short term project based funding.
- In addition, even though official statistics on the number of asylum seekers and refugees in a variety of types of formal education exist in most Member States, they are not collected systematically and may refer to various groups including asylum seekers, refugees, non-nationals and children with a migration background.

### **Social Services**

Ensuring and safeguarding migrant's access to social services is important for a number of reasons. First and foremost, it is integral to protecting the human rights of migrants and to enable them to lead their lives in dignity by providing pathways towards meaningful societal participation. Secondly, providing social services for the integration of migrants is an investment which pays off economically, contributing to economic growth and a wider tax base in receiving countries through a strengthening of Europe's workforce. It also constitutes the most effective way to prevent future costs tied to inadequate integration in society.

However, it is clear, that given the scale of flows in recent years, social service providers have been significantly impacted by this trend, as they are often at the forefront of co-ordinating support. Depending on the legal status and needs of different migrant groups, such support can range from short-term actions such as emergency accommodation, social and healthcare assistance and support with administrative needs to longer term services that include language learning, cultural integration, counselling and labour market integration. In a context of fiscal consolidation which poses challenges for sustainable service provision and against a backdrop of rising xenophobia, often fuelled by political rhetoric, social service providers face significant challenges to find the best ways to deliver services to a diverse group of users – a

group which continues to grow in size, experiences stigmatisation and trauma, and may often be highly skilled yet have a wide spectrum of needs.

## Section Two: Local Actions to provide reception services: Some Case Studies

### 1. REACT, Thessaloniki (EL)

#### Background:

Thessaloniki is the second largest city in Greece and capital of the region of Macedonia. During the current refugee crisis, Thessaloniki has experience extremely high levels of transit migration, however since borders were shut and the Balkan route into Europe was blocked in March 2016, refugees have become trapped in Northern Greece and are therefore tending to stay for longer periods in Greece. Additionally, after the border closures, refugees in the border camp at Idomeni were relocated to camps in and around Thessaloniki creating larger populations of longer-term refugees in the city region.

In response to the border closure and refugee crisis, the Municipality of Thessaloniki invited local stakeholders to coordinate as a city to create an Urban Local Group and produce a Local Action Plan. The two broad challenges identified were emergency support services and social integration. As time goes on the emphasis has started to shift away from a focus on short-term emergency facilities and camps for arrivals to medium to longer-term integration of refugees into the city. Asylum seekers are increasingly choosing to stay longer in the city rather than seek transfer to other countries.

#### The Action:

The REACT (Refugee, Assistance, Collaboration, Thessaloniki) project is a project managed by the Municipality of Thessaloniki in partnership with the UNHCR, implemented through local networks of local authorities and NGOs. It is running from May 2016 until December 2017 and is funded by the EU. The total project budget is € 3.505,308,29.

The focus of the project is to establish accommodation in the city for asylum seekers and refugees in private apartments, collective centres and host families (with a target of 888 accommodation places overall) and provide basic support services to them. This includes accommodation maintenance, interpretation and accompaniment to health and other public services, legal and psycho-social support and access to health and education. The programme prioritises particularly vulnerable groups such as single parent families.

An important part of REACT's work has been increasing the supply of accommodation available to refugees and this has involved working with estate agents, landlords and promoting the project to prospective host families. Estate Agents have supported the project pro bono by promoting the project to landlords and homeowners, putting up posters and disseminating information materials. REACT has collaborated with TV and radio channels to promote the programme to prospective providers of accommodation.



The municipality has been accruing accommodation through the renting of private apartments and equipping them with furniture, appliances and linen so that they can then accommodate asylum seekers and refugees. Beneficiaries/residents receive prepaid food vouchers, free personal hygiene items and house cleaning materials and travel cards for the city bus system. The REACT programme signs up interested host families and matches them to appropriate referrals awaiting accommodation. Host families receive financial support (€75/per person/per month).

NGOs working within the network provide a range of services. This includes counselling and psychosocial support, particularly in dealing with discrimination from ARSIS, children's activities by the YMCA, health care and advice through the polyclinics of PRAKSIS and legal advice and representation through the Greek Council for Refugees and the Hellenic League for Human Rights. With each organisation coordinating through the network and delivering on its area of expertise REACT is an example of a holistic approach to supporting refugee integration and provision of basic services.

**Further Links:**

REACT website <http://www.react-thess.gr/>

REACT TV broadcast for renting apartments <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzPKhMAJpn0>

REACT broadcast for host families <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YBtNlek3pDA>

**Contact:**

Email: [reactun@gmail.com](mailto:reactun@gmail.com)

Telephone: +30 231 331 8600



## 2. Health Commission, Roquetas De Mar (ES)

### Background:

Roquetas de Mar is located in the south of Almeria province in the region of Andalucia. The municipality is 60 square km in size and has experienced rapid population growth in recent decades from 28,000 in 1990 to 96,000 inhabitants in 2017. This growth has been stimulated by economic growth in intensive agriculture and tourism. Population fluctuates seasonally and in the summer the population can reach circa 250,000. It is an area of Spain with a high migrant population making up 30% of the permanent resident population. Migrants are attracted by the economic opportunities offered in particular by the agricultural economy. Many are also in Roquetas seeking the right to family reunion.

The migrant population is extremely diverse. The highest EU migrant population originates from Romania and third party migrants originate predominantly from Senegal, Morocco, Mali, Guinea Bissau and Ghana. The Municipal Office for Immigration was created in 1997 to lead on migrant integration policy and provide integration support services. The overarching aim is to eliminate inequalities between the migrant and Spanish populations through working in a coordinated way between departments and different organisations.

### The Action:

The Health Commission is an example of strategic joined up working across the municipality. It was formed in 2008 and is made up of 5 city councils, 7 NGOs, migrants associations and health care professionals. It acts as a central communication hub to coordinate initiatives, share information, develop ideas, co-create strategies and exploit the synergies between the different organisations.

The commission has developed a number of initiatives to join up health promotion with other migrant integration work. In particular it has focused on improving migrant access to health programmes, health education and supporting migrant women in vulnerable situations. Examples of projects include incorporating health education as part of Spanish lesson programmes; training health agents and developing action plans to deal with different aspects of health; and education around household cleanliness and hygiene to prevent infectious diseases. The Commission also hosts regular seminar events bringing together different actors to look at specific issues around migrant health, latest research and health inequality.



A major project which has emerged out of this commission is the Programme for Mental Health Care of the Migrant Population (PAPI) which is targeted at migrants diagnosed with mental disorders and those at risk of social exclusion. This programme works to make mental health care accessible to migrants and also develops the skills of health care professionals to work more effectively in an intercultural setting. It also researches and shares epidemiological studies.

The programme places a high value on sustaining active networks. These networks are the support systems that ensure interventions are appropriate and meet the needs of immigrant populations. Additionally through the network, NGOs and migrant associations can better coordinate with health care institutions and professions to make access to treatment more direct and rapid. Particular challenges identified by the programme are how to support very transient people and create a continuation of treatment and also how to provide health support to illegal immigrants.

#### **Further Resources:**

A film about the Health Commission (in Spanish) can be found here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CE5ti4HS0c>

#### **Contact:**

Pilar Baraza Cano – [mariap.baraza.sspa@juntadeandalucia.es](mailto:mariap.baraza.sspa@juntadeandalucia.es)

### **3. The National Network of SPRAR- Experience of Messina (IT)**

#### **Background:**

The city of Messina is located on the northern coast of Sicily. It has a total population of 238,439, with 5% of inhabitants registered as non-Italian. The main origin of migrants is Sri Lanka, the Philippines and N. Africa- mainly Morocco. Messina is a key transit location for migrants crossing the Mediterranean from Libya to Italy. Between January 2016 and May 2017 more than 18,000 people have arrived in Messina by boat including 2,925 unaccompanied minors.



The management of refugee arrivals is through a two-stage reception system. Stage one deals with immediate issues including identification and registration by police, health screening and emergency accommodation in camps. Stage two is focused on supporting migrants who wish to stay in Italy, known as SPRAR (Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees).

### **The Action:**

SPRAR is Italy's national system for providing longer-term accommodation and support for refugees and unaccompanied minors. It is delivered by localised SPRAR networks, made up of local institutions who implement reception services and a set of special projects. The overarching aim of these projects is to support integration, social inclusion and the progression of refugees into Italian society. Local SPRAR's fund these services through accessing the National Fund for Asylum and Services, managed by the Ministry of the Interior. SPRAR projects work with the specialist expertise of cultural mediators, social workers, educators, psychologists and legal professionals. Typically, migrants receive support through the SPRAR for 6-9 months during the early stages of settlement in Italy.

In Messina, there are two SPRAR centres- Castoreale and Rodi Milici with a total of 51 family units. They are managed by the Cooperative Azione Sociale. The budget for both centres is €1.3 million/year. The Cooperative works in collaboration with a range of stakeholders- public, private and the voluntary and third sector to support migrants in an integrated way. This enables individual support and planning for each migrant. The main activities of the SPRARs are cultural-linguistic mediation; support with accommodation and access to housing; orientation and access to services; education; professional (re)qualification; labour market integration; social integration; legal support; and social and health services.

Private companies work with the SPRARs to offer work and internship opportunities and various third sector organisations offer recreational, social and cultural activities. The SPRAR has close relationships with the school and adult education systems and it helps mediate the enrolment of children in local schools. Adults are supported to undertake Italian language classes (which are compulsory) and other educational opportunities. Careers experts work with linguistic and cultural mediators to undertake an analysis of skills and employability. This results in bespoke training and apprenticeship opportunities being offered. While many migrants have been supported into their new life in Italy and there are many successful individual case studies, the SPRARs have experienced problems reconciling their local needs with the centralised SPRAR immigration system. Also a continuing challenge has been distrust of local communities to SPRAR projects.

### **Further Information:**

For information about the SPRAR system in English see <http://www.sprar.it/english>

Coopertive Azione Sociale <http://www.azionesociale.it/>

### **Contact:**

Giancomo Villari: [giancomo.villari@comune.messina.it](mailto:giancomo.villari@comune.messina.it)

#### 4. Socio-Economic Inclusion of Asylum Seekers and Refugees, Riga (LV)

##### Background:

While Latvia has not been a common destination for refugees, numbers have risen in recent years. In 2015, Latvia made the commitment to receive 531 refugees within the EU Relocation Programme. By the end of April 2017, Latvia had received 318 of this quota with 308 relocated from Greece and Italy and 10 from Turkey. In 2016 350 people applied for asylum in Latvia including 169 from the Relocation Programme with the top 3 countries of origin being Syria, Afghanistan and Russia. From January-April 2017, 211 people applied for asylum in Latvia including 149 from the relocation programme with the top 3 countries of origin being Syria, Eritrea and Kazakhstan. However, while asylum applications are rising, monitoring has indicated that the majority of asylum seekers granted refugee status or an alternative means of staying in Latvia have gone on to leave Latvia for other countries in Europe, very often Germany. Therefore numbers of those choosing to remain more permanently are much lower.

In December 2015, as a response to growing numbers of asylum seekers arriving in Latvia, the government approved an Action Plan for the Relocation and Admission of Persons who need International Protection. The aim of this plan is to formalise a system for assessing and admitting asylum seekers as well as set out a socio-economic inclusion strategy for refugees and those who have obtained other status to remain which fits the Latvian context.

During the asylum procedure, asylum seekers are accommodated in a reception centre in Mucenieki, 17 km from Riga in an ex Soviet military base. Each asylum seeker receives €3/day to purchase food and basic commodities. The centre includes access to internet, a gym, a library and a playroom.

During their stay in the reception centre, residents receive Latvian language tuition (120h) and also attend introductory courses about Latvia which cover history, culture, employment, education, health care, social security and other information to support orientation in the country. The studies are led in Latvian with translation into six languages- Russian, English, Arabic, Kurdish, Farsi and French. Additionally a website has been created which is available in these six languages with information for both asylum seekers, refugees and those granted alternative status and also information for the Latvian population.



Once granted status to remain, refugees or a person who has been granted alternative status receive €139 /month and €97/month for each additional family member. They also have a right to work and can receive support from the State Employment Agency. However, particular challenges effecting integration have been identified as a lack of knowledge of the Latvian language and also a particularly negative attitude towards immigration from Latvian society and media. Both these factors inhibit integration at all levels.

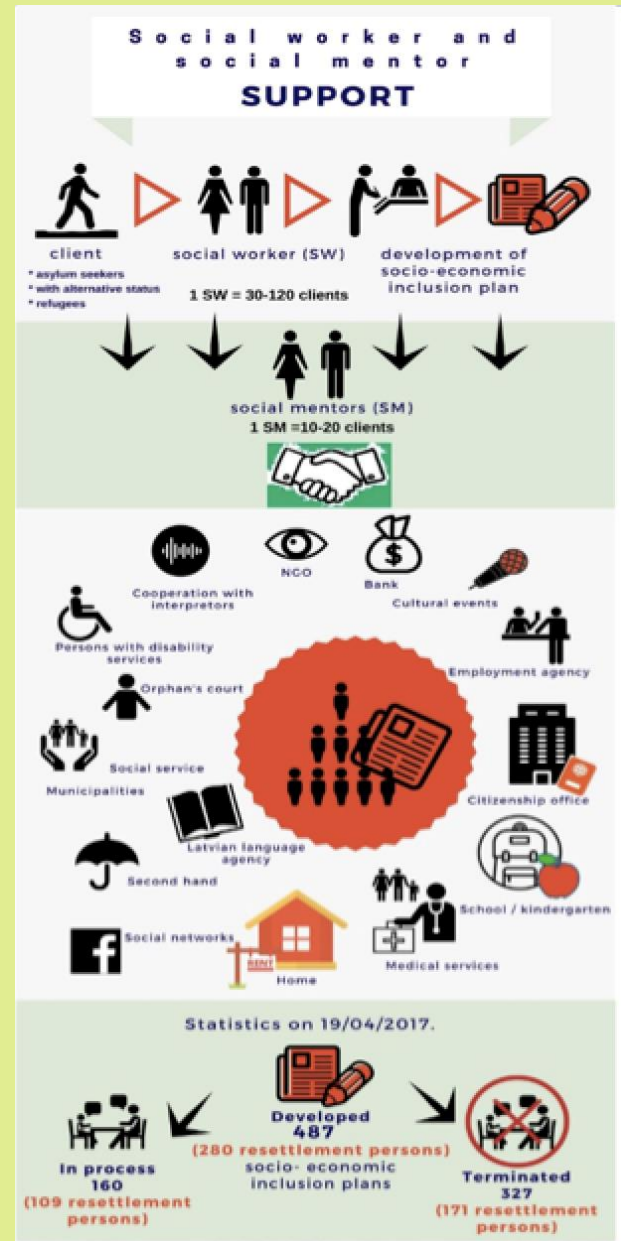
To try and counter socio-economic inclusion issues, a national programme of nearly €2.2 million has been implemented by the Society Integration Foundation, in cooperation with the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs. This programme has invested in the provision of social workers and social mentors for asylum seekers and persons with refugee or alternative status. These services are available for 3 months during the asylum application process and an additional 12 months after obtaining status. The social support offered aims to assist a person during their transition into Latvian life and includes socio-cultural understanding, navigating the social system and public institutions, everyday life skills and skills development.

**Further Links:**

Information about Mucenieki Accommodation Centre can be found here <http://www.pmlp.gov.lv/en/home/services/asylum-seeking/mucenieki.html>

The information website for asylum seekers and Latvian society- <http://www.beglis.lv/en>

An English version of The Action Plan for Relocation and Admission in Latvia of Persons who need International Protection can be found here <http://www.vvc.gov.lv/export/sites/default/docs/LRTA/Citi/Cab. Order No. 759 - Action Plan for Movement and Admission in Latvia.pdf>



**Contact:**

Ilze Dumina (Society Integration Foundation): [ilze.dimina@sif.gov.lv](mailto:ilze.dimina@sif.gov.lv)

## 5. Reception Services for Unaccompanied Minors, Dresden (DE)

### Background:

Asylum seekers in Germany are accommodated broadly in three types of accommodation- initial reception centers, collective accommodation centers and decentralized accommodation. All asylum seekers within Germany without a residence permit are initially transferred to the nearest reception centre and for a period of up to six months after their initial asylum applications have been filed, asylum seekers are generally obliged to stay in an initial reception centre. Regional lander and local municipalities are responsible for asylum accommodation and therefore the approach to reception services and what is provided varies regionally.

Unaccompanied children and young people under 18 account for a considerable proportion of the growing number of asylum seekers arriving in Germany. Unaccompanied minors from third countries entering Germany are a particularly vulnerable group and specific reception services have been developed to support their particular needs. On contact with authorities, unaccompanied minors are taken into care by the Youth Welfare Office. The subsequent provision of accommodation and material provisions varies between Lander with young people often being housed in shared accommodation centers or also in host families.

The city of Dresden has seen a huge rise in accommodation needs of asylum seekers from 483 in 2009 to 5462 in 2015. There has been a concurrent rise in the numbers of unaccompanied minors.

### The Action:

The Share Accommodation Shelter provides accommodation for unaccompanied minors and currently houses 20 people under the age of 18, who share rooms (2 per room). The centre has 15 social advisors working to support the inhabitants. Every young person receives a monthly grant of €300 /month and they also receive a medical card. They receive support from an official guardian.

As well as accommodation, the centre includes fitness facilities, a playground, a kitchen, internet and satellite TV. Staff and guardians support the young people with school attendance, creating and sustaining daily routine and leisure activities and the centre has special events to celebrate cultural festivals. However, a key challenge remains that of motivation and a sense of being able integrate. Also challenging is how to maintain direction without parental control or the parameters provided by the young people culture and society of origin.

### Contact:

Magdi Khalil: [Magdi.Khalil@mailbox.tu-dresden.de](mailto:Magdi.Khalil@mailbox.tu-dresden.de)

## 6. Grand Hotel, Augsburg (DE)

### Background:

Augsburg is a city located in South Germany in Schwabia, Bavaria with a population of just under 300,000. Research has shown, nearly 50 % of the population has a migration background. Like other cities in Germany, Augsburg faces challenges with the integration of refugees and asylum seekers, particularly during the early stages of arrival and through the asylum seeking process. While many factors underpin this lack of integration, the nature of accommodation accessed by asylum seekers is an important factor. The regional government of Schwabia provides a mixture of centralised accommodation in designated larger spaces and also more dispersed accommodation in houses which the government rents in order to house asylum seekers.

A lack of access to work and barriers to other activities also serves to isolate asylum seekers from the wider community. For the first 3 months after arrival work is forbidden, and after this time they only stand a chance if no German or EU citizen is in the running for the job- a priority system called *Vorrangprüfung*. Many asylum seekers experience delays or difficulties in getting the correct papers to qualify them to work and difficulties with finding work can continue for many years. The Grand Hotel has evolved to provide solutions to some of these issues creating a space where cosmopolitanism, sharing and communal living is built into the ethic and practical running of the project and it's different activities.

### The Action:



Grand Hotel is a hybrid building use project combining artist studios and cultural facilities, asylum seeker accommodation, a restaurant, bar and hotel under one roof. The project started in 2011 when a small group of local artists got together to develop a plan to bring a former old people's home in central Augsburg back into use. They approached the owner to discover that the building was already earmarked for asylum accommodation. The city urgently needed spaces to accommodate refugees. It was then that they developed the concept to integrate cultural use by artists with hotel and asylum accommodation. The city agreed to the proposal and in 2015 'Grand hotel Cosmopolis' opened. With the help of local volunteers, the artists fundraised and renovated the building, investing over €300,000 in the building works and many thousands of volunteer hours.



Social equity forms the foundation of the project. All those using the space-artists, visitors, staff, craftsmen, guests are treated as equals. The term 'Fluchtlinge' (refugee) is barely used, instead people prefer to refer to hotel guests with and without asylum. A diversity of people are guests for varying amounts of time.

There are double bedrooms with shared communal facilities which accommodate asylum seeking families, as well as individual women, men and children. The accommodation for asylum seekers is paid for by the regional government. Twelve rooms have been individually designed by artists and accommodate travellers, visitors and artists from around the world. While prices are suggested guests are invited to pay as much as they can. All guests- refugees and visitors are invited to help volunteers in the kitchen to help prepare meals and meals are served on a communal dinner table.

On average more than 60 people reside within the building, and volunteer help has risen steadily to around 200 people locally with many extra volunteers provided by guests visiting the Grand Hotel. Asylum seekers are involved in the running of the space and the restaurant and participate in the various activities and programme of cultural events. This provides both work and entrepreneurial opportunities for asylum seekers.

Grandhotel has become the hub of a creative international community in Augsburg. The design and function of the space makes it natural and inevitable that asylum seekers mix and integrate with local people and visitors to Augsburg. Participation is a central principle. The project draws from utopian ideals, aiming to manifest a cosmopolitan every day culture without limits where refugees, asylum seekers, travellers, artists, guests and neighbours meet and are welcome.

**Further Information:**

[www.grandhotel-cosmopolis.org](http://www.grandhotel-cosmopolis.org)

For more detailed information about the project in German, English and Spanish see [http://grandhotel-cosmopolis.org/de/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/06/GHC\\_3sprKonzept\\_A4\\_view.pdf](http://grandhotel-cosmopolis.org/de/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2014/06/GHC_3sprKonzept_A4_view.pdf)

**Contact:**

**E-mail:** [kontakt@grandhotel-cosmopolis.org](mailto:kontakt@grandhotel-cosmopolis.org)

**Phone:** 0821 450 82 411



## 7. The Drop App, A Drop in the Ocean, Nea Kaval Camp (EL/NO)

### Background:

A Drop in the Ocean is a small Norwegian based charity set up in August 2015 to provide support to refugees in Greece. It is currently active on the island of Chios, in Northern Greece and in Athens. It is a volunteer organisation and it's main tasks include the distribution of food, clothes and other items; the organisation of activities for residents of camps; assisting in English learning and providing materials and support for bilingual language learning.

### The Action:

The Drop Currency and Drop App is a virtual currency scheme which has been developed for use by those resident in Nea Kavala refugee camp to acquire food, clothing and other goods. It was developed by two volunteers, Maarten Hunick and Bart Driessen who wanted to improve the distribution system of the camp's market.

The app and currency have transformed the way that the charity organise warehouse operations and distribute donations and other goods to camp residents. It has created an effective system for the warehouse which is fit for purpose for an operation run by an ever changing workforce of volunteers. It has empowered camp residents to work with a budget and 'shopping style' approach to acquiring donations and also provided a smart system of logging and tracking donations and what is needed by the residents.



The app has become integrated into the daily lives of residents and volunteers. Residents are assigned a fixed time each week to visit A Drop in the Ocean's market. They receive a 'drop card' with the number of the container they live in, the family's name and how many drops they have in their account. They use these drops like currency and shop in the market before they register their goods at the 'cashier' and drops are deducted from their card.

This system results in goods purchased to be logged providing a streamlined system to track which items and what sizes residents want. The Drop app uses the data generated by the market to create statistics and diagrams to analyse the needs and trends of the camp day to day.

In order to improve the organisation and efficiency of the warehouse, the Drop app also acts as a coordination tool to register and track boxes of donations. Once each box is checked, it receives a QR code sticker, the code is scanned and information about the contents of and location of the box are added into the app. An important benefit of this system is that it is simple for volunteers to learn and therefore they become very quickly effective warehouse workers.

This app has been very successful and A Drop in the Ocean are currently adopting the system into the other camps they work in in Greece.

**Further Information:**

To see a video about how the Drop app works go to <https://www.drapenihavet.no/en/the-drop-app-2/>

**Contact:**

Tel: +47 482 97 381

Email: [post@drapenihavet.no](mailto:post@drapenihavet.no)

## **8. 'Refugees Welcome' -Riace Resettlement Programme, Calabria (IT)**

**Background:**

Riace is a hilltop medieval village located in the region of Calabria in the south of Italy. The region is facing two major demographic trends. The coastline of Calabria has been a major landing site for refugees seeking a new life in Europe and numbers have risen dramatically over recent years. Concurrently, the region has suffered 20-30 years of high demographic decline, with a large proportion of it's young population moving to northern Italy for better economic opportunities. The European recession has accentuated this dynamic and the population of Riace dropped dramatically from 2,500 to 400 from the mid 1990's. This has resulted in the usual issues associated with depopulation and shrinking settlements- empty and declining properties, an aging population, closure of local services and general decline in conviviality and community spirit.

**The Action:**

Rather than seeing the incoming flow of refugees as a drain, the municipality of Riace has embraced their arrival as a potential solution to the dynamic of decline. Riace has adopted a highly proactive strategy for welcoming refugees to the settlement, providing homes and opportunities to encourage them to settle. It has become a refugee reception model well known around the world.

The approach titled the 'Refugees Welcome' project, has been spearheaded by Mayor Domenico Lucano. Before becoming mayor, Lucano had helped facilitate the housing of Kurdish asylum seekers who had arrived on a boat nearby to the village in 1998. Six years later after becoming mayor, Lucano was able to implement a more formal strategy of refugee resettlement with a comprehensive programme of integration measures.

Funding from the EU and Italian government is managed by the local municipality and cooperatives run by refugees and locals. The municipality receives approx €30 /day for each asylum seeker housed.



New arrivals in the village have been recognised as a significant lifeline for the continuation and regeneration of the village. Rather than taking a temporary 'hosting' approach to refugees undergoing the asylum process, Riace invites and incentivizes refugees to stay and settle in the village, providing them with free accommodation, schooling and access to work.

The local administration has rented many of the empty and semi derelict houses at a low price providing locals with income from their properties which had stood long-term empty. A programme of activities informed and prepared local people for the new arrivals into their village and cultural activities and events have celebrated the longer-term migrant past of the area.

Through this settlement the population of Riace has climbed and it is currently at 1800 residents with about a quarter of these being migrants. Along with this population growth has been a diversification in the population with people from over 20 nationalities now residing there- creating a multicultural village community. Refugee residents have integrated in many areas of the largely agrarian economy, working in farming, local craft making workshops and in the tourism industry. Additionally, the local administration created a coupon system for migrants with no income which acts as a local currency and can be spent inside the community, thereby strengthening the local economy. Locals are directly involved in and paid for the training of refugees. The influx of children has meant that the local school has been kept open.

A key to the success of this strategy has been the strong leadership and determination of Lucano with his open and long-term vision for rejuvenating the village. The approaches adopted and practised in Riace have spread to other villages and towns in the region. The example of Riace offers a very different approach to the camp and reception centre accommodation model. It also highlights the benefits that can come from making village life viable and attractive to refugees to counter the draw of big cities. At it's best the village/small town scale may support more personal relationships to develop between established local populations and immigrants and also could provide new arrivals with a healthier and

safer context to heal from trauma and rebuild their identity and life. However the challenge of sustaining the economies of these small rural communities remains difficult and for many migrants economic opportunity resides in the cities.



**Further Links:**

[www.comune.ricac.rc.it](http://www.comune.ricac.rc.it)

An article on Riace  
<http://www.eurozine.com/the-riace-model/>

Riace festival  
<https://www.facebook.com/Riace-In-Festival-843053969108143/>

## 9. Canopy Housing, Leeds (UK)

### Background:

Leeds is a city in West Yorkshire, England with a population of approx. 780,000. It is a diverse city with over 75 ethnic groups, with minority ethnic populations representing just under 11.6% of the total population. It has a long history of immigration.

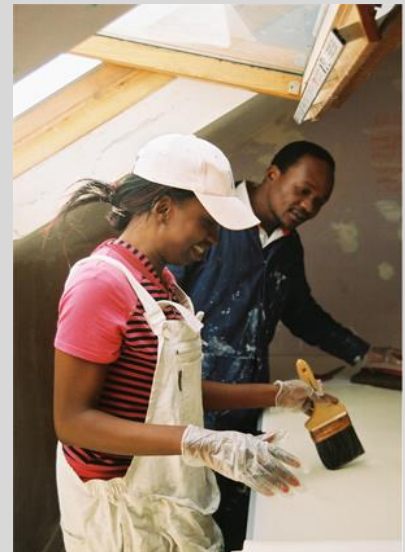
Leeds is part of the City of Sanctuary movement- a national movement to build a culture of welcome for people seeking sanctuary in the UK. In addition to the city council's membership of the national Asylum Dispersal Programme, it has more recently been in negotiations to bring families to the city under voluntary Afghan and Syrian relocation schemes.

Many refugees and asylum seekers are at risk of homelessness or experience homelessness at some stage. A recent report for the UK in 2017 has found that many refugees in the UK are becoming homeless once granted asylum as they hit a 'cliff-edge' of support following a positive decision on refugee status. Once granted status refugees have only 28 days of support known as the 'move-on' period. Delays in processing papers and official documents mean that refugees are left destitute, unable to access social security, employment or housing. Housing agencies are under increasing pressure to support and help integrate new migrants.

### The Action:

Canopy Housing is a self-help community housing charity set up in Leeds in 1996. It works mainly in inner-city multicultural neighbourhoods in Leeds and is dedicated to the renovation of empty and often derelict properties. It was the winner of the UN World Habitat Awards in 2016 for its innovative housing work. It provides housing opportunities for people that are homeless or threatened with homelessness and also

mobilises local volunteers to help with renovation activities and at the same time gain new skills in building work.



While Canopy does not specifically target asylum seekers and refugees, many people involved are from this background. Specifically it shares an office space with local refugee organisations and this enables close collaboration and joint working and also improves accessibility of the scheme to asylum seekers/refugees. This joint working is critical to supporting refugees with information about their housing and accommodation options, especially during the critical time after asylum is granted and refugees move out of the accommodation provided by the government Home Office.

Volunteers are the main driving force behind Canopy and many come from migrant backgrounds. Through volunteering, they learn many useful skills such as plastering, painting and decorating, tiling, wallpapering, carpeting etc and volunteers have access to facilities at the Canopy office including laundry, computers and workshops. Volunteers develop new networks through the volunteering community and they are supported to pursue extra training in building related skills.

Additionally, many people with refugee backgrounds have become tenants of Canopy. Canopy is a responsible landlord, has affordable rent levels and does not charge deposits or ask for rent in advance. Canopy tenants volunteer alongside other volunteers to decorate their new house.

Canopy's work has enabled it to build up a freehold asset base of over € 1.1 million, helping it raise capital and revenue funding from a variety of sources. It works closely with Leeds Council who leases some of its hard-to-let properties to Canopy on a peppercorn rent basis. Canopy is an innovative example of combining access to low cost housing with skills development and vocational training. It is an integrated way of offering asylum seekers and refugees a pathway into independent living in the UK.

**Further Information:**

Canopy Housing <http://canopyhousingproject.org/>

Leeds City of Sanctuary <https://leeds.cityofsanctuary.org/>

For the 2017 report 'Refugees Welcome? The Experience of New Refugees in the UK' see [https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0004/0316/APPG\\_on\\_Refugees\\_-\\_Refugees\\_Welcome\\_report.pdf](https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0004/0316/APPG_on_Refugees_-_Refugees_Welcome_report.pdf)

**Contact:**

Email: [info@canopyhousing.org](mailto:info@canopyhousing.org)

**Section Three: Additional Resources**

This section provides access to additional background reports and also other case studies relating to the theme of Reception Services.

- [“The Organisation of Reception Facilities for Asylum Seekers in different Member States”](#) European Migration Network, 2014.
- [Current migration situation in the EU: Education](#), FRA 2017
- ECCRE [Good practice guide on the integration of refugees in the European Union: Health](#)
- [The implementation of the hotspots in Italy and Greece A study](#), ECRE 2016
- For a discussion of this beyond Greece and Italy, see AIDA, [Wrong counts and closing doors: The reception of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe, March 2016](#)
- [Explanatory Note on the ‘Hotspot’ approach](#)
- [Eurocities- Refugee Reception and Integration in Cities, March 2016](#)

## Section Four: Workshop materials

This section provides access to the workshop material:

The [agenda](#) of the workshop

Presentations of Case Studies: [Dresden](#), [Messina](#), [Riga](#), [Roquetas de Mar](#).

Some [photo's](#) on our Facebook album.

This report has been produced by Haroon Saad (lead expert) and Ruth Essex (support expert) for the Arrival Cities Network.

August 2017