D1.1 Interview Report and Service Provision Needs and Gap Analysis

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Author: UAB-Teresa Sordé

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D1.1 Interview Report and Service Provision Needs and Gap Analysis

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Project no. 870939

SO-CLOSE

Enhancing Social Cohesion through Sharing the Cultural Heritage of Forced Migrations

DT-TRANSFORMATIONS-11-2019: Collaborative approaches to cultural heritage for social cohesion

Start date of project: 01/01/2020   Duration: 36 months

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Acronyms and abbreviations

In this report, countries are referred to by their official abbreviation. The abbreviations used are as follows:

EL	Greece
ES	Spain
IT	Italy
PL	Poland
SE	Sweden
R	Refugee/Asylum Seeker
CI	Cultural Institution
N	NGO
A	Academic
P	Policymaker

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents all the main results of the fieldwork conducted with all major stakeholders: refugee and asylum seeker communities, policymakers, cultural institutions, NGOs, and academics. In total, 196 semi-structured individual interviews were conducted across the following four EU member states (Italy, Spain, Poland, and Greece). All these countries have a history of having witnessed exile and forced migration themselves, even though the number of refugees hosted by them varies and they are not all affected in the same way by requests for asylum. Based on the experiences and perceptions of participants, the report attempts to assess needs and identify challenges in the sharing of the experience of forced displacement between refugees and the local communities in Europe where they have resettled.

The main findings are:

- Refugees and asylum seekers have very different reasons for seeking asylum and could face different types of challenges depending on their gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, economic resources, ideas, religions, age, social support networks, and regional economic and socio-economic characteristics, among many others features.

- A number of factors can impact refugees' integration into the host country: the political will at the local and national level, the migration and asylum policies, the diversity and efficiency of public services available, the media and cultural landscape, and the specific economic, social, and geographic characteristics, the size and composition of migrant communities' economic conditions, and pre-existing networks.

- The involvement of NGOs in different integration areas is crucial to ensure access to mainstream services for refugees and newcomers. Nevertheless, the scope of their action is limited by a lack of continuity of their service, the fragmented nature of programmes for refugees, the political agenda of the funding authorities, weak institutional capacity, and limited financial means.

- Cultural institutions are diverse with many areas of activity and a wide range of aims and missions. Overall, the refugees' cultural heritage is not one of the primary objectives of the cultural institutions' activities leaving an important space for improvement.

- Public opinion is divided on the issue of refugees, and according to several participants, the initial empathy of 2015 has been considerably replaced by xenophobia and anti-migrant rhetoric.

- The promotion of dialogue and the full recognition of the others would involve a more effective pathways to the full integration of refugees and asylum seekers communities.

- The basic medium of social integration is an interaction based on cross-cultural communication and mutual understanding and recognition. Beyond formal

policies, integration could be seen as a two-way process that requires a willingness of the host community and refugees to exchange, share spaces, and know each other. Cultural heritage could be a field of interaction.

- Many participants suggested that the memory of past forced displacement and migration in Europe could (but would not necessarily) contribute to the promotion of mutual understanding between forced displaced populations from past and present conflicts.

- The perception of being culturally accepted by others varies depending on the individual experiences, religious affiliations, and national identities of refugees and asylum seekers.

- Most interviewed refugees and asylum seekers said they would like to share their history and cultural heritage and noted that it was necessary to dispel misconceptions about the reality of life in their country of origin by reminding others of their rich cultural heritage and millennia of history.

- Digital technologies are not only the means of communication, but they can play an important role in building confidence between refugees and local communities and strengthening intercultural exchange.

- Refugee communities actively use the Internet and various social media tools to maintain contact with friends and family members, share experiences, and assist members of their communities.

- New technologies are often used by refugees to express themselves, heighten awareness of their situation to a wider public, learn more about the culture of the host country, and establish contact and exchange experiences with the local communities.

INTRODUCTION

This report presents all the main results of the fieldwork conducted with all major stakeholders: refugee and asylum seekers communities, policymakers, cultural institutions, NGOs, and academics. It will serve the purpose of identifying gaps and needs with the aim of fulfilling them in the subsequent phases of the project.

In collaboration with the project partners, a research design has been developed to specify the sampling process and define the data collection process and analysis plan. It is particularly important to highlight the work conducted in the field by the four cultural institutions: Villa Decius Association (Krakow), Monte Sole Peace School (Monte Sole), Memorial Museum of Exiles (La Jonquera), and Greek Forum of Refugees together with the affiliated Contemporary Social History Archives (Trikeri). The following graphic shows an overview of the different stages of the elaboration of the WP1.
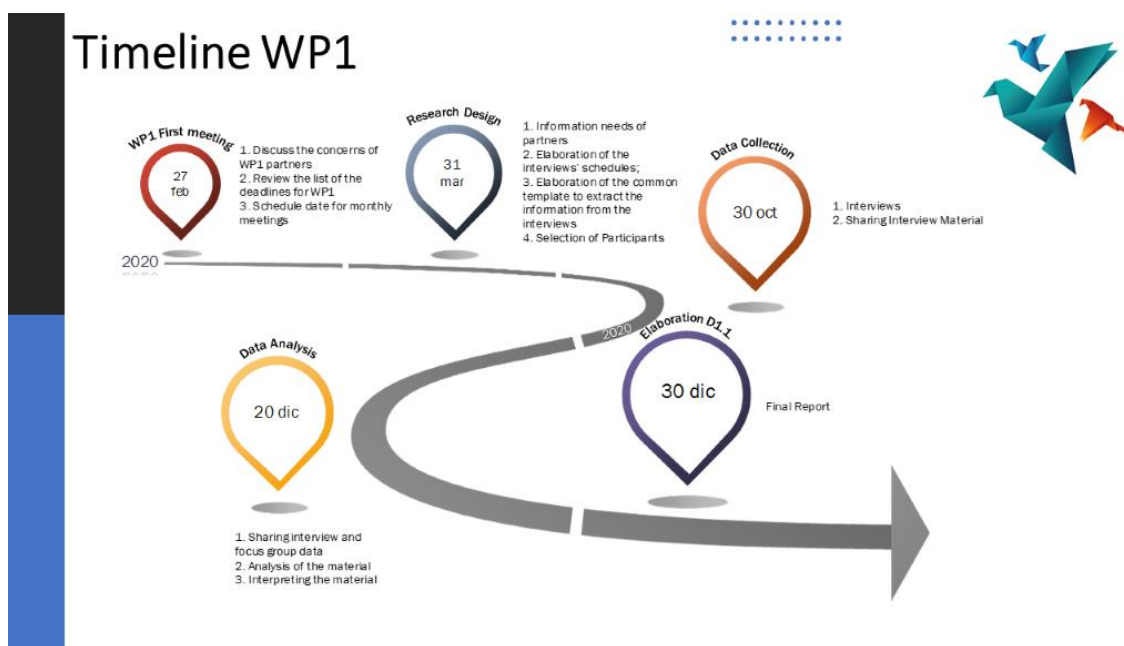
Figure 1.Timeline WP1

An important note needs to be made to the great efforts made by all the SO CLOSE consortium, and more specially to those directly involved in the development of WP1, as it has been mostly implemented against all odds in the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though conducting fieldwork is always a challenge, the pandemic backdrop deeply affecting the world population everyday life has represented an additional and unexpected one to be overcome. Looking back to all the work

performed, we would like to acknowledge all the efforts and dedication made to every single person who has made this report to become a tangible reality, from sharing their more personal stories to expert opinions, to those who have travelled or connected to whatsApp, cleaned the database, analysed the rich data or coordinated with all the partners.

Report structure

The structure of this report is as follows:

- **Chapter 1** offers a theoretical perspective of forced migration, cultural heritage, and the use of digital tools to access cultural heritage.
- **Chapter 2** outlines the project objectives and methodology used. This chapter illustrates the ethical aspects, limits, and challenges of the research.
- **Chapter 3** presents the major results of the collected data. The findings are grouped into three parts. The first part discusses the realities of forced migration, migratory journeys, and the inclusion processes. The second part analyses cultural heritage in the context of forced migration. The third part provides a detailed analysis of the use of digital technology and social media by refugees, asylum seekers, cultural institutions, NGOs, and governments.
- The purpose of **Chapter 4** is to identify the key challenges and needs of the different stakeholders involved and engaged in refugee issues.
- We conclude with some concluding remarks on the main findings identified.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A brief introduction to relevant theoretical concepts is presented in the following section in order to better frame the data analysis. Three main themes are presented in particular: forced migration as the common background of all the personal stories presented in the report (3.1.), access to cultural heritage and its connection to refugees' inclusion (3.2.), and the role played by digital tools in the field of cultural heritage to build new bridges and opportunities between refugees and local communities (3.3.).

1.1. FORCED MIGRATION

This report focuses on compiling the narratives of individuals who have fled from their homes due to forced displacement along with other individuals who work with them. The conceptualization of forced migration requires some attention to better frame the data analysis that follows.

Today's migrations are the result of a complex combination of voluntary and non-voluntary movements where the challenge lies in the impossibility of drawing a clear line between these categories. In recent years, we have witnessed a growing visibility of so-called involuntary, forced, or despair mobility (Castles 2003). These migrations, deeply marked by precariousness, represent a scenario that is most prone to the violation of basic rights. The forced nature of migration responds to sociological categories that must be reflected not so much through demarcation criteria, but on the basis of continuums that vary over time. For this reason, forced migration cannot be approached from conventional legal definitions, which distinguish refugees (the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol as a demarcation criterion), from others, considered economic migrants, who move voluntarily and autonomously, based on economic reasons. The world as it stands is witnessing a growing asynchrony between sociological and legal categories (Galdini 2018), which shows a trend towards the ineffectiveness of classical dichotomies when it comes to understanding international migration.

The theoretical approach to "forced" migration and the review of the restrictive perspectives to the term "forced" or "involuntary" that has emerged as a topic of discussion in recent years constitutes a central element to the debate. On the one hand, there is the question of how to link micro and macro theories and, on the other, the relevance of human agency. The debate around so-called "forced" migration necessarily leads to analysing how macro-level factors shape the opportunity structures that condition (that is, simultaneously enable and limit) people's migration decisions (De Hass 2011). Thus, the focus on human agency is extremely important when it comes to distinguishing between "voluntary" and "forced" migration. It follows from the conventional distinction that only those migrants perceived as victims without the ability to act ("forced migrants") deserve to be protected. Conversely,

other migrants (those defined as "voluntary") are punished precisely for the exercise of their agency. They are not deemed worthy of state protection as it is assumed that they decided to leave their countries voluntarily and they are attributed the vulnerable status of undocumented/irregular/illegal migrant (Gzesh 2008:111).

According to Herrera (2006:62), the scientific exploration of the reasons behind personal decisions has, in reality, never been a simple sociological or political question upon which one can base or classify the decision to migrate based on scales of will. However, since the 1990s, different reviews of forced displacement have been developed. All of them share the idea of a continuum between "forced" and "voluntary" migration (Van Hear 1998). As Van Hear (2014) argues, migrants who have traditionally been classified as "volunteers," insofar as they belong to the lowest socioeconomic levels, have extremely limited mobility options. In addition to this, they face the added lack of alternatives to migration to be able to economically sustain their lives and those of their families. In the same way, many of the people classified as refugees or asylum seekers ("forced migrants") redefine their migration project to also include the need to improve their life chances once they manage to reach a safe place. In short, according to Van Hear (2014), there is a movement from refugees into economic migrants throughout the process of departure, transit, and arrival which allows us to speak of "mixed migratory flows" which are increasingly complex and elastic. In part, this is due to a consequence of the frequent coexistence of situations of poverty, inequality, conflict, and human rights abuses.

Within the debates that place the link between globalization and the increase in expulsions of people within a context of progressive restriction to mobility, the concept of "survival migrations," coined by Saskia Sassen (2016), is relevant. The author refers to the loss of habitat in the places of origin as a cause of migration that is conceived as a survival strategy and that leads people to risk their lives in dangerous journeys to escape their places of origin. Sassen (2016) argues that the mix of adverse conditions – wars, dead land, loss of natural resources, and expulsions (economic, social, and biospheric) has produced extensive loss of habitat for an increasing number of people, in part as a consequence of misguided development policies and the abuse of austerity policies and contraction in public spending. It is no longer about migrants in search of a better life who aspire to send money and one day perhaps return to their homes of origin along with the family they left behind, but of people who simply yearn to survive and often do not even have a home to return to. To understand the rise of these expulsions, Sassen concludes that political and economic systems have gone from a logic in which they sought to include people as consumers or clients to another where the system does not seek to include, but to expel, as of the moment when people no longer seem so necessary to guarantee the accumulation dynamics of the capitalist system (Sassen 2014). Faced with this reality, the author wonders to what

extent the classic categories that we use to understand and describe migrations are sufficient to capture the specificity of these emerging flows.

The concept of survival migration was previously used by Lester (2010). This author attributes this type of migration to economic inequality and injustice at the global level. This displacement can be forced temporarily or permanently; voluntary, regular, or irregular; circular or seasonal. The reasons can be specific and easily discernible or mixed. Regardless of whether or not survival migrants fit into the applicable legal categories (asylum seekers, irregular migration, etc.), what these movements have in common is that they lead to human insecurity throughout the migration cycle. They often use dangerous means of movement such as the use of smugglers. They are often unable to enjoy secure legal status in destination or transit countries and are often exposed to premature and forced return to a country of origin destroyed by conflict or structural poverty, among others (Lester 2010). Other authors point to definitions based on the violation of human rights as a demarcation criterion, which implies an expanded definition of the term, and can also include many migrants who are considered economic (Goodwin, Gill, and Newland 2003). According to Gzesh (2008), the classification of certain groups of "economic migrants" as forced migrants may mean an advance in the recognition of protection for these people by the states.

This debate, aimed at expanding the "forced" criterion from its multidimensionality, is framed in what authors such as Castles (2003) have called the global migration crisis. It is characterized by an alarming increase in contexts of human mobility caused by situations of impoverishment, violence, and human rights abuses observed throughout the world. Through the term "global crisis," Castles (2003) assumes that forced migration is not the result of a series of unconnected emergencies, but an integral part of North-South relations. For this reason, it insists on the need to theorize about forced migration and link it to economic migration, considering that both are closely related as an expression of global inequalities and humanitarian crises that have been accentuated in recent years. Faced with the fusion of "'multiple motivations," which are often indistinguishable, a "nexus between migration and asylum" is produced, which makes it difficult to separate economic motivations from those related to human rights (Castles 2003).

Therefore, we can conclude that what the author seeks is precisely to show the crisis in the relations between North and South caused by uneven development (Castles 2004:862). Thus, although a person's decision to leave their native community will always be partly a personal choice ("voluntary"), the fact that the same decision is made by thousands of people indicates that it is made within the constrictive framework of a set of structural factors that offer people only a restricted range of options for their personal and family survival. From the perspective of human rights, Castles (2003) concludes that the effects of national development policies, insofar as they destroy traditional production and reproduction systems for support and do not

offer alternatives to millions of people, can also be considered "forced migrations." Within this expanded framework, authors such as Gandini (2018) problematize the concept of "forced migration" and show how the incorporation of a rights-based approach to the study of skilled migration allows it to be considered "forced" to the extent that (for example, in countries like Mexico, a case study that the author analyses) it responds not so much to a choice, but to (in)voluntariness as a defining characteristic of the movement and as a final option in the absence of national development policies that guarantee a job according to their educational level.

Overall, in this report, the concept of forced migration has not been conceptualized as a finished and finely-cut dimension of migration journeys, but as unique and specifically contextualized in each case, where human agency handles the constrictions and the opportunities granted to each individual in different ways.

1.2. CULTURAL HERITAGE AND INCLUSION OF THE REFUGEES

A second key dimension of the SO-CLOSE project is cultural heritage. Particularly, it is aimed at contributing to better understanding the role of cultural heritage in promoting social cohesion, namely, in which ways shared past experiences can be utilized in the present to facilitate forging, maintaining, and negotiating the collective identities among a range of communities with different social, cultural, and political experiences. In a certain way, it refers to the use of cultural heritage and memory in the construction of collective identity based on shared understandings. The dialogue between refugees, the local community, and institutions makes cultural heritage a collaborative or interactive process. There is a need to consider the ways in which cultural heritage can become a resource to share and convey common spaces to share stories and how cultural heritage can represent an opportunity to generate new bridges within communities and promote social cohesion.

Heritage is a concept that seems easy to understand, but it has taken time to agree on a common understanding. Its definition has changed over time and there is a range of ideas about its nature and use. In recent years, there has been discussion about different types of heritage, especially about the tangible and non-material or intangible forms of heritage. In the specialized literature, heritage is mainly used to refer to a group of resources: natural (natural sites with cultural aspects such as cultural landscapes and physical, biological, or geological formations), tangible (paintings, sculptures, coins, manuscripts, monuments, archaeological sites, shipwrecks, underwater ruins, and cities), or intangible (oral traditions, performing arts, or rituals) inherited from the past and deemed worthy of preservation as an inheritance for the future (UNESCO 2020). It is worth noting that this conceptualization of heritage can be considered the consequence of a long and

complex "process of a reappraisal of the overall idea of heritage" (Bortolotto 2007:21). UNESCO's Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage World Heritage Convention of 1972 represented a leading text in terms of the definition of heritage. This convention identifies three types of cultural heritage:

> Monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science; groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science; sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view. (UNESCO 1972: Article 1)

The World Heritage Convention has been criticized for neglecting "non-Western ways of understanding heritage" and for "universalizing Western concepts of heritage and the values inherent within that" (Smith 2006:28). A body of international treaties and texts was developed by UNESCO and intergovernmental organizations for the protection of cultural heritage beginning in the 1970s (Blake 2000). In 2003, UNESCO adopted the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, whose purposes are: to safeguard the ICH, but also to ensure respect for the intangible cultural heritage of the communities, groups, and individuals concerned, to raise awareness at local, national, and international levels of the importance of the intangible cultural heritage, and to provide for international cooperation and assistance (UNESCO 2003: Article 1). This convention represents a significant change as it starts to broaden the definition of heritage to include cultural elements and introduces the new category of intangible heritage. In contrast to the 1972 convention which had a "narrow and provincial western approach to heritage" (Bortolotto 2007:24), UNESCO's new idea of heritage proposes a more global vision of cultural heritage. The definition of intangible cultural heritage offered by the 20003 Convention is broader being "the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity" (UNESCO 2003:5). Under this Convention, intangible cultural heritage is manifested inter alia in the oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events,

knowledge, and practices concerning nature and the universe and traditional craftsmanship.

Notwithstanding the criticism levelled against the 2003 Convention (Amselle 2004; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004; Smith 2006), what is highly significant for the purposes of this project is the consideration of the universality of world heritage and the importance of intangible cultural heritage as a mainspring of cultural diversity and a factor in bringing human beings closer together. The 2003 framework Convention highlighted the "interactive, dynamic and cohesive" character of intangible heritage (Howard and Graham 2008:4), which led to extending the limited scope of the material preservation/conservation to a more inclusive and dynamic conception of cultural heritage. This understanding of cultural heritage has the potential to foster inclusiveness, a sense of cohesion and consensus, and to promote greater community participation in the ways that collective identity is understood and constructed.

The concept of heritage is relevant here as a form of "social action" (Byrne 2008; Harrison 2010b) and "an act of communication and meaning-making" (Smith 2006:2). As Harrison (2010a:39) notes, "heritage as social action is more concerned with practices or with the intangible aspects of heritage than with objects of heritage." In her book *The uses of heritage*, Smith (2006:2) explores "the idea of heritage not so much as a 'thing,' but as a cultural and social process, which engages with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present." This approach assigns greater analytic weight to social action, human agency, and cultural meaning. Therefore, people are considered to be more active and mindful in their use of heritage. If heritage and its representations are not interpreted just as replications of the real but as constructions of complex interactions between different groups, this suggests that the heritage and its interpretation play a central role in the construction and reproduction of identities. Byrne (2008:23) argues that "It would be difficult to find an example of heritage work in which heritage is not being deployed in identity formation." Indeed, heritage is bound with identity construction at both collective and personal levels. It can forge a sense of common identity based on the past and facilitate the feeling of belonging to a community. However, as Smith (2006:4) states: "heritage is not necessarily about the stasis of cultural values and meanings but may equally be about cultural change. It may, for instance, be about reworking the meanings of the past as the cultural, social, and political needs of the present change and develop, or it may be about challenging the ways in which groups and communities are perceived and classified by others. Heritage is about negotiation – about using the past, and collective or individual memories, to negotiate new ways of being and expressing identity." Heritage thus implies an interpretative process associated with identity construction that can be used to construct narratives of inclusion and exclusion.

Even though the international system links refugee status with recognized civil and political rights, the history and heritage of refugees are often excluded or side-lined from the official representation of heritage and there is limited knowledge among the general public with regard to the experience of forced displaced persons. These official and informal forms of misrecognition can systematically contribute to silencing, marginalizing, or deforming the individual and collective voices of refugees and their needs and identities. The sociologist Alberto Melucci noted in *The playing self* (1996:29): "No one can construct her/his identity independently of its recognition by others. Every individual must assume that her/his otherness and uniqueness is constantly acknowledged by everyone else and that this recognition is based on intersubjective reciprocity." The main challenge then lies in designing mechanisms to reinsert refugees' heritage into the sphere of identity and belonging of the host country.

In this context, refugees' participation in framing and implementing cultural heritage practices is an area that merits more attention. Forced displaced persons are often seen as victims, survivors, and passive receptors in the host country. Consequently, most attempts at implementing heritage practices are expressed in assimilatory terms and refugees are often invited to learn or be educated about the cultural heritage of the host country. Viewing heritage as a cultural and social action allows us to explore how refugees construct, represent, negotiate, and modify the meanings they give to their community's past, objects, places, and practices of heritage. It can be assumed that for refugees, simply being far from their country or cultural territory can change their experience and sense of heritage. Although distances may create difficulties for affirming a sense of cultural and historical identity, refugee groups often retain key features of their cultural heritage and modify the culture of their host countries as much as they are modified by it. As such, heritage could be viewed as a multi-layered cultural practice that can also be used by refugees as a political and cultural resource to ensure greater involvement in their communities and redefine their position or place in the host country.

Heritage is, therefore, a breeding ground for social actions and interactions that occur in the shared frameworks of meaning and experience. It can take an active role in establishing communication between a host society and refugees. This interaction, mediated by past and collective or individual memories, can create opportunities for change and regeneration. In such a perspective, refugees are not characterized merely as passive participants of culture, but as actors who are actively engaged with their heritage "to cease being foreigners and start being citizens, to start being of a place instead of merely being in a place" (Byrne 2008:6). As Harrison (2010a:39) explains, "this model of heritage as social action could also be characterized as a 'bottom-up' approach, in opposition to the way in which heritage as an 'industry' operates from a 'top-down' position."

This understanding of heritage, supporting the shift from considering refugees as passive recipients to active agents of integration, is extremely important for the development of innovative intercultural social and cultural practices, especially at the local level, with a view to strengthening social cohesion within multicultural environments. According to this perspective, refugees should be envisaged as dynamic agents in the production of culture who help to build social capital, identity, and community. This active engagement by refugees is important as it allows them to recreate new meanings, values, and memories through the process of being in the new location, the outcome of which is to "forge a sense of common identity based on the past" (Smith 2006:29).

Heritage in this sense is not just about the past, it is "a process of engagement, an act of communication and an act of making meaning in and for the present" (Smith 2006:1). It could help to stimulate activities aimed at enhancing the participation and support of both local and refugee communities in renewing memories and sharing experiences and it can be used by the refugees to build their links with each other and with places. This active use of heritage may help host societies to remember the past to reinterpret it through the experiences of the present which take place in the context of interactions between local communities and refugees. In the same vein and suggesting a participatory approach that sees refugees as actives owners and modifiers of culture, this project stresses the importance of the recreation and co-creation of more inclusive cultural heritage through digital intermediaries more than the conservation, preservation, and visitation of heritage.

1.3. DIGITAL TOOLS TO ACCESS CULTURAL HERITAGE

Within the debate around cultural heritage, an important aspect is the introduction of the use of digital tools. Refugees and asylum seekers need to face not only the fear and the traumas of the violence suffered during their journeys but must also deal with the precariousness of isolated spaces and the feeling of not belonging in the host society. As the UNHCR (2020) indicates, built and physical spaces might represent barriers that perpetuate this feeling of fear and loneliness. In contrast, the digital space could rise as an environment where borders do not exist, and refugees and asylum seekers can meet and speak to their peers and loved ones and enjoy a feeling of equality. Having this concept in mind helps us realise that working with digital technologies as solutions for humanitarian work is a powerful resource, and it is needed to establish the co-design of these tools based on user-centred methodology to give validation and voice to the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees as women, men, sexually and gender diverse individuals, and racialized individuals that have many experiences and stories to tell. This will facilitate well-being and integration in society through life experiences and also the feeling that they belong – starting from the digital environment and then arriving in the physical environment as well.

This experience must be achieved through the construction or establishment of contact between different parties or communities inside what has been defined as "spatial dimensions" (Smart, Donner, and Graham 2016). These dimensions refer to discourses and narratives in which technology plays an important role in the interaction and offers enough resources to lead to the integration of communities.

This is especially important for forced displaced individuals who perhaps could not plan their journey and were radically pulled out of their environment, social life, and even simple daily interactions. If it is notable that connectivity and modern digital tools rose as an alternative to solitude, belongingness, and unattachment in times of crises for a regular citizen living in a big city close to his family and holding a stable job and housing during the pandemic lockdown experience caused by COVID-19 in 2020, imagine what connectivity would mean for a family escaping a civil war in foreign lands or living in a shelter or refugee camp.

> When refugees are compelled to leave their homes and families are torn asunder, communities get broken, people get split (up), refugees try to stay connected with their families…The benefits to refugees are clear: Getting online is the only way to communicate with family left behind or gone ahead. It's also one of the best ways for them to access trusted sources of information about the asylum process and its changing procedures. (UNHCR 2016:2)

Considering more practical examples of connectivity in humanitarian actions and project-implementation, it has been proven that mobile connectivity has an important impact in delivering aid as well as paving the path to greater autonomy and empowerment of populations that have been affected by humanitarian crisis (Casswell 2019). Mobile phones have been used for mapping, finding resources, connecting with peers during the journey towards a safe area, accomplishing the right to information during a migratory journey, and also tracking international aid from international organizations and civil society institutions supporting refugees and asylum seekers.

2. PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

This section summarises the project's development and its methodological approach. The research was conducted between May and November 2020. It involved individual interviews with academics, policymakers, cultural institutions, NGOs, and refugees and asylum seekers in four EU countries: Italy, Spain, Poland, and Greece.

2.1. SELECTION OF THE STUDY PARTICIPANTS

In total, 196 semi-structured individual interviews were conducted across the four EU member states. As planned in the Grant Agreement, the cultural institutions in each country conducted interviews with five distinctive groups: refugees and asylum seekers, cultural institutions, academics, policymakers, and NGOs working in the field.

In the case of cultural institutions, academics, policymakers and NGOs working in the field, the strategy was mainly based in snowballing, as most part have already contacts that were initially interviewed and supported to identified subsequent study participants.

Refugees and asylum seekers

For the purpose of the project, the stratified purposeful sampling technique was used to identify potential refugees and asylum seekers. This strategy permitted capturing major variations and identifying similarities among users. It is important to note that in the context of a sharp rise in forced displacement, the presence of refugees and asylum seekers in different countries changes significantly from year to year. To determine which and how many people to include as participants, based on a detailed analysis of the current situation, the biggest refugee and asylum seeker groups were identified in order to get an overview of the five largest groups in each of four host countries.

The map in Figure 1 presents a summary of the refugees and asylum seekers in the four countries examined in this project. Italy reported the largest total number of refugees and asylum seekers. By contrast, Poland reported a relatively low share of refugees (12,455) and asylum seekers (3,024). The country with the second highest share of refugees and asylum seekers is Greece, and Spain ranks third.
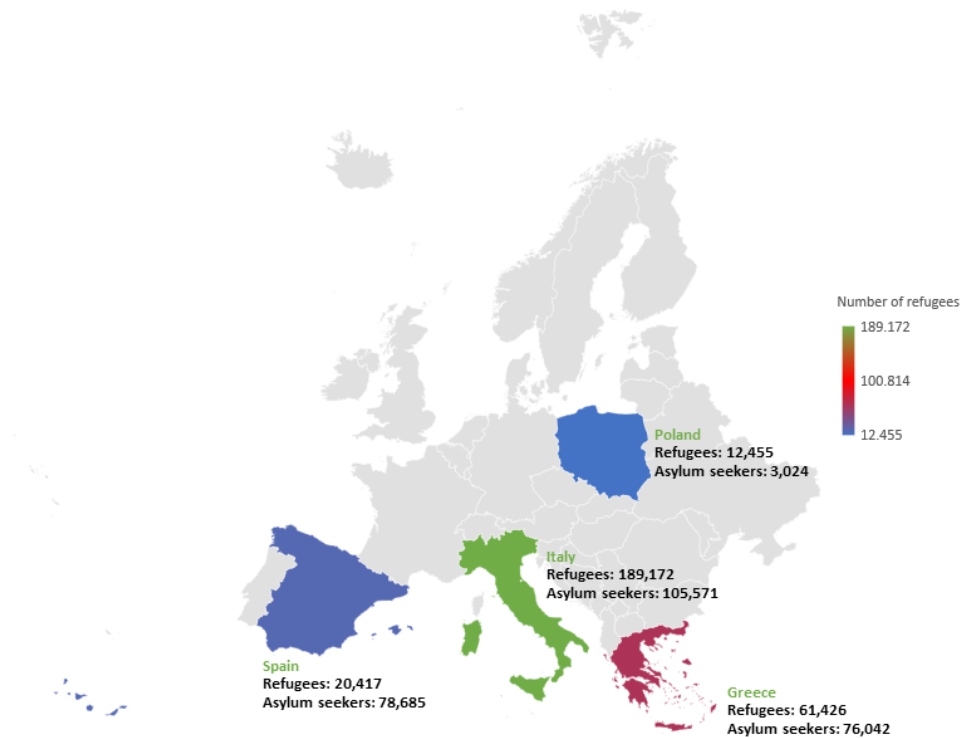
Figure 2. Refugees and asylum seekers by country of asylum: Greece, Spain, Italy and Poland (2018)

Table 1 provides an overview of the five main countries of origin of asylum seekers and refugees in each of the four participating countries in this project.

Table 1. Main countries of origin of asylum seekers and refugees, number by country (2018)

Countries	Five main countries of origin of asylum seekers	Five main countries of origin of refugees
Greece	Syria (13,145), Afghanistan (11,820), Iraq (9,640), Pakistan (7,185), Turkey (4,820)	Syria (23,931), Afghanistan, 9,291), Iraq (8,828), Iran (1,532), Palestine (1,290)
Italy	Nigeria (17,349), Eritrea (13,426), Pakistan (10,501), Bangladesh (6,116), Cote d'Ivoire (5,436)	Nigeria (22,319), Pakistan (18,249), Afghanistan (16,941), Mali (15,003), Somalia (13,373)
Poland	Russia (2,246), Ukraine (309), Tajikistan (95), Georgia (62), Turkey (37)	Russia (9,893), Syria (531), Ukraine (464), Iraq (225), Belarus (199)
Spain	Venezuela (31,620), Colombia (10,385), Ukraine (4,300), Honduras (3,690), El Salvador (3,685)	Syria (13,675), Palestine (1,051), Cuba (885), Somalia (682), Ukraine (562)

Source: [1]

The initial basic strategy for selecting participants was submitted to the partners' opinions in order to develop a new mapping that reflects the reality of each specific country and the best fitted option for each cultural institution. The final sampling was the outcome of discussions with experts and organizations involved with refugee and migrant issues in all four countries. Based on the initial proposal, different criteria were added to identify the different candidates for each cultural institution:

a) The focus on displaced persons affected by war;

b) The accessibility of participants;

c) Seeking for diversity in terms of gender, age, socio-economic status, etc.;

d) Resident status: refugees and asylum seekers (applicants for international protection);

e) Concerning refugees, those who arrived in the host country before 2015, and for asylum seekers, those who arrived after 2015.

The recruitment process consisted in four different strategies: a) working with NGOs; b) Local authorities; c) Personal and Institutional connections; d) snowballing approach.

The key strategy to get access and make contact with the potential participants was using a network of NGOs working with asylum seekers and refugees. In general, the partners of the consortium cooperated with local authorities and NGOs to contact asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection.

GRF (Greece). Given its close links with the refugee communities, the Greek Forum of Refugees had no difficulties in selecting participants according to the criteria of nationality and date of arrival. Most interviewed refugees and asylum seekers in Greece were already in contact with the GFR. Under the guidance of project staff, potential participants who were engaged or interested in project-related issues were first identified. They were then contacted and informed about the project and asked if they wanted to participate in the interviews. Interviews were conducted with those who expressed a willingness to be interviewed. All thirty-two interviews with refugees in Greece took place at the GFR headquarters in Athens.

In order to establish contact with the group of refugees and asylum seekers, the Spanish and Italian partners made use of their personal and institutional networks.

World Bank 2020; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 2020). It must be noted that there is sometimes a significant variation between statistics on refugees and asylum seekers produced by different countries and international organizations. In these cases, UNHCR Population Statistics Database has been taken as a reference source.

MONTESOLE (Italy). The Monte Sole relied on the support of the local authorities and the following organisations to identify refugees, asylum seekers, and special protection holders among the general group of migrants:

- CIDAS

(Cooperativa Inserimento Disabili Assistenza Solidarietà) (https://www.cidas.coop/)

- Caleidos Cooperativa Sociale (https://www.caleidos.mo.it/)
- Associazione di volontariato Porta Aperta (https://www.portaapertamodena.it/)
- Amal al Hayat (https://www.hayatonlus.org/)
- Operazione Colomba: https://www.operazionecolomba.it/
- CIAC   (Centro Immigrazione Asilo Cooperazione internazionale di Parma e provincia) (https://www.ciaconlus.org/)

From the first group of potential participants, the Monte Sole selected those without a serious traumatic situation. Then the project, its phases, and objectives were presented to the second selected group and those who presented interest and willingness were contacted for the interview.

MUME (Spain). The Memorial Museum of Exiles (MUME) used the same strategy in Spain. Five organisations backed the Spanish partner to contact the participants:

- CEAR (Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado) (https://www.cear.es/)
- San Juan de Dios Leon
- Fundaciò Autònoma Solidària (https://www.uab.cat/web/fundacio-autonoma-solidaria-1345780033395.html)
- Sodepau - Solidaritat, Desenvolupament i Pau
- Ca la Dona (https://caladona.org/)

In Spain and Poland, another effective strategy that has been used is the "snowballing" approach was adopted to selecting participants. In this method, a refugee or asylum seeker with whom contact had already been made used their social network to refer to other refugees and asylum seekers.

VILADECIUS (Poland). Three organisations supported the Villa Decius Association to establish contact with the participants:

- Dzieci z Dworca Brześć (Children from the Brest Railway Station)
- Centrum Wolontariatu w Lublinie (Volunteer Center in Lublin)
- Kobiety wędrowne Gdańsk (Itinerant women Gdańsk)

Cultural institutions cooperated with local authorities and NGOs in order to identify refugees, asylum seekers, and special protection holders among the general group of

migrants. It should be noted that the assistance coming from some NGOs was very important in some cases. In Spain, another effective strategy that has been used is the "snowballing" approach was adopted to selecting participants. In this method, a refugee or asylum seeker with whom contact had already been made used their social network to refer to other refugees and asylum seekers. Given its closed links with the refugee communities, the Greek Forum of Refugees had no particular difficulties in selecting participants according to the defined criteria.

The basic strategy used to select participants from cultural institutions, academics, policymakers, and NGOs, was to find those who were engaged in refugee-related matters. For example, NGOs working with refugees in different fields, such as rescue, first arrival, integration, and empowerment have been contacted. For the category of cultural institutions, those institutions which are dealing with or cultural heritage or migration or a mix of the two were selected. All academics who were interviewed during this project are experts in migration and refugees. To start creating a strong bond for the following WPs, those scholars who might have a potential interest in the So-Close project were contacted. In the case of policymakers, those who had an active role with refugees were selected. Aside from the competence of policymakers, the diversity of administration and ranking in the political field were taken into account when selecting interviewees.

Some refugees and asylum seekers who were interviewed over the course of this project said that they were familiar with the history of the local community in Europe where they have resettled. For those who were not familiar with the local history, interviewers attempted to briefly explain the history of violence and experiences of forced migration in the host country. With such an approach, certain cultural institutions, as indicated by Monte Sole, went a step further by implementing the following measures: "Except for refugees and asylum seekers that were uninitiated to the history of the place and often about the Italian history of the 20th century, all the others were more or less aware of the core of what happened and of what was our starting point. For the unaware group, we provided images, some written testimonies, and, for some of them, a guided tour, and a workshop directly in Monte Sole. In terms of connecting themes, for some refugees, there was the issue of running away from violence against civilians while for others the points were political persecution, dictatorship, censorship, extreme poverty and exploitation, absence of rule of law, and military power and domination." Given that the fieldwork was conducted in the places where the local communities have a history of having witnessed exile and forced migration themselves, the historical matching was made based on the similarities of personal and collective traumatic experiences.

The documents used in the interviews were translated into different languages depending on the needs of each country: Spanish, Catalan, French, Greek and Italian. In cases where the interviewees did not speak any of these languages, communication

with them and most of the interviews were conducted in their language of choice with the help of cultural mediators or interpreters. These languages covered almost all participants. Nevertheless, some required the aid of interpreters of the NGOs, who orally translated the consent form and information sheet.

Researchers were advised to ensure fully understanding of the consent form and information sheet by the participants. Even in those cases where participants did not have particular difficulties, researchers went over them reading and ensuring understanding paragraph by paragraph.

A total of 200 interviews were planned. In each country involved in the project, the cultural institutions were supposed to administer 50 qualitative interviews. During the kick-off meeting which took place on January 21-22, 2020, a full session was dedicated to discussing the concrete organization of the fieldwork under WP1. In any case, there was no doubt that the interviews with refugee and asylum seekers will be the most important source of information to identify the needs and gaps for the subsequent phases of the project. But two important reflections were made. First, 200 interviews with refugee and asylum seekers seemed a priori a high number, even though they were distributed within the four countries and responding to the different criteria too many with the risk to data saturation and dedicating a highly intensive effort to a task that at some point will not be useful for the project, as information might start to repeat. In retrospect, the research team consider that the proportion of interviews dedicated to refugees and asylum seekers were the appropriate to secure a general overview of the main challenges encountered. Second, the SO CLOSE tools are not only oriented to refugee and asylum seekers communities but also to the wide range of potential end-users, it was then, when it was considered as positive to the project to identify the needs of scholars, cultural institutions, NGOs and policy makers. This involved to design interview outlines for each specific group. With this decision, the consortium considered to obtain a full picture of the needs, gaps and challenges that all the actors involved in the field of cultural heritage are facing in making it accessible to all publics, and specially, those refugee and asylum seeker communities. Finally, based on the theoretical framework presented in this report, for the sake of the fieldwork, it was decided not to limit the recruitment to those who respond to the legal definition, but to follow a more sociological approach, thus, including migrants who have not acquired the official status. Based on these methodological and theoretical questions, the final distribution of the 200 interviews was agreed to be the following:

(a) Refugees and asylum seekers (128 interviews),
(b) cultural institutions (12 interviews),
(c) academics (12 interviews),
(d) policymakers (24 interviews), and
(e) NGOs (24 interviews).

In total, 196 semi-structured individual interviews were conducted between March and November 2020, amidst the strictest country closures due to the pandemic. The covid 19 restrictions forced the team to readapt to the possibilities of completing the interviews. The table below shows the final number of interviews conducted among each of the five participant groups in the four countries. The achieved sample included a large number of refugees and asylum seekers who represented the majority of interviewees (122 interviews), as well as scholars and migration experts (12 interviews), policymakers (24 interviews), professionals and representatives of cultural institutions (13 interviews), and NGOs (25 interviews).

Table 2. the number of interviews conducted among each of the five participant groups (N=196)

Countries	Refugees & Asylum seekers	Policymakers	Cultural institutions	NGOs	Academics	Total
Greece	32	6	3	6	3	50
Italy	27	6	4	6	3	46
Poland	32	6	3	6	3	50
Spain	31	6	3	7	3	50
Total	122	24	13	25	12	196

Table 3 provides an overview of the gender of refugees and asylum seekers interviewed in each of the four EU Member States covered in the research.

Table 3. Gender of refugees and asylum seekers interviewed (N=122)

Countries	Female	Male	No answer	Total
Greece	16	16	0	32
Italy	6	21	0	27
Poland	22	10	0	32
Spain	9	21	1	31

Table 4 provides an overview of the main country of origin of refugees and asylum seekers interviewed in each of the four EU Member States covered in the research.

Table 4. . Main countries of origin of refugees and asylum seekers interviewed (N=122)

Countries	Five main countries of origin of asylum seekers	Total
Greece	Afghanistan (12), Iraq (12), Syria (8),	32
Italy	Syria (1), Libya (1), Niger (2), Sudan (1), Afghanistan (1), Chile (1), Iraq (2), Gambia (4), Mali (1), Nigeria (2), Turkey (1), Pakistan (1), Eritrea (1), Ivory Coast	27

	(1), Guinea Conakry (1), Venezuela (3), Chad (1), Somalia (1), Benin (1)				
Poland	Ukraine (11), Syria (5), Georgia (3), Iraq (2), Russia (3), Ingushetia (2), Chechnya (5), Dagestan (1)				32
Spain	Afghanistan (11), Lebanon (1), Syria (15), Iraq (1)				31

Table 5 provides an overview of the residence status of the interviewees. From this table it can be seen that 27,9% of the interviewees were refugees, 18,9% were asylum applicants, 12,3% were humanitarian status holders, 11,5% had subsidiary protection status, and 23% had other statuses at the time of interview.

Table 5. Resident status of refugees and asylum seekers interviewed (N=122)

	Asylum applicant	Beneficiary of international protection			Other	No answer	Total
		Refugee	Subsidiary protection	Humanitarian protection			
Greece	10	14	1	7	0	0	32
Italy	4	10	7	2	4	0	27
Poland	4	4	2	1	13	8	32
Spain	5	6	4	5	11	0	31
Total	23	34	14	15	28	8	122

* The category "Other" refers to interviewees who have already been granted citizenship or permanent residence in the host country. The average age of respondents was 34,1

Table 6 provides an overview of the interviewees' age at the time of interview. 99% of the interviewees were between 18 and 65 years. The minimum age was 19 and the maximum age was 72.

Table 6. Age of refugees and asylum seekers interviewed (N=102)

Countries	Age range	Number of participants	Average, Maximum, Minimum of the age
Greece	**< 18**	**0**	**Average: 37**
	18-65	**32**	**Max:55**
	> 65	**0**	**Min:21**
Italy	**< 18**	**0**	**Average: 33,3**
	18-65	**26**	**Max:72**
	> 65	**1**	**Min:19**

Poland	< 18	0	Average: 33,3
	18-65	11	Max:44
	> 65	0	Min:20
Spain	< 18	0	Average: 33,4
	18-65	31	Max:49
	> 65	0	Min:19
Total	< 18	0	Average: 34,2
	18-65	100	Max: 72
	> 65	1	Min:19
	Missing	21	

In relation to level of education of refugees and asylum seekers (see table 7), more than 45,8% of respondents had at least undergraduate university education, and many (35,8%) had completed secondary education. 14,2% of them have had a primary education, and only a small number (4,2%) had never attended school.

Table 7. Education of refugees and asylum seekers interviewed (N=120)

Countries	Level of education	Number of participants	Percentage
Greece	Never attended school	1	3,1
	Primary education	12	37,5
	Secondary education	12	37,5
	Tertiary education	7	21,9
Italy	Never attended school	1	3,8
	Primary education	2	7,7
	Secondary education	9	34,6
	Tertiary education	14	53,8
Poland	Never attended school	0	0
	Primary education	1	3,1
	Secondary education	11	34,4
	Tertiary education	20	62,5
Spain	Never attended school	3	10
	Primary education	2	6,7
	Secondary education	11	36,7
	Tertiary education	14	46,7
Total	Never attended school	5	4,2
	Primary education	17	14,2
	Secondary education	43	35,8

Tertiary education		55	45,8

The table 8 provides information on the year of arrival of refugees and asylum seekers in the host country. The vast majority of people interviewed (64,2%) arrived in the host country in 2015 and after. 35,8% of respondents had arrived prior to 2015.

Table 8. Year of arrival in the host country (N=120)

Countries	Year of arrival	Number of participants	Percentage
Greece	Before 2015	14	43,8
	2015 and after	18	56,3
Italy	Before 2015	10	38,5
	2015 and after	16	61,5
Poland	Before 2015	8	25,0
	2015 and after	24	75,0
Spain	Before 2015	11	36,7
	2015 and after	19	63,3
Total	Before 2015	43	35,8
	2015 and after	77	64,2

The professionals and representatives of cultural institutions from areas of museums, the performing arts, and education with different levels of experience and involvement were asked to explain their vision, experiences, projects, results, and the practical challenges they faced when dealing with refugees and asylum seekers. It is not difficult to imagine the wide range of diverse activities undertaken by these cultural institutions. This includes activities such as collecting documents from the resistance struggle during the Second World War, promoting contemporary cultural heritage, defining the government's memory policies, disseminating knowledge of the historical period between 1931 and 1980, using theatre in education, promoting the expansion of contemporary art at national and European levels, and improving education and language training.

This diversity is also reflected among the NGOs. There are highly differentiated networks of organizations dedicated partly or fully to refugee protection. In some NGOs, a wide range of services are provided including special programmes related to the asylum process, organizing reception, providing medical assistance, psychological support, legal advice, housing, helping improve access to hospitals, courts, schools, organizing events, outdoor activities, training courses, supporting workforce insertion, and so on. Other NGOs provide more focused services that lead to professionalizing their services. Meanwhile, many NGOs interact and cooperate with public authorities

and their activities are limited to certain services and they are marginalized from specific procedures such as legal and administrative issues.

2.2. KEY QUESTIONS AND INTERVIEWS

The interview guide followed a qualitative approach. Interview guidelines developed in collaboration with partners were used to guide the interviews. Depending on the target group, the interview guidelines varied from 17 to 47 open-ended questions. The purpose was to allow participants to express themselves in their own words, and to capture their full narratives of their own stories. The subjects covered varied depending on the experience and needs of the participants. As illustrated in Figure 2, our research provided a particular framework that consisted of categories ranging from standard biographical data to comments on themes and ideas related to the participants' activities, expectations, and needs and the implementation and exploitation of technological and digital tools to promote mutual cultural and life-experience understanding.

Refugees & Asylum seekers
- Situation in the country/area of origin;
- Situation in the host country/area;
- Personal migratory journey;
- Use of digital technology and social media;
- Migrant/refugee's expectations and needs;
- Contextual background.

Cultural institutions
- The activities of the institution relating to refugees and migrants;
- Expectations, main challenges, and difficulties;
- Technological tools used and digital tools that could be developed.

Policymakers
- Services and benefits are available to asylum seekers and refugees;
- Integration and inclusion;
- Perspectives for asylum and migration policies: implementation and exploitation of digital technology to promote mutual cultural and life-experience understanding.

NGOs
- The activities of the organization;
- Expectations, main challenges, and difficulties;
- Technological tools used and digital tools that could be developed.

Academics
- Integration and inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers;
- Research tools and resources in the area of migration and asylum;
- Implementation and exploitation of digital technology to promote mutual cultural and life-experience understanding;
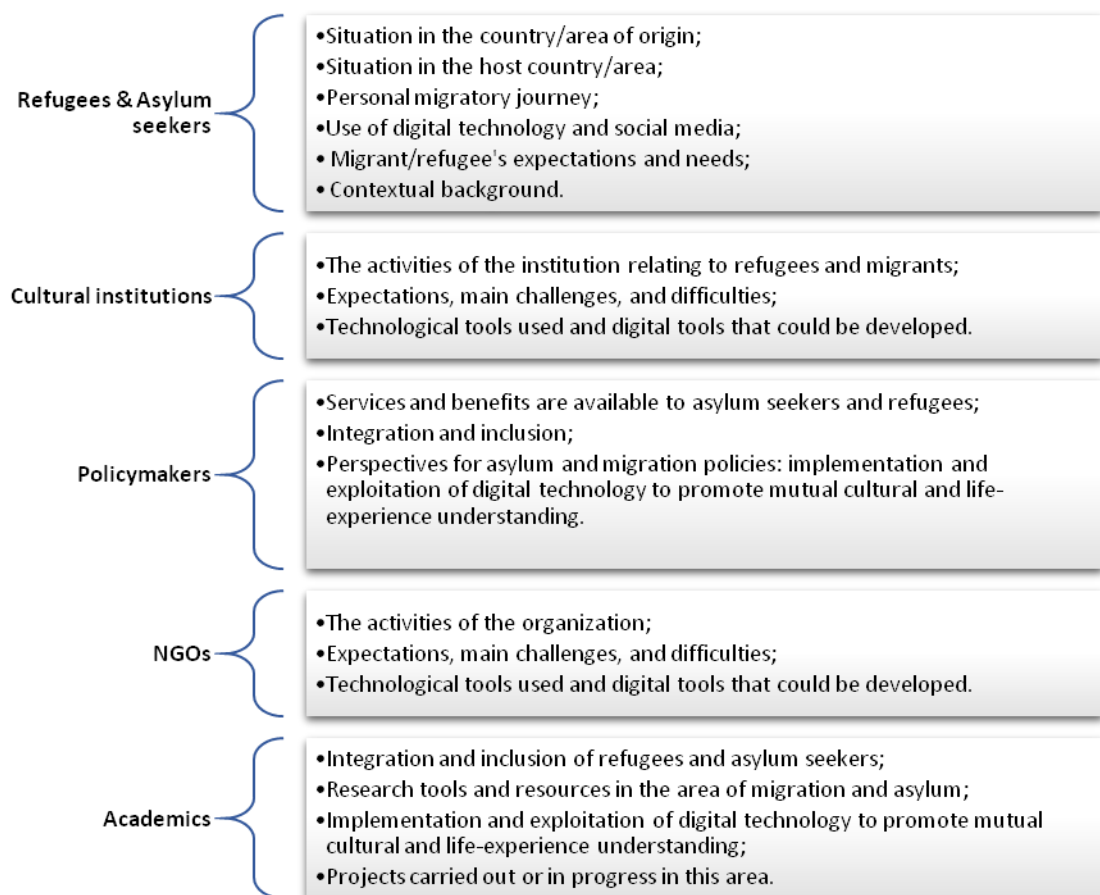- Projects carried out or in progress in this area.

Figure 3. Main themes for five groups of participants

The results will be the foundation for the creation and implementation of innovations in digital cultural heritage applications focusing on cultural exchanges between forcibly displaced populations of the past and present. Additionally, questions were inserted

about the implementation and exploitation of digital technology to promote mutual cultural and life-experience understanding. These interview guides were organized strategically to be a supporting material for the fieldwork analysis, and had the final outputs of four distinct interviews' guides and a general technical Guidance on how to conduct interviews (see all these documents in the Appendix B).

The thematic areas covered in the interviews with refugees and asylum seekers do not reflect the same areas covered in the interviews with experts, policymakers, and professionals. In the case of refugees and asylum seekers, we designed an interview guideline with five parts that allowed participants to place their experience of migration/exile in the context of their lives and the lives of those around them. The first part of the interview establishes the context of the exile/migration experience. The idea was to put the participants' experiences in context by asking them to talk about their past lives up to the time they became asylum seekers or refugees. The second part of the interview encourages participants to talk about their migratory journey and arrival in the host country. The purpose of the third part was to concentrate on the concrete details of the participants' present lived experiences in the context of the host country/region. We asked them to reconstruct their early experiences in the local community and their participation in and access to cultural heritage. We also asked participants to reflect on the meaning of their experience of exile and their perception of the current situation. The fourth part deals with refugees' and asylum seekers' use of technological and digital tools, audio-visual resources, and social media. The fifth part aims to understand asylum seekers/refugees' expectations and needs.

Fieldwork summary templates were used strategically as the foundation of the analysis of interviews, facilitating the workflow between the interviewers, translators, and data analysts. These are available in Appendix B.

2.3. ETHICAL ASPECT: INFORMED CONSENT AND DATA PROTECTION

All the work presented in this report has fulfilled all the Ethical standards described under SO CLOSE WP7. Particularly, a careful revision has been made to make sure that all the latest requirements of Data Protection in the European Union under the GDPR and to guarantee the safety of all participants, especially the most vulnerable ones, such as asylum seekers and refugees are fully met. All information collected during the fieldwork has been recorded and stored in a safe and encrypted workspace (NEBULA-UAB) that only authorized members of the consortium have access to, ensuring that Article 8, Title II (European Parliament, Council and Commission, 2012) on the protection of personal data is complied with. This article states that:

> 1. Everyone has the right to the protection of personal data concerning him or her.

2. Such data must be processed fairly for specified purposes and on the basis of the consent of the person concerned or some other legitimate basis laid down by law. Everyone has the right of access to data which has been collected concerning him or her, and the right to have it rectified.

3. Compliance with these rules shall be subject to control by an independent authority.

SO-CLOSE has also followed the guidelines for Ethics in H2020 projects, which affects all steps of the co-creation path among different WPs, from the selection of participants until the final dissemination, and concerning all data collected, *how* this data is collected, ethical requirements in approaching participants, and storage needs, which will be managed entirely by the UAB team. A crucial pillar was to ensure that all requirements previously specified are met was the signature of consent forms by all participants in the research. Every participant took part in SO-CLOSE as a volunteer and did not receive any sort of compensation. The identification, approach, set up of interviews, and signature of Consent Forms was done by the partners of the consortium in their corresponding countries: Villa Decius Association (Krakow), Monte Sole Peace School (Monte Sole), Memorial Museum of Exiles (La Jonquera), and Greek Forum of Refugees together with the affiliated Contemporary Social History Archives (Trikeri).

All participants received detailed information about the objectives of the interview, possible discomforts or risks associated with their participation, the Consortium, and how their data would be managed. This information is mandatorily written in an accessible language so participants can understand and be able to decide on their own will whether they want to participate or not, and which authorizations they would like to give to SO-CLOSE for the analysis, toolkit design and development, publishing, or diffusion.

This information was explained orally and also through the Consent Forms (see annex C) available in multiple languages that participants need to sign or provide oral consent at the beginning of each interview. The Consent Forms and all personal data shared are recorded in encrypted spaces at the UAB.

2.4. RESEARCH LIMITS

The information expressed in this report do not express the entirety of realities experienced by refugees. Thus, all expressions regarding any countries, societies, organizations, and cities are based entirely on the participants' statements, therefore, no generalizations can be inferred from what is presented here.

SO-CLOSE acknowledges that Social Sciences are not - and should not - be considered a single truth to tell the stories of human beings. Research is an important tool to unveil prejudices, contribute to social participation, and create tools for education, but it cannot encompass all the realities that could be lived and all the

information regarding refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, policymakers, academics, associations, national or local governments, cultural institutions, or international organizations.

Between months two and three of the SO-CLOSE Calendar, Europe experienced one of the toughest times in the 21st century, which affected the lives of all citizens globally: the COVID-19 pandemic. In this context, there was an assessment of possibilities for implementing the fieldwork with all partners of the project due to COVID-19 restrictions. This assessment analysed all options to decide on the selected method of data collection. All efforts were made to maintain the structures in the Grant Agreement and the WP1 team recognizes and appreciates the priceless support of all partners in ensuring that all interviews could be done following the most professional standards in such difficult times.

The fieldwork has been performed following the safety requirements put in place by the governments where participants are located in order to avoid risking the health and safety of all the collaborators and participants involved. The main pillar of these measures has been the methodological modifications done in the fieldwork to perform interviews online to guarantee everyone's safety.

2.5. FIELDWORK CHALLENGES

As an exercise of recognizing the importance of fieldwork in the process of getting to know the participants and learning more about their views, this section will briefly cover a few challenges that occurred during the interviews which are worth sharing as part of the methodological path of the project, though more associated with the empirical aspects of the research. Each cultural institution has shared their first hand experiences conducting fieldwork and they are presented in what follows.

Greek Forum of Refugees (GFR) reported that one of the main challenges during the research was the fact that refugee flows in the country are not finalized and are ongoing in a non-linear manner. Greece is seen as a transit country by refugees who wish to reach other European countries after their arrival and there were not a lot of participants who had arrived before 2015. The refugees and asylum seekers contacted were often reluctant to be interviewed due to previous experience. Thus, many feel that "there is no reward [in collaborating as participants of the interviews] while at the same time struggling daily to ensure their own survival" (GFR, internal report, 23 August 2020). As an alternative to overcome this issue and ensure an ethical and respectful understanding of the narratives, the GFR integrated cultural mediators in their teams to collaborate in the fieldwork, giving support not only for translation and language, but also for understanding the essence of the project and their own narratives, assuring the understanding of each question, and building bridges between the interviewees and interviewers.

The Memorial Museum of Exiles (MUME) based in La Jonquera highlighted the challenges during the beginning of the fieldwork while the country was still in a

national lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic and flexibilization of social distance measures were still not established. The pandemic "limited the possibility to contact all the target groups. Some organizations were overwhelmed by the situation and were not able to address new demands that were crucial to the launch of the project. Doing interviews online has been difficult, especially with refugees" (MUME, internal report, 16 November 2020). It has also been stated that the project was a good opportunity to give voice and agency to refugees as a central part of this research. However, the "interviews might reopen old wounds or stir up old memories that can be painful for the people interviewed" (MUME, 2020). This lesson results in the need to prepare the vocabulary for the interviews and reinforces the need of a humane approach during the fieldwork. Especially important considering how painful working with memories can be for interviewees, and even more when the interviewers come from a different cultural background and speak a different mother tongue.

The Italian partner MONTESOLE Peace School reports the difficulty of finding refugees willing to be interviewed for two main reasons: a) because this was not considered a priority in their lives, especially for those who arrived in recent years and have work, ID documents, and housing as their primary priorities. The theme of cultural heritage is seen as secondary and, in any case, it can be taken into consideration only when basic needs are satisfied. b) Some refugees and asylum seekers were not willing to take part in the interviews because they did not want to talk about their past anymore, but rather to forget it.

Another issue to consider is that the pandemic has brought even more uncertainty and precariousness into the lives of people already at risk of exclusion, shifting their energies and attention to material problems of handling daily life rather than being involved in more far-reaching projects. The same thing can be said for the organizations that work directly with refugees and that in various ways have put the Italian partner in contact with refugees and asylum seekers: the amount of work that they have to do increased a lot and it was difficult for them to pay attention otherwise. Due to these circumstances, it was considered important during the interview to adopt a very human and welcoming approach even with respect to claims related to more practical aspects, in order to convey a real interest in past and present difficulties and not just an instrumental use of the testimonies.

2.6.   DATA ANALYSIS

Data were collected through the following data sources: (1) semi-structured individual interviews; and (2) researchers' field notes. All interviews in each country covered by the project were transcribed for the purpose of analysis. Interview results were summarized in templates and analysed to identify recurring themes. Summaries

of all interviews were translated into English. The analysis of the interview templates has been done in three steps:

Step 1. Data collection performing the interviews, collecting audio files, interview summaries, and consent forms.

Step 2. Alignment of interview summaries with themes to be analysed to meet the methodological and theoretical needs of SO-CLOSE and reorganization of interview summaries into single documents filtered by themes.

Step 3. Analysis of the templates provided by cultural institutions and final drafting of the WP1 Report.

Qualitative data were analysed through thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2013; Thelwall, 2021) to identify recurrent themes and categories. All interviews and field notes were shared with the GEDIME researchers and were examined and grouped into themes. An initial researcher coded interviews and categorized textual data as they related to themes. Subsequently, other researchers engaged in reviewing and refining the themes. For each of the themes, a researcher was tasked with conducting and writing a detailed analysis. To demonstrate the essence of each theme, the researcher, as part of her or his analysis of the material, embedded collected data extracts within an analytic narrative. Finally, two researchers were asked to reread the entire data set and the final analysis to ensure the internal homogeneity and coherence within and across the themes.

3. RESEARCH MAIN FINDINGS

The following section presents results based on the fieldwork. The results have been structured into three main sections that follow: the realities of forced migration, cultural heritage and inclusion of the refugees, and the use of digital technology and social media in refugees' inclusion.

3.1. THE REALITIES OF FORCED MIGRATION

In this section, we first analyse of the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers in the origin and destination country. This information allows for understanding the complex realities of forced migration. Second, major refugee policy initiatives, NGOs and cultural activities, public opinion, civil society engagement, and the perspective of refugees and asylum seekers are reviewed. Through this section, questions related to the challenges and implications for refugees' inclusion in the host society are addressed.

3.1.1. Migratory journey and arrival

The interviewees presented an interesting diversity of routes and journeys taken. From the analysed data, it can be concluded that there is not a single rule on how a person *becomes* a refugee, although it is easy to spot a few *trends* and challenges that happen to forced migrants during their pathways to look for asylum. What is clear is that the journeys taken by refugees once they leave their country are not simple and cannot be summarized in only one pathway. There are multitude of situations happening – mostly at the same time – and the only thing in common between these individuals is that they cannot return to their homeland due to security reasons and even direct threats to their lives.

3.1.1.1. Reasons for exile

Important quotes describing the diversity of trajectories lived by refugees will be presented in the following sections.

War

Perhaps the most known reason why people flee their countries and find themselves in a situation of seeking asylum is the threat to life that involves the war. Although war and conflicts has been noted in several interviews, we highlight and acknowledge that this is not the case of all asylum seekers, yet it is very common for specific profiles. One of these profiles is Syrian citizens and people living in Syria who had to flee from conflict zones in the second decade of the 21st century. These individuals became one of the most known diasporas in the recent years and gained significant attention in European and international media due to the cruel and harsh stories of families leaving their homes, which are described below: "When the bombing started [in Aleppo] with the explosive barrages very intense in our areas, I

could not stand it anymore, especially when the bombing became very intense" (Interview EL.R.20). A situation of conflict does not apply solely to asylum seekers from the Middle East, but also those from Eastern Europe and Africa: "I left my home area Lugansk in 2013 when the war started. Then I lived for a few years in Charkiv, and in 2019 I decided to go to Poland. I can't go back to my home city because of war, and there were no conditions to stay in the other part of Ukraine (due to the economic situation)" (Interview PL.R.2). Some interviews (Interview IT.R.17; Interview IT.R.18; Interview IT.R.26) shows that in some circumstances the triggering factor to leave the country is connected with forced recruitment in armed factions, more than the general lack of possibilities and violations of human rights connected with the state of war. "I left [for Italy] when there was the war in Libya [in 2011] because I used to live in Libya, the nationality I had was the citizenship of Libya, because in Gaddafi's time we were recognized, in the case of a Tuareg who moved from Niger to come [...] to Libya, the law made [it possible] that he had the right [...] to be a citizen, because historically speaking [...] the Arabs came, they expelled our people just like that, and with colonization the borders were made, but in reality this area is our territory, [...] we have the same dialects, we have the same culture [...]. [I left when there was war] because I could not choose to stay" (Interview IT.R.3).

Insecurity and Political repression

Several interviewees stated that they left their country because they had no other choice and feared for their own life or safety (Interview IT.R.22; Interview IT.R.24; Interview IT.R.17; Interview ES.R.21; Interview ES.R.5; Interview ES.R.25). The sources of insecurity are numerous. Conflict and violence are obvious sources of insecurity, as are state violence and organized crime. Reference is made to repeated violations of rights on ethnic or family bases, persecution for political ideas, lack of security, and constant risk to one's life because of authoritarian political regimes. A political refugee residing in Italy since 1973 recounted human rights violation he suffered under the Pinochet dictatorship:

> I arrived in Italy and… at the end of 1973 and because of the coup in Chile, under the government of Salvador Allende […] because I was a member of the regional directorate in Santiago of the Socialist Party of Chile, of Allende's party and then I had a government position within the Ministry of Agriculture […] Then on 11 September it happened to me precisely on the way to the headquarters of the place where I worked, just 150 meters from the Moneda building, where unfortunately it was… Allende and many other Chilean democrats lost their lives due to the violence of the Pinochet dictatorship. That is why I was arrested […] and I was lucky that… having suffered a violence that over time I realized was a great cruelty, but compared to what other people have suffered, it seemed to me almost as if nothing had happened to me, what I mean is that on 11 September when I was arrested together with other

friends and comrades we were hit, beaten, and this violence ended with a simulated shooting: they threatened us by saying where are the weapons, we did not actually have weapons, so the leader of the platoon […]then said shoot and […] they shot in the air, but the violence of those who have toyed with people… […] was a brutal power play of life or death towards people. […] But the luck was that we were arrested on the 11th, for these two days they beat us on several occasions, on the 13th an incredible thing happened: other soldiers arrived and kicked and struck us, they left us on the roads, they […] left us free, they took us neither to the stadium nor to any concentration camp, and there the pilgrimage began and I almost never returned […] to my house and I stayed in other people's houses until the situation was such that we decided we had to go abroad. (Interview IT.R.7)

Gender and Sexually diverse asylum seekers

Another important topic that is often not recognized as a central characteristic of asylum seekers' journeys is the gender disparity between women and men, which comes to light when using storytelling and narrative-inspired methodologies in interviews like the ones performed in SO-CLOSE. Among these gender disparities and the clear privilege that cissexual male asylum seekers have, there have been reports of gender persecution and attempted rapes by smugglers and other migrants during the journey as a woman refugee in Greece stated:

In 2018, we had social problems. They came to kill me. That's why I decided to leave. I had cancer. My husband neglected me, so we got to the point where we got divorced. Neither my family nor his wanted it. My brothers came to kill me because I wanted to divorce. During this time something happened to the doctor and when I told him I wanted to divorce, he retaliated by giving some photos of me to my brothers and my brothers decided to come and kill me. […] I also have three daughters who had to have a clitoridectomy and it was one of the reasons I decided to leave. Even though it was dangerous for me and the children, it was better for me to leave. (Interview EL.R.15)

Another notable fact is that gender violence is commonly less noticeable than the previous statements. For a large number of female asylum seekers, gender disparities or violence are reflected while growing up and through institutionalized sexism that generates inequalities, lack of opportunities, and exclusion. In these cases, women are pushed to precariousness, poverty, and deprivation of their wills and opportunities. When external conflicts occur in their areas of residence, they are doubly affected by the crisis and start their journeys as asylum seekers with fewer resources, less education, and are often under the control of other men in their social circle.

[My home country] is a paradise as an image, but we have gone through very hard times and the difficulties there are more than you can bear to live. There are many difficulties. Let's say the jobs are few, very few. Women cannot work

the way they want, so they do not work much. Okay, in our generation, we could only become teachers and nurses. These were the only schools. While I was a good student and wanted to go to study in another city in Mosul, my father didn't let me go and I was forced to become a teacher. (Interview EL.R.7)

The LGBTI+ community also suffers harsh persecution, and a growing number of asylum seekers and refugees are coming to Europe because they faced threats for being gender non-conforming and/or gender and sexually diverse individuals (Interview IT.R.13). What has been interestingly illustrated during the fieldwork is that for LGBTI+ asylum seekers, the journey is not only a struggle for survival after clear persecution due to their identity, but also a self-discovery journey within: "In 2015 when I discovered my homosexuality I felt in danger in my own country. I was a threatened person. They could kill me at any moment. When the war came, I took advantage of the events in Syria to escape the country […] I do not identify with any gender. I went to Spain to understand who I am. Who am I? A woman or a man?" (Interview ES.R.8).

Labour Life and Asylum seeking

This is a somewhat unknown fact that leads people to leave their countries and become refugees, but interesting cases that relate to the world of work have been identified. An illustrative case is the story of a person working on communication and cinema who left due to political repression and life threats in Afghanistan: "In 2015 I made a documentary about the Taliban then and that cost me and I had to leave'' (Interview EL.R.22). The stories about persecuted people who worked in the media do not stop there, and they are more common in situations of coup d'états and takeovers in the political arena of the countries of origin.

> Then I went from Syria to Qatar. I worked in the press as a writer about the war. I was a reporter. Then there was a problem because I wrote bad things about Assad and good things for others. But I was convinced that both were evil, that both parties were bad. Where is the Syrian youth? They didn't want me, and I left Qatar. I went to Turkey and, at first, I had a very bad life because the Turks do not speak English or Arabic, only Turkish. Afterwards, I had nothing there. (Interview ES.R.7)

After forced migrants leave their countries of origin, it is very common to have stories related more to cases of slavery or slavery-like working conditions due to political turmoil (Interview IT.R.27; Interview IT.R.28). This was reported by a few interviewees during the fieldwork, such as the story of an asylum seeker from Afghanistan who left Afghanistan after the war in 1995 and became a migrant/refugee working in very difficult conditions in Pakistan:

> I worked on coal in the mountains as a small child, and my brother and I went first, and then my parents came. We used to make carpets in Afghanistan. I was

in Pakistan until 2000 and then I came to Iran in 2000, where my brother was living. Okay, I was making carpets and I did not know construction and such. As soon as I arrived, he put me to work. I mean it was very difficult for me, really, I could not breathe. Until about the summer of 2005 I was in Iran, working in construction as well. In Iran, you are caught and directly sent to Afghanistan. I said, better get out of here too. Four of us decided to come to Europe. When we came to Turkey, I saw the situation with the inflatable rafts, and I was really scared. I borrowed from an acquaintance and I gave $3,200 to the traffickers to bring me to Greece. (Interview EL.R.23)

Forced prostitution has been also reported in the interviews (Interview ES.R.25), which indicates a clear gender privilege as stated by a Syrian refugee in Spain, who explains that prostitution was imposed on her in the country of transit before the final destination: "Before coming to Spain, I spent three and a half years in Lebanon. I had to prostitute myself to earn money and to survive […] I met a girl that was forced into prostitution. Sometimes they are forced by their husband" (Interview ES.R.9).

Health and well-being

A lesser discussed reason for individuals to undertake an asylum-seeking journey is the matter of health and well-being. Perhaps it is not very common to see forced migration due to health conditions, but it is not uncommon to listen to stories of refugees and asylum seekers who gained this status after migrating for health treatments and were not able to return to their home country.

> In 2018 I decided to leave for the treatment of my child, and we went to Turkey, but we came back. For the second time in 2019. [When you went to Turkey for your child did he manage to do the treatment?] No, unfortunately. Unfortunately, there was no cure in Iraq, Turkey, or Iran. In 2009 my child and my wife went through an organization in Italy and were told about an operation. And now we made the same trip to go back to Italy to have the operation. This time at my own expense but we did not make it. [And in 2019 did you leave again because of your child?] Yes. He is in a bad condition and needs treatment. And with the boat we were in we would go to Italy, but the engine broke down and we ended up in Greece. (Interview EL.R.16)

Childhood and refuge

In times of war, children are some of the most affected individuals because their memories will be affected for their entire life. Several interviewees left their home country for the first time and undertook a forced journey as a child. The participants are adults today, but they reported what happened when they were child refugees in transit looking for asylum.

> I was six years old. There was a war in our village. We left for the first time and went to the big city. And then again for a year we stayed there, then again, we

went back to the village. After two or three years, another war took place and we left and went to Turkey. We went back again. I think I was nine years old then. And the last time I left was 1995, when I left and came here in Greece. There was a war between the Kurds. Civil. And then my husband and I left. He wanted to come here in Greece because his brother was here. (Interview EL.R.8)

The reality for refugee children is even harder because all the above factors and challenges described in the previous sections of this report are also present in their migratory cycle. One of them is the rupture of denied entry to their home country during a transit or short migration, which leaves them in a vulnerable situation in between borders, as we can see in the following narrative:

I was born in northern Iraq, in Iraqi Kurdistan. I was there until I was seven years old. Due to the Iran-Iraq war in 1988, we were forced to flee to Iran. I grew up in Iran, I studied in Iran. At the age of 17 we went back to Iraq. […] We returned at the end of August 1996, due to conflicts, civil wars. They came and drove us again from the borders of Iran. We re-entered Iran but then I did not return to Iraq. Because of the war I left and came here. (Interview EL.R.10)

Ruptures and dissidences in the asylum seeking or migration cycle

This is an interesting example of how the journeys undertaken are not always the same and many variants. Many current refugees start as migrants or even students in a neighbouring or nearby country (Interview IT.R.13; Interview IT.R.23; Interview ES.R.25; Interview ES.R.26; Interview ES.R.30; Interview PL.R.3; Interview PL.R.8). The political situation in their home country is so difficult that they cannot continue with the regular migration cycle and return to their country, so the only option left is to seek asylum in another country. In the following quote, we can read the story of an individual who used to be a migrant in Iran and then was stranded in a situation that made it impossible for her to return to her home country, Afghanistan, and she did not want to remain in Iran. Her choice was to leave both countries and go to Europe.

A year and a half ago, I left for different reasons. Finishing my studies in Iran I didn't have any chance to work there or have a residence permit. They don't issue permits to us. We had a big problem. Returning to Afghanistan is impossible because of safety issues. It's also very difficult for us to get back into Afghani society again. You feel in a difficult situation when you are a refugee in Iran, because you don't belong anywhere. You can't go to Afghanistan, and you aren't accepted in Iran. You must go somewhere else to start a new life. To feel like a human being and a person […] When I finished my studies and went to Afghanistan, I realized how difficult it is to do different things, to do things as a woman. Even the looks from men when I was on the road, I didn't feel safe from the men. I realized how difficult it is in Afghanistan for a woman to

progress. This created fear for me and then I decided this shouldn't be. I said I must leave. I have to leave. (Interview EL.R.2)

3.1.1.2. Roads of exile

There is a wide diversity of roads of exile and means of transportation reported by participants during their journeys. This diversity breaks the idea that refugees are a solid and unified concept and shows a new perspective in which, as with any other social group or community, there is an important disparity of privilege and inequality between participants: "I was planning to come by plane first, but then I had my little daughter with me. I was the only one who had a visa. And we came by train all across Turkey to the border and again we were stopped there because the little one did not have a visa. But the policeman was nice. He let us pass and said okay no issue because it was too small anyway" (Interview EL.R.25).

Many risk everything, even their lives, to embark on a dangerous journey across the Mediterranean (Interview IT.R.9; Interview IT.R.17; Interview IT.R.25; Interview IT.R.5; Interview IT.R.20). The experience of an interviewee from Guinea-Conakry clearly illustrates the dangers of the Central Mediterranean route:

> We left Mali, we came to Algeria [...] we worked there too because every time we arrived in a place the money ran out, we had to beg, to work, do everything, sleep on the streets. So from Algeria we worked, we found some money and went to Libya but when we arrived in Libya [...] there was war, at that moment there was even more violence, they were beating and shooting. When I arrived in Libya let's say... that's where I found out exactly what war means, even before when we left Mali to arrive in Algeria, during the desert we encountered some difficulties too because there were Tuaregs, you had to pay, that is practically the main reason you ran out of our money, because when we travel [...] at a certain moment we found four pickup trucks with a machine gun in the back and they made us stop, we were in that truck with more than 100 people inside [...] they asked us for money, whoever didn't have money or refused to pay or got too smart, they beat you or shot your legs, or they made you stay there. That is, I saw them shoot someone right in front of me, I also took a beating [...] In the end, we have overcome that too and we arrived in Algeria. In Algeria there were Moroccans and Algerians... but they were kind [...] because there was a civilisation there, but as soon as you leave civilisation there's always someone who screws you over, someone who wants to take your money. In the end, we arrived in Libya [...] after all that mess there [...] evil was everywhere, you had to be very careful, that is you couldn't even walk around the streets because there was someone who would take you, make you work, and wouldn't pay you, because my friends and I have worked more than 1000 times without being paid, or sometimes you work but they don't give you money, then you beg them to at least give you food because you have neither

food nor money, you have nothing. We have worked a lot, even there, confronting each other and overcoming all the difficulties, because even if you go out to buy something you had to run, you always have that fear that someone is coming to get you, that someone will shoot you, because that's what happens there. At the end [...] we found some money [...] a lot of money because you had to pay for the boat there. And I didn't have a lot of money, but [...] I also had those friends who were like brothers who had arrived there, they had already found some money because they were older, they worked even more [...] and they helped me get the rest of the money to pay for the boat and we went to the edge of the sea to wait there. We waited for three months, even from there it was like three hellish months because in those three months you don't have much to eat there because you are always closed [...] they are really lousy places in the [most absolute] way. After those three months there, one day we boarded at night [...] each raft had like 100 people on it, they sent our raft but it was a broken one [...] we went 50 kilometres, we heard that the raft made a "crack" sound, and there were some people [...] who wanted to risk going on and on because they know what's there if they go back, they [...] made us pay for a new boat, and there were those who don't want to die [...] I was among those [...] who didn't want to die so young, that is, I didn't really want to die young. The captain [...] also said he doesn't want to die [...] so he turned around and we went back. That day there, let's say when I got off I was very scared, at the same time I was very happy, that day there I prayed to all the gods I knew, I said finally I didn't die and I am still alive, but I will remember that day it all my life. [...] Then when we went back their boss saw that the boat was defective, he made us sleep there on the beach, the next day he sent us [...] [on a new raft]. We got on at 1 am and [...] around 6 or 7 am we saw the big ships [...]. We were the first to go to that ship. [...] They sorted us out and that's when I started to lose a little bit of the brothers I left with. [...] They sorted us in those big ships and in two and a half days we arrived in Sicily. (Interview IT.R.21)

Another important point to highlight is the smuggling activities reported during the interviews. They are present in almost all stories of countries of origin, especially in the ones reported in the most recent years, in which borders have been securitized and the possibilities of applying for a humanitarian visa to travel by regular means are becoming nearly impossible. These trips are regularly done by boat, as stated by a Syrian refugee in Greece: "First, I went to Turkey. Then I arrived from Izmir by boat from the sea. I arrived in Samos, and then the state sent me to Athens. The trafficker wanted money. 'Do you have money? Let's go'" (Interview EL.R.31). However, they are also very common in land transportation on very dangerous routes also managed by smugglers.

With a truck. We were twenty, twenty-five, or thirty people in a truck through the mountains. We hid during the day since we only drove at night. During the day, we looked for a cool place to rest. If they see you, the police come, they catch you, and it's over. Some nights we walked, others we went by truck, and others by car. (Interview ES.R.17)

Although the focus of the interviews was the arrival to Europe, there are several important findings about South-South migration that need to be considered. In recent years, border control and policies are being constantly updated in Global South countries, especially the ones located close to conflict zones, and smugglers have intense activities in these areas as well, using a mix of regular transportation and irregular documentation:

I came from Syria crossing the Syria-Turkey border, which is legal, with my passport. Then when I arrived in Istanbul, I came illegally. It was easy. One trafficker was here, one in Turkey. They have communication with each other. I know one in Syria, he tells me. I have a friend in Istanbul. They talked; I came to Istanbul. I found this person. He gave me a fake passport and I came by train. (Interview EL.R.30)

It is worth noting that it is easier and safer for men across all means of transportation. Furthermore, obtaining a visa to enter through safe transportation, such as by train or airplane, plays an important role in this imbalance of opportunities.

I made the trip legally, because my ex-husband had got the necessary papers and sent us a visa. And we came by plane normally. I did not have this difficult experience. I have heard a lot, and from them, I have also heard from my husband. We are now together. Because he also travelled illegally. And my sisters who are now in Germany illegally have travelled. I have heard many difficulties. (Interview EL.R.21)

3.1.1.3. Journey: hazards and risks

The experience of a 19-year-old Gambian asylum seeker illustrates how dangerous a journey to get to Europe can be and how criminal organisations may subject asylum seekers to violence, systematic rape, slavery, and abuse:

The first trip from Mali, let's say up to Niger, I had met a driver who took me almost like a son, because […] in Africa so, when you travel like this every stop that goes where the police are, they make you pay money, if you don't pay money they send you back so, that gentleman every place we arrived […] [he said I was his] son, […] until I arrived […] in Niamey, up to there, then we never met that gentleman again. Then in Agadez… Goodness… it's a small town that's hot, you can't even go outside, you can go outside but when they catch you, they can rob you, or when they catch you, they sell you to another person like that, if you don't pay money. […] If you don't pay the money, they won't leave

you, they do business with the people who are going, you keep them and if you don't give me money, I'll kill you. […] In Libya you have to pay, if you don't pay in Libya, they won't let you through, and from there you have no more friends. […] In Libya friendship is over, because they can always kill you. […] In Libya I was in a camp like this, when the girls arrive and there is a beautiful girl in that camp, they send people to go to Italy, they have a house like this, when they believe that a girl is beautiful, they don't send her in that community where there are so many people, they take her in their house like this. Every night they take her and have sex and then when the trip arrives they let them go up immediately, because the females, for example, when they arrive, can stay for a week or two weeks or even two days like that, they go immediately, but the males can stay for a year, you pay your money and they don't let you go… they don't let you go, but the females can stay and don't pay money and they let you go, so it's different. (Interview IT.R.14)

One of the most present pictures in the memories of refugees is the smuggler. (Interview IT.R.17; Interview ES.R.13; Interview ES.R.17; Interview ES.R.22). And this is one of the most controversial as well. Smugglers have been reported as the main assisting figure for crossing borders and also in giving the first assistance when arriving in a new place and there are feelings of appreciation for them in several interviews. "The trafficker was good, he helped me. Two fellow children were also with me, two young children. These two guys helped me a lot during the journey" (Interview EL.R.1).

Nonetheless, they have also been reported as infamous rapists or corrupt figures that take financial advantage of people in extreme situations, as reported by an Iraqi-Kurdish woman who is seeking asylum in Greece: "traffickers do horrible things on the road. Let's say on the way there were some girls with us who were just beautiful. They separated them. If my brother was a trafficker, I would not trust him" (Interview El.R.15).

The migratory journey towards a safe heaven was often taken as an important life experience with important moments of learning: "But at the same time, it was a great experience for me. I have learned a lot from this trip. Because it is a long journey, you can see different things, different people, different places, and different problems that [...] you understand what is a problem in the first place in this journey" (Interview EL.R.1).

It is obviously worth acknowledging that this does not mean that the journey was pleasant or easy, but we could consider it a re-humanizing act, or a sign of recognition and a capacity of summarizing and reflecting about one's journey, offering the individual a possibility of self-reflection and indicating a self-awareness of personal choices after their integration.

First time travelling that way. Fear, worry. What can I tell you, whatever you imagine. But okay, we learned something. That things change. Sometimes you may be with your family and not feel afraid, but there are times when you need to slowly, slowly stand on your feet. Feel good without your family. (Interview EL.R.3)

Despite all the difficult situations, inequality, and life threats suffered, cooperation between other groups of refugees during the journey and family support remain strongly in the memory as a cornerstone of individual integrity: "The most important support for me was the psychological support from my family who always called me, they told me not to worry, this trip will end, you will arrive safely. I consider this the best support. I think I was able to overcome the [...] difficulties of the trip more easily. As a man it was easier to get over it" (Interview EL.R.4).

One of the main sources of support come from married couples, especially in moments of disease, in the form of psychological support and assistance to keep up with the determination to find a safe place. "I was not afraid anymore because I had my husband with me. If I was alone I might, but I was with my husband" (Interview EL.R.8).

There was also cooperation and emotional support outside of the family. In several interviews we heard stories of cooperation and friendship among asylum seekers and refugees: "Look, we were this one group, okay, there were some families who really when they saw that I was pregnant and alone, they were trying to help me, and they were saying, 'If you feel like you're alone, you can come here, be in our company'" (Interview EL.R.2).

A few participants have reported moving situations lived during their journeys, which can be a helpful resource to raise awareness on how difficult this journey is for millions of refugees worldwide and how services should also consider these situations. Among the hardest situations are walking on foot crossing countries, having issues with police or violence from groups against refugees' rights, and facing the death of beloved family members and friends:

We went to Iran on foot. I remember very well we ate grass on the street because we had nothing. Suffering in Turkey. In Turkey I was afraid of being caught because they would take me back to the other side where we have civil war. I could not stay longer in Turkey. I entered Bulgaria due to deportation. I stayed in Bulgaria for three months in detention, as I can remember. There was no communication with anyone. My parents thought I was dead on the street. From Bulgaria I then went barefoot to Greece. What I remember when I started, I had no shoes to wear. Turkey, Bulgaria, Iran, Turkey, Bulgaria, Greece. [...] Nobody. Captive and alone. Not many people were coming that time. We had to help each other. If I could not walk, one of my friends when he was with

us [...] And I have helped the others because we reached the snow, one almost died. I put him on my shoulder as much as I could pull him. [...] Very much. It affected me a lot. First, to say that I went all this way in fear. Fear, firstly, that the Turks would catch me, that they would not give me to the other side because I would have finished. Because I was on the other side of a family, in another political party, and there was a conflict between them. My dream then was to reach Greece. I arrived in Greece, they caught us, they sent us back to Bulgaria. [Why did you want to get to Greece in particular?] Because we had read as much as we could about Greece. We had learned four things about Greece, that if we get there, we will no longer be in danger of the fear of being returned or the violence that may [...] If you go back, they may kill you or you may be imprisoned. [In Bulgaria] they kept us without food for three days. Three days without food, after three days after hunger, thirst, fatigue, fear they put us in a cage, a closed cage with handcuffs all together so that the border patrol would take us to the Bulgarians. Then when I arrived in Bulgaria, I had neither shoes nor clothes. It was slowly beginning to be winter and it was very cold in Bulgaria. Fortunately, then they took us to Sofia. There they had a centre for refugees. They put us in an old hotel. We went in. Fortunately, we warmed up there a bit and then we started discussing how to leave again. Some were seeking asylum then. I was afraid of being deported to Turkey. Then we decided to go on foot to Greece. We went on foot. We walked for three days. We arrived in Xanthi. That's where the authorities caught us. Okay, they kept us for a month then. But then, and still I am impressed, we were four children. They put us with the adults. We had no papers. But we left and came to Athens. (Interview EL.R.10)

3.1.1.4. Arrival: difficulties and support

When refugees arrive at their destination, they are supposed to seek asylum. The main points of survival become very evident. After a long and exhausting journey that often takes months or years, refugees must start from scratch and look for the most basic resources to start the long process of integration. The main points referred to in the narratives by refugees are related to accommodation, health, support from organizations, and police brutality – which is often the most memorable situation of their first contact with the institutions in the destination country.

These quotes illustrate a little bit of the issues faced by refugees when seeking assistance for their issues and how bureaucratic and linguistic barriers make it so difficult:

Then when any diseases begin. My situation was that I was hospitalized after being in Poland for a month. It is terrible, you feel abandoned, nobody can come to you, help you, you can't even explain what hurts you, how you feel, or has chronic diseases. I had no major problems here, these were formalities.

Sometimes it was necessary to come several times. In terms of medical service, I had funny situations. They heard the accent, they thought I didn't understand anything, and they started to say, "Oh, she's from Ukraine", they talked about me a bit. And I understood but couldn't explain the medical terms. (Interview PL.R.3)

Refugees' access to basic public services relies on the political will at the local and national level. NGOs and international organizations play a crucial role in providing assistance to new arrivals and are remembered and appreciated for life. There are several international organizations working in the field with refugees in Europe, such as the Red Cross and the UNHCR, and also local organizations and civil society initiatives that stand on the front line of assistance. They assist in psychological support, accommodation assistance, health services, legal issues, formalizing asylum procedure requests, transportation, and food. When asked about the most important sources of support for the interviewees in their refugee processes, many point to different civil society organizations that provide services to the refugee population as the main pillars of support. The support from these organizations in economic matters, or in the search for studies, housing, or jobs, is fundamental for families who do not know how the host society works. However, in some cases it simply becomes clear that a local person's intention to listen to them or treat them well is enough for the refugees to feel supported. Some of these stories follow:

It was the support of organizations and specifically an organization called the Greek Council for Refugees. It was the one that listened to me and supported me every time I had a problem. Whatever problem I had. Either I had a problem with the asylum process, or I had domestic violence, a problem with my husband. I went there, I had a social worker. (Interview EL.R.1)

As reported by the interviewees, it became clear that due to the fact that asylum seekers and refugees face restricted access to health and social care in the host countries, only in very few cases did they seek assistance from professionals, psychologists, and social workers when they faced difficulties or personal problems. Although the family remains the main support in dealing with problems for a large part of the interviewees, in several interviews, refugees and asylum seekers stressed that they are often alone in the host country and they cannot count on the assistance of families or friends and feel intensely severe loneliness and pain: "Do you know what helps me? Music and walking. Nobody else. I have fallen many times. I have gone through many things. Okay, all women say the same. This has helped me a lot, listening to songs and walking. Many times, I have gone from here to Chalandri (Region of Athens)" (Interview EL.R.8). As in the comment above, relaxing activities such as listening to music, taking a walk, watching a movie, and reading were often among the solutions used by refugees and asylum seekers to reduce their anxiety level.

Taking advantage of the digital era, several interviewees used social media to keep in contact with friends and family members. Some expressed that they were supported by their compatriots and other refugees. In a few cases, asylum seekers said that religion or belief is their main way to face problems, as is for example the case of a Syrian refugee in Greece: "When we have a problem, I do not tell others. We say it between us as a family. I pray to Allah to solve our problems because he will solve them for us. And generally, we only discuss this issue with each other'' (Interview EL.R.25). A refugee from Chechnya expresses the same idea when she says: "My family and my religion help me to deal with personal problems" (Interview PL.R.23).

When refugees and asylum applicants first arrive in the host country, they face different types of challenges depending on their economic resources, gender, age, social support networks, and the region's economic and socio-economic characteristics. For instance, asylum seekers who had been in camps and mass accommodation centres often encountered several problems: difficulties to cover their everyday personal needs, lack of basic services and resources, problems related to coexistence, and violence in the camps. A young Afghan asylum seeker who arrived in Greece in 2019 recounted his life at the camp in Moria where he lived for five months: "I would get up in the morning first go to the toilet. I had to wait at least 15 minutes to half an hour to go to the toilet. Then I went to wash my hands and my face. Again, 15 minutes to half an hour you had to wait in line to get to the water. For breakfast, it is one and a half to two hours that I had to wait in line if there was any breakfast left. Many times, we did not have breakfast because it ended quickly. Then again, I had to go in line for food. There again one and a half to two hours and that was if you could get food in time before the tension started. Once the tension started, they would close and stop the process of giving food. And then it was dinner, and again we had to be in line to get it. This was life" (Interview EL.R.4). This complex and difficult situation led, in some cases, to personal troubles, drug addiction, public violence, family problems, and divorce. The experience of a Chechen woman in a Polish refugee camp illustrates this point very clearly: "I lived in Timbak. I went to the camp with my husband. I was not given children without my husband's permission. I had to marry him again to bring my children. We started living together in the camp. You can't talk about it, but I will tell you. My husband started to be addicted to drugs in the camp. There were only drug addicts in Timbak. They are there even now. Then we were poisoned in Grodniki. I was living in Brovinov with my children then. I split up with my husband. We started a new life with the children" (Interview PL.R.17).

Results showed that women, in general, experienced more difficulties in the camps in terms of access to services, violence and insecurity, the use of common spaces and infrastructure, and higher levels of stress and being overburdened by their roles (Interview ES.R.25; Interview ES.R.26; Interview ES.R.28). Gendered behaviours, roles, the division of labour, and the distribution of power seem too resistant to change in

the camps and the refugee communities within the camp made women more dependent and isolated. A woman refugee from Syria mentioned that: "It was very different because the men just went to get the food and then did nothing else. We women had to go and get the water that was far away to wash the children and the clothes and after that, all day running after the children. In other words, we did all the work and the men just went to get the food'' (Interview EL.R.20). Others also explained that the insecurity of their condition had more negative effects on the women. Several interviewees noted that preventive measures and the provision of special protection are needed for women in refugee camps.

In other cases, for those not connected with refugee camps, pre-existing networks played an important role in the reception condition they encountered. The experience of a Syrian refugee who arrived in Italy in 2019 provides a clear example of how social networks are crucial in the process of exile, reception, and integration: "I arrived in a town. I am different from the refugees that came by sea illegally. I arrived at a place where everyone knows me. They know everything about me. Operazione Colomba spoke with them, they knew that they would receive Abdu. He is a Syrian activist, he works in Madinat al salam, and everything was ready. The house was ready, all the community was waiting for us in the church with Don Andrea. And those are the people that I had the most contact with as Italians. And I have lived with them for one year and a half now, so they are my second family. I don't think I was feeling like the other refugees that arrive through the sea, that live in the tent camps in Europe. So, this way of migrating through the humanitarian corridors really protects the dignity of the refugees regardless of what the refugee is. His dignity, his rights. And he [the refugee] will receive his rights here" (Interview IT.R.1).

3.1.2. Integration and inclusion processes

It should be pointed out that a number of factors can impact a refugee's integration into the host country: the migration and asylum policies, the diversity of public services, the media and cultural landscape, and the economic conditions in the host region. In fact, social inclusion is a multidimensional area that is the result of multilevel actions. Certainly, the specific economic, social, and geographic characteristics of the host countries and regions and the size and composition of migrant communities often influence how integration policy is set and managed at the various levels. In general, across the four countries analysed in this project, initial support (i.e., language, information, accompaniment, etc.) for newcomers has been established. However, it could be noted that almost all of the stakeholders interviewed in this study agreed that equal access to welfare benefits was not guaranteed and reported some obstacles that refugees and asylum seekers experience when accessing services that are regulated and planned by different levels of government. According to the protection associate of the UNHCR Office in Athens: "Now there are some rights, some of them work, so there is access for people to social welfare, health, education, etc., but in the current

situation we have a lot of obstacles both legislative and practical, bureaucracy, language barrier, and not all services are adapted and informed about the situation in order to serve them, so there are many problems" (Interview EL.P.5).

Various interviewees explicitly mentioned that many countries do not have a specific strategy covering all sectors involved in the inclusion of refugees. In certain cases, participants criticized the absence of overall strategy and multilevel coordination to address the needs of refugees. A coordinator of the Migrant Integration Council of the Municipality of Pireus noted: "I don't think it [the government] has a strategy. It has returned to a more, let's say, traditional system with previous laws. There is no concern for the integration part. In other words, I believe that now the government is only pursuing a foreign policy, which is purely about illegal immigrants, to catch and deport them. They are tightening the entry measures and they are not dealing at all with the part of the internal immigration integration policy" (Interview EL.P.1). In this regard, the improvement of the reception plan, simplifying the bureaucracy, reintroducing the humanitarian permit, and giving as much voice as possible to third parties involved in social services provisions are some proposals for reform advanced by interviewees.

3.1.2.1. Governments strategies and public policy

The most frequent measures adopted by governments to assist the integration of refugees and asylum seekers involved a wide variety of policy dimensions: education, health, labour, welfare, and so forth. In the words of Elly Schlein, former EU MP and Regional Minister of Welfare and Social Affairs in the Emilia-Romagna Region: "The policies of the Region act on three fundamental axes that are transversal to multiple sectors. One is that of strengthening the autonomy of migrants, for example learning the language, knowing their rights, knowledge of the territory (also how the services are organized), training, and work. Then there is the second axis to accompanying welfare services to offer answers in an increasingly intercultural context that recognizes itself as such. Here, this is a crucial step. And then, as a third axis, that of building bridges and exchanges between migrants and people who were born and raised here. These are above all civic participation initiatives, parties, engagement by younger generations, and cultural or sporting initiatives" (Interview IT.P.2). Some other measures mentioned by interviewees included language and cultural classes as early as possible following migrant arrivals, actions to raise awareness and information on culture and diversity, promoting vocational training and access to work, organizing cultural festivals, implementing various Erasmus+ programmes in schools or eTwinning where refugee children actively participated in collaboration with children in Greece, and organizing debates, forums, and educational programs in schools. Some projects, like "school for work" in Italy, paired high school students with refugees (Interview IT.P.5).

Although challenges for the inclusion of the incoming population are multi-dimensional, negative attitudes toward migrants and a lack of coherence in migration policies are mentioned by policymakers as two main obstacles. Some interviewees described the rising tide of xenophobic and anti-refugee sentiments as a serious difficulty and an obstacle to successful integration. In their view, part of the explanation for this may lie in concerns regarding employment and ethnic stereotypes (Interview EL.P.1). Gaps regarding the design and implementation of integration policies across different levels of government constitute a second challenge according to policymakers. These gaps often result from difficulties in coordinating an integrated approach across sectors of policy. This lack of coherence in turn can make it difficult for NGOs and local authorities to contribute to policy implementation. In this regard, Paulina Wlaźlak, migration and repatriation inspector at the Gdańsk City Council stated: "There are many challenges: the misunderstanding of the types of stays for these people, the processes themselves, and the definitions on many levels of both the local community and the authorities. Very often it seems that we talk about the same subject and use completely different concepts and it turns out that there is no agreement here. […] It is very often necessary to integrate people who live here but live in uncertainty because they have an uncertain status for two years, for example. This is because the legalization of the stay is still going on, which is not the competence of the local government. It is difficult to present an integration program to someone who is not sure if they will not get a negative decision in a few days and will not have to come back or who is stuck in the system and cannot visit their family for a year or more. These prolonged procedures are something that is not understandable" (Interview PL.P.5).

In response to the question if the government takes any measures to improve social cohesion and promote mutual understanding between refugees and their local communities, at least three Greek policymakers surprisingly replied, "no action is taken" (Interview EL.P.4; Interview EL.P.1; Interview EL.P.6). For some it reflects a lack of political will and coordination mechanisms across different levels of government:

> No. I think no action is taken. There we have seen that the local bodies, municipalities, and so on have a very big role, where a very hostile climate has been observed, depending of course on the region. But there has not been any coordinated effort, certainly not at the legislative level, nor by the state, to approach these societies and do community building. So, I would definitely say no. On the contrary, from the summer and onwards, there has been a very strong negative rhetoric in the public discourse from the government regarding the refugees. They talk about illegal immigrants, they talk about invaders at the border, and the UNHCR had warned that such statements were made by politicians. This is then reproduced by the citizens themselves and leads to an increase in incidents of racist violence, which is indeed what has happened in

recent months both on the islands and on the mainland, especially where new camps open and housing is denied to vulnerable groups even now with COVID. And certainly, there is a political discourse that is reproduced in the media and essentially presents the refugees as invaders and an enemy, pressing for such reactions at the local level as well. So, it is just the opposite. There is no provision. On the contrary, there is a targeting, and this is a relatively new element of recent months. (Interview EL.P.4)

Several interviewees stated they are very conscious of the existing gap regarding migrant integration and social cohesion. However, they used several examples in order to show various relevant initiatives designed at the local level to support mutual understanding. Lucia Fresa, head of the International Projects and Relations Office in Bologna, described the initiatives they spearhead in this regard:

We have had two projects: first Amitiè, then it became Amitié Code. It is a project funded by the European Commission concerning global citizenship and education. On one hand, we worked on training civil servants, together with Bologna University and Monte Sole Peace School. On the other hand, we held training and non-formal education workshops for students and teachers. There was a communications campaign aiming at the citizens of some European cities, among which Bologna, on the complexity of migrations: causes and consequences here and in the countries of origin. So, from this activity, the municipality developed an Action Plan to counter discrimination and promote the rights of new citizens. (Interview IT.P.6)

In response to the question what the priority should be, they emphatically state that living conditions must be improved (Interview EL.P.4). Therefore, there should first be a new policy on visas and access to the country (Interview IT.P.5), legislation guaranteeing the rights of mainly vulnerable groups, fair procedures allowing access to asylum (Interview EL.P.4; Interview EL.P.5), and policies focused on the integration of the refugees (Interview IT.P.6). With regard to the latter, language is identified as the main challenge to integration (Interview EL.P.5; IT.P.1; and PL.P.2), followed by access to work due to lack of documentation (Interview IT.P.3), and the need to promote meeting spaces between different cultures (Interview IT.P.2). Furthermore, the following is also indicated as a priority: "To improve and facilitate administrative procedures of all kinds and to shorten and train staff and officials who deal with them in terms of cultural sensitivity and empathy" (Interview Pl.P.1). Also, a specialist interviewee points out that: "We must prioritize the migration of families [...] We must not divide families with our migration policies as we did in the past with Honduran and Bolivian families" (Interview ES.P.1). Finally, one interviewee states that the priority should be to "stop the war, let people breathe, create democracy, and open up conditions for people" (Interview EL.P.6), and another adds that the whole process of

receiving those who cross the Mediterranean Sea should not be the sole responsibility of Italy, Greece, and Spain (Interview IT.P.4).

In response to strategies to ensure two-way interaction, it is noted that, "it is good for everyone to be involved everywhere and for things to happen together, a museum, for example, or an event that has elements of the heritage of immigrants" (Interview EL.P.1). In other words, one should "hang out" (Interview EL.P.2), share, interact, or get to know each other (Interview PL.P.1), and "get out of this story of the refugee as a victim" because in this way they are institutionalized, not really integrated, but made clumsy (Interview EL.P.3). In short, when you have this population in a de facto situation of social exclusion, because the system does not allow them to adhere to a social policy, to give them the tools to build their lives here, you cannot talk about cultural exchange (Interview EL.P.4). Instead, we must think of a strategy for the future, "where we organize the possibility for immigrants to also cultivate their culture in the places of Western culture and continue to make it live, not only as a fossil of the past but as something active" (Interview IT.P.1). In order to make all of the above concrete, direct cooperation should be sought with municipalities (Interview EL.P.5) and we should ask ourselves how to bring this part of the population closer to cultural institutions, so that museums also become places of integration (Interview IT.P.4).

In some cases, the policymakers recognized that the involvement of NGOs in different integration policy areas such as language acquisition and access to a job, healthcare, housing, and cultural activities is crucial to ensure access to mainstream services for refugees and newcomers.

3.1.2.2.   NGOs and cultural institutions

Looking at the NGOs we interviewed, we can identify different kinds and sizes of organizations operating in different subsectors, from arts to immigration services. The types of organizations in this study vary as well as the spatial reach and level of their activities. They are involved in a broader spectrum of activities which include assistance given to asylum seekers in relation to housing, welfare, healthcare, education, and access to the labour market. They assist "asylum seekers in the application process," "providing medical and humanitarian assistance in the fields of medical care, chronic diseases, sexual and mental health, victims of torture, services related to hygiene and living conditions," "providing free legal assistance to persons who are at risk of social exclusion," "integration of first and second-generation immigrants," and "promoting dialogue between cultures, mainly through a literary competition for migrants." Some NGOs, such as Fundacja Ocalenie, focused primarily on issues related to refugees and asylum seekers:

> [We are] supporting refugees and immigrants in building their new life here in Poland, that is, their integration. We are equipping them with the skills and knowledge they need, and a strong attitude towards individual work to help

each person to find themselves in a new environment and situation. We also organize cultural events, fundraising, and educational campaigns. We also run campaigns, workshops, and events that are supposed to bring people who are refugees, immigrants, or whatever their situation is in Poland closer to Polish society and how they can be helped. These activities are aimed at, for example, social workers, students, and children in schools. In all these activities we try to show refugees in the most human way, to show them less trauma and more of them as people who have their own dreams and resources so that they are not associated only with problems. (Interview PL.N.6)

Nevertheless, all NGOs are not necessarily focused on the provision of basic services to refugees. A member of *Abrazo Cultural* organization explained: "Our mission is to contribute to the social and labour integration of refugees. We do it through a space where migrants can share their culture and show their talents […] We try to change the narrative around refugees. They are not just dependent, passive, or fragile. They are people full of talents, abilities, and ideas. We organized language courses and intercultural activities, handled by refugees" (Interview ES.N.6). Some other NGOs acted in other ways to promote cultural dialogue. Another interesting example is the one of Cantieri Meticci:

Well, the mission of my organization Cantieri Meticci is to make people mingle, the most diverse people, particularly Italians and migrants through very diverse artistic forms. At the beginning it was only theatre, then more and more it became handicraft, tayloring, design, and the activities for refugees are to make them aware of the opportunities handicraft offers. We held short workshops in centres for refugees, before Salvini destroyed several things. After, for those interested, we do workshops in public or semi-public places, parishes, libraries, district centres close to centres for refugees [...] so that those who are interested come independently to attend the workshop once a week, mingling with interested Italians. Also, two or three years ago, we created a workshop of arts and crafts, workshops, and training in tailoring and carpentry in collaboration with the cooperatives managing refugee centres [...] then the most talented ones became part of our theatre company as actors, tutors in theatre or dance workshops, stage designers, or light designers […] The most relevant were projects financed by the UE I think [...] like Beyond Theatre, training in all the jobs related to theatre, and the creation of a show [TN as the result] of all those trainings, like culinary, stage design, acting, design, and then it became the same in all our projects. It is getting problematic, because accommodation centres for refugees are in trouble. We are trying to activate the informal network, but it is more problematic than structures with which you could have a consolidated relationship. (Interview IT.N.5)

As may be seen, in some cases, the local NGOs, funded by the states, European, and international organizations, have become service providers. In other cases, they act according to their ambitions and intentions. Despite this diversity, these NGOs all have one thing in common. They work closely with the supranational, national, and local authorities, civil society, and refugees. They increasingly function as a substitute for the state in a market for service provision for refugees, operating on local and international levels. Consequently, a lot of them compete for public contracts and European projects, and the governments subcontract them to offer services.

In terms of impact assessment, in the opinion of the interviewees, the NGOs' actions had a direct and strong influence on the refugees' lives. In their view, the NGOs empowered the refugees by providing them basic services (health services, education, training, housing, and employment). Nevertheless, they are acutely aware that the scope of their action was limited by a lack of continuity of their service, the fragmented nature of programmes for refugees, the political agenda of the funding authorities, weak institutional capacity, and limited financial means. As noted by the social unit coordinator in the Greek Council for Refugees (GCR): "The refugee context is very difficult politically and socially. So, based on this fact, that is, that policies are not in favour of refugees at the moment, a big effort is being made. We have helped a lot of people, from finding them housing to helping them access healthcare […]" (Interview EL.N.6).

Some representatives of the NGOs organized around specific operational issues, such as arts or legal support, and often opted for more concrete responses when they were asked about the impact of their activities on refugees' lives. For example, Pietro Floridia, who is the director of Cantieri Meticci, expressed the impact of their activities with the following words:

> In terms of relations and friendships, we made a difference. One of the issues is that there are [TN asylum seekers] boys only staying with people from their home country, boys [referring to those who attended the courses] who have a more diverse friendship network. Italians attending our projects are university students or graduates because theatre represents an interest mainly for educated people. In the common passion for theatre, for staying together, or for attraction between different people, it made these people have friendships at another level compared to those who didn't attend the courses [...] and secondly, in terms of language command, self-introduction, opportunities to see different things, because we tour Europe with our shows [...] some of them would have never dreamt of seeing Poland or Belgium [...] many of them became mediators because they had more tools, cultural, entertainment, play tools [...] with some of them we had projects with NGOs, employing them as mediators. (Interview IT.N.5)

Not only do NGOs help refugees meet their basic needs, but they also facilitate the social and economic inclusion of asylum seekers. Overall, NGO representatives and activists share a similar approach about their positive impact on the social inclusion of refugees by emphasizing the importance of their long-standing experience in this field in areas such as "flexibility," "holistic and cultural approach," "creativity," "empowerment" measures, and "mediation" capacity. As Apostolos Veizis, Head of the Programmes Department of Médecins Sans Frontières Greece (MSF) explained: "NGOs, due to the experience and flexibility they have gained over the years, could help a little better in the area of integration'' (Interview EL.N.4). However, even in the NGOs working with or close to the government, there is a critical discourse about state accountability with respect to forced migrants. This perspective was shared by an activist with HumanRights360, when she noted that: "In general, NGOs have taken a very large part of history without it being assigned to them. Looking at the picture as a whole in recent years, it seems that NGOs have come to replace the state's inability to provide the services it needs" (Interview EL.N.3). In fact, most interviewees had repeatedly underlined that "organizations must not replace but help the state where it cannot intervene" (Interview EL.N.1). However, given the lack of political will or the inability of governments to handle the social and humanitarian crisis through concerted actions, in most cases, NGOs are taking on increasing responsibility in this area. This view is explained well by the Chairman of the Board of the Fundacja Ocalenie/Rescue Foundation: "I think that they should play such a complementary, bottom-up role to what the state should do, while in Poland it is the other way round. It's NGOs that do all the activities that the state should provide, or are cheap subcontractors of the state, in these activities. This should not be so" (Interview PL.N.6).

Based on the fieldwork conducted in four countries, we can observe that the refugee issue is not the primary objective of the cultural institutions' activities. There is, however, a widespread awareness of the need to do something about immigrants and refugees, and multiple initiatives at local, national, and European levels are taking place in this direction. Cultural institutions are diverse with many areas of activity and a wide range of aims and missions. As regards migration, they used public performances and organized multiple activities, from social events to international projects, to raise public awareness and consciousness. In addition, they organized workshops, seminars, thematic working groups, language courses, and so on. In short, their actions were mainly focused on intervening in the public space and, whenever possible, encouraging refugees to participate in such activities. Some of the interesting activities being undertaken by cultural institutions are well explained by a worker with an Italian cultural institution, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa:

> We have had individual and specific projects over the years. Direct work with refugees and asylum seekers is not part of our daily routine, but we have had

some experiences and I will mention at least three of them [...]: the first one is work that is very much related to journalistic production, in particular video making. We followed […] through a video maker, who still works with us, Paolo Martino, the route, the journey, of forced migrants, Afghan refugees through the Balkan route until their arrival in Europe. (https://www.balcanicaucaso.org/Reportage/Mussa-Khan) This was one of the first reports made in this sense, it dates back to 2010. […] So, asylum seekers and refugees are the protagonists, they were the protagonists of some documentary video making works carried out in most cases with a participatory video making approach. […] The second is a project that has been carried out by the other Operating Unit [...] it's called 'Storie da Cinema' [Film Stories] […] Originally, we wanted to use cinema to talk about migration issues. […] The third project was called 'Wikipedia for refugees' which was supported […] by the Wikimedia Foundation, the global foundation behind Wikipedia's collaborative projects. […] We had a Digital Skills project for asylum seekers and refugees. [...] It was really a great success, as much as it was a pilot experience, because mainly it was also a moment of great empowerment and of making these young refugees, asylum seekers, the protagonists of a path and making them creators of content, not only beneficiaries. (Interview IT.CI. 2)

With the intensification of arrivals, some cultural institutions within the framework of new projects have concentrated more efforts on refugee issues. In Greece, for example, as noted by a professional with the Panhellenic Network for Theatre and Education:

Our involvement [with the refugee issue] began with the creation of a large project in 2015 in collaboration with the UNHCR, which met us through one of our laboratories […] The main goal of the program is to raise the awareness in the local population about the human rights of refugees through theatrical techniques. So, all workshops, seminars, and activities have this goal. These workshops were substantially adapted to the needs, available time, and so on of the respective participants. To understand how much this programme was embraced, from 2015 until the end of 2019 it had reached 9,000 teachers, over 300 schools, 70 cities, and 60 student festivals. Also, in 2015, with the explosion of flows, we began to think about what we could do to be close to young refugees and unaccompanied children through theatrical techniques and tools to be able to express their own thoughts and anxieties. (Interview EL.CI. 3)

When asked about the impact of their projects on the lives of the refugees, a significant part of the cultural institutions that were interviewed believed that their impact is very hard to assess or their activities did not produce a significant impact in the personal lives of forced migrants. As the project manager of Malopolska Institute of Culture emphasized: "Migrants are not our target group, so it is difficult for me to

say how much migrants participate in programmes that are open to the general public" (Interview PL.CI. 1). The executive director of the Onassis Foundation, Stegi expressed it with the following words: ''I cannot answer that, but I would say that we have little importance in their daily lives'' (Interview EL.CI.1). Some cultural institutions which were engaged in specific targeted refugee projects emphasized that the impact of these projects resulted in making "people protagonists, not only beneficiaries. There is a discourse related to empowerment and there is a discourse of overturning some of the roles" (Interview IT.CI.2). According to the school manager of CPIA Piacenza, the impact on Italian literacy activities is high, as the knowledge of the Italian language and some elements of Italian culture are fundamental tools for integration. The other projects aiming at involving migrants and their narratives are an added value that can stimulate self-reflection and promote awareness in refugees. On the other side, they help the hosting community to understand personal stories and reasons behind migration.

3.1.2.3.   Public opinion and engagement of civil society

In the opinion of the interviewees, public opinion is divided on the issue of refugees. In their view, the initial empathy of 2015 has been replaced mostly by xenophobia and anti-migrant rhetoric. As Elianna Koniali, a scientific advisor with UNICEF Greece emphasized:

"In 2015 and 2016 when there was this huge wave of arrivals, where there was a great deal of solidarity and you can say that this solidarity was also wide, the borders to Europe were open and we were talking about a refugee population on the move. So, Greece was a transit destination. When the borders closed and people were trapped and the local communities saw that it was a 'problem' that came here to stay, then much more hostile attitudes and behaviours and practices from local communities began. And I would say that even places like Lesbos that were traditionally quite open are now tired because the weight and numbers they are called to manage are very disproportionate. And there you see that there is no national system for the distribution of this population within the country itself. Okay, this has to do with the legislation, following the EU-Turkey agreement, but since the borders were closed and people see that the refugees are here to stay, it seems bad, because they are afraid that they will get their jobs, that Greece will be Islamized, and so on. So now public opinion, at least what we see in the media, is quite hostile. Now whether this is representative, it depends region by region and depending on what population you are talking about'' (Interview EL.P.4).

Overall, they claim that the public perception of migrants worsened. According to an interviewee, this may be explained on the one hand by the "difficult economic and social situation" in the host country, but on the other hand by feelings of enmity toward refugees and "fear of an invasion" promoted by conventional media and some political parties (Interview IT.P.6). It is interesting to note here that some interviewees

believe that anti-refugee sentiments are weakening within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, but this is an issue that would benefit from more detailed research.

Some NGOs, especially the Polish organizations, feared that public opinion is increasingly vulnerable to manipulation by mass media in a society where anti-immigration rhetoric is gaining popularity. Several interviewees stated that concerns over the cultural assimilation of immigrants and security have encouraged anti-immigration political parties to promote openly xenophobic vocabularies, thus legitimizing the emergence of negative attitudes towards immigrants, especially Muslim ones. In this respect, a Polish interviewee from the Halina Nieć Legal Aid Center mentioned that:

> In my opinion, this is related to the negative narrative in the public media, above all, which builds aversion and a lack of trust in certain ethnic and religious groups, but also towards foreigners in general. There is this conflict between us and foreigners, despite the fact that a large percentage of Poles have had some kind of migration experience in their history, and these experiences are not always positive. I have the impression that these moods were a little bit more intense after 2015 because that was the time when fear of Muslims and terrorists, in connection with the refugee crisis, reached some absurd peaks. Now it has decreased a little. Though we are a country which, in its current shape and political climate, is nevertheless a homogenous country. In my opinion, this vision of the Polish state is the main obstacle. (Interview PL.N.3)

According to the NGOs, the main obstacles to stronger engagement by civil society in promoting values based on integration, dialogue, and tolerance are the lack of recognition of diversity and understanding of others, decreasing tolerance of cultural difference, and a fear of "strangers."

For the advocacy officer of Generation 2.0, a non-profit organization created by the second generation of migrants in Greece, "misinformation" is the main obstacle: "from the moment the other does not see your human condition and sees you as a victim or as an unfortunate creature, he sees you sometimes negatively, sometimes aggressively, and there is no room left to see that you can participate through your values and that you can have a dialogue. From my personal experience, I can say that people only turn to us when they want to talk about immigration. As if we have nothing else to say. They will not address a refugee or an immigrant for issues of the municipality. This means that they do not count you as an active member of society and do not believe that you can express an opinion on other things related to our daily lives'' (Interview EL.N.5).

Concerning the aspect of civil society engagement in promoting values based on integration, dialogue, and tolerance, according to one of the members of the

Panhellenic Network for Theatre and Education, the migrant crisis has offered new opportunities to engage significant portions of civil society in supporting migrants. Nonetheless, "the truth is, in the last year and a half, it's as if people have started to get tired of the subject" (Interview EL.CI.3). Along similar lines, other interviewees recognized that "There has been a very serious attack on the whole world of solidarity, reception, and international cooperation. […] We must explain that international cooperation benefits everyone" (Interview IT.CI.2). While many factors explain the emergence of negative attitudes towards immigrants, some argue that, within a context of strong polarization of civil society on issues of migration, the social media, and fake news, had a damaging impact on citizen engagement in solidarity actions in support of refugees (Interview IT.CI.3). Others point to the connections between social indifference and the multifaceted and structural crisis in Europe. As the director of Istituto Storico Nazionale Ferruccio Parri suggests:

> The first difficulty I think is fear, insecurity, the situations of uncertainty that we find ourselves experiencing, the economic crisis, the crisis of values, now the epidemic [...] and so on, always put each of us who goes there on the defensive. And this feeds, as we know, the dynamics of exclusion, of the search for scapegoats, of discrimination of the different, and therefore all the practices that instead can create trust and customs are, in my opinion, important. Here, of course, then to this general problem, in our case, how to say [...] it certainly does not help the fact that the Italian context is historically and also currently furrowed by traces of racism, xenophobia, discrimination, [...] even at high levels, and therefore the re-legitimization of discriminatory practices certainly in this phase is a big problem. (Interview IT.CI. 1)

3.1.2.4.   Outsiders within: refugees' perspectives on discrimination

Some respondents felt there are many resemblances among both societies. In this respect, they observed areas of similarities in "thinking," "culture," "motions," and "expressions." They often said, "we are all human" and "there is no difference." A woman refugee in Spain expressed herself in these words when she explained the cultural similarities between Syria and Spain: "We have a similar perception of family [...] Other similarities are lives outside the bars, the food, going out with friends. We both give importance to creating human networks and to food" (Interview ES.R.28). According to the majority of participants, there are, however, important differences to be noted. They noticed differences in the way people dress, practice religion, express their opinion, talk about politics, raise their children, treat women, and communicate with each other. For instance, a female refugee explained: "a Greek woman is freer to be able to express herself as she wants, while I have to think about it many times to say it once. But it was very difficult for me to express my opinion a little more freely. Yes, because it takes many years to be able to leave one culture and go to another, it takes work" (Interview EL.R.7). Some argued that this social difference could

sometimes be a source of institutionalized discrimination and a reason that may explain why refugees don't have the same rights, benefits, and privileges as nationals.

With regard to the perspective of refugees and asylum seekers, the results show that a significant number of respondents felt their current life in the country of destination was not bad. Reflecting upon the reasons motivating this positive attitude, an asylum applicant from Afghanistan maintained that it lies in insecurity, fears, and the suffering she had to face in her country of origin. She said: "I am satisfied because first of all there is security, there is no war here. This is important. And secondly, I have this little house, I have this support" (Interview EL.R.5). Another asylum seeker from Iraqi Kurdistan explained his contentment in Greece by saying "there are human rights, they respect people, they respect children here" (Interview EL.R.16). Overall, a positive factor in the life of asylum seekers and refugees is the absence of large-scale violence. However, in many states, there are evident security problems and discrimination against refugees and asylum applicants and many of them continue to live in poverty and insecurity. Many participants talked about the fact that they would like to work and remarked that they felt deprived of the advantages and rights enjoyed by the host society. A woman seeking asylum in Greece remarked that "normally the situation is difficult, but because I see that the others do not even have housing to stay in and I have somewhere to stay, I say that I am satisfied, at least I have somewhere to stay. But at this moment, I feel very insecure. Anyone who takes refuge suddenly is thrown out in the street. This scares me" (Interview EL.R.2).

Based on the responses gathered, some of interviewees mentioned that their community's culture was more or less respected in their host country. This perception of being culturally accepted by others varied depending on individual experiences, religious affiliation, skin colour, and national identities. Findings suggested that some communities such as Kurds generally feel accepted, understood, and protected in the host society because of real or imagined geographical and cultural similarities. For instance, a Kurd from Iraq commented: "I feel very close to Greece as a homeland because it is remarkably similar to our homeland in the sense of the weather. And that it is close, not far away. I feel close to my homeland. […] Yes, when I was in a Cultural Association, we did a lot of things, our celebrations and things like that. We were saying that we had this celebration, and we did the celebration. There we showed many things about the language, the country, and the culture. And in the end, we gave a book about our culture. I mean for the culture of the Kurdish people" (Interview EL.R.7).

On the contrary, looking at the interviews, one may conclude that religious backgrounds constituted a source of discrimination and exclusion. According to several accounts of Muslim refugees, their cultural specificity was misrepresented or even stigmatized. As an asylum applicant in Greece explained: ''we want to be a member of society, we are part of this society. I feel that especially in the part I work on. But there

are times when you really feel like being kicked out. For example, the authorities sometimes humiliate us. They think we do not understand. […] No, I don't think so. For example, when I was working and fasting, not a single day did they tell me, you are a Muslim and you are fasting, we can take care for one day and you don't have to come to work. For example, everyone is at home at Easter, but they do not let us celebrate and be at home. They did not give me permission to be at home'' (Interview EL.R.24). They believed that the origin of the discrimination and intolerance against Muslims could be found in misperceptions of Islam.

Some interviewees believed they faced discrimination due to their skin colour. A 25-year-old Gambian refugee in Italy explained: "There's a new place that our director opened a new camp for refugees. But when our director took us there, we came out of the car, we wanted to go to the place and take some items. When those people saw us, they were surprised. Because this was their first time seeing a black person. Some guys came and said 'Wow, this is the first time I've seen a black guy. Nice to meet you. You are welcome.' But the way they looked at us we suspected it was the first time they were seeing a black person. So sometimes, not all of them but others will be scared to get in touch with you even if you come close to them, they will be scared." (Interview IT.R.9) Another asylum seeker from the Gambia stated: "Some jealous people, for example, if you are a black foreigner like this, when you dress like this, clothes that cost a little bit, if you go out like this, they look at you as a person like this… they say 'but who is it?' Because when I party like this, for example, when I dress like this, I go outside, and I see people looking at me very badly. […] They are not racist, they are jealous, they don't want to see foreigners living like that [well, economically well off]" (Interview IT.R.14).

When asking refugees about their relationship with the local community, two aspects are mentioned primarily. The first is related to the handling of the local language, and the second is more about the acceptance of the refugees by the local population. The interviewees point out the question of language, and in a transversal way, they state that without mastering the local language, it is impossible to generate any type of effective link, whether friendly or working. Regarding the acceptance (or not) of refugees by the local community, the perception of the interviewees is that, due to not understanding the language, they are sometimes ignorant of what the local population says or thinks about them. However, others categorically state that they understand through the behaviour of the local community that they are not part of that society and that they are considered more as a burden: "Some, I understand through their behaviour that we are considered part of this society, we can contribute. But there are many who believe that we are a burden in this society, that we are people who do not follow the rules here and create a problem" (Interview EL.R.2). In the same way, there are interviewees who say that the locals think that there are too many of them and not enough room for them, even leading to situations of bad

treatment as shown below: "In the 12 years I was in Crete I didn't make any friends[...] The Greeks don't want other refugees to come. And the friends I have now, who are very good to me, don't want to. They say it's enough. We can't live here, it's too difficult. What will they eat, where will they stay, where will they find work?" (Interview EL.R.9). For some interviewees, the year 2016 appears repeatedly as a date of change in the local perception of migration, as the arrival of refugees due to conflicts in their countries of origin intensified: "In 2016 the situation began to change. You could still find people who wanted to support and help. And then, at the same time, another thought began to grow among the Greek population. That it's as if people now have to stay in Greece, and that's what we don't want. And another group took advantage of that. And at that point, you start to see extremism. On both sides. So, you find supportive people who are trying to help the refugees. Or people who just want to get rid of those people and think that refugees are the problem that destroyed Greece. They blame the refugees. To make the situation of this crisis, the refugee crisis is an excuse for them. An excuse for what they have suffered from the political life in Greece perhaps" (Interview EL.R.28).

Aside from cultural and social acceptance, the analysis suggests part of refugees and asylum seekers is subject to exclusion and deprivation and often has limited access to the protection and services to which they have a right, such as health assistance, residence rights, housing, welfare benefits, and education. The complexity of asylum procedure and obtaining residence permit were the most common problems that asylum seekers faced especially in Greece and Spain (Interview EL.R. 1; Interview EL.R. 11; Interview EL.R. 12; Interview EL.R. 19; Interview EL.R.22; Interview EL.R.22; Interview PL.R.29; Interview ES.R.18; Interview ES.R.27). This was the case for example for a Kurdish refugee from Iraq who had not obtained his residence permit after having lived in Greece for seventeen years: "The big problem is that I do not have papers yet". (Interview EL.R. 11). The analysis reveals that access to healthcare services has been identified as one of the major problems encountered by refugees and asylum seekers. A women refugee in Poland provides an example: "There are very big problems with medical service. Sometimes we called an ambulance, but they didn't come. It's a big problem. They just do not come they may not answer. We will not deal with this and they know it and do not come. Once I felt very bad, my back got jammed, and in such case, we didn't even call an ambulance, because they don't come anyway." (Interview PL.R.24; Interview PL.R.19; Interview PL.R.21; Interview PL.R.22; Interview PL.R.28; Interview ES.R. 19; Interview ES.R. 26; Interview ES.R. 28; Interview EL.R.2; Interview EL.R. 19). With insufficient language skills, some interviewees find it difficult to speak or maintain a conversation in the language of the host country. Consequently, access to the public health system, although formally available for refugees, remains practically limited. Regarding services, the expectation by many respondents was that the host country guarantees them access to administrative procedures, the social benefits of welfare services, and public health.

3.2. CULTURAL HERITAGE AND INCLUSION OF THE REFUGEES

Social integration is often a central and contested theme in migration policies. Regarding the main factors in the integration of incoming populations, there is a shared understanding among participants we interviewed that the key domains of integration are housing, employment, education, healthcare, and the relations between refugees and local residents. However, some interviewees see integration as a relational process, depending on the "social acceptance of the environment," "the possibility of sharing spaces and languages," and the mutual relationship between hosts and displaced people. Rejecting the conflation of integration and assimilation, a professor at the University of Parma explains that: "by 'integration' I don't mean a process of acculturation and insertion. Integration is integrity, the entirety between two systems that meet, local and newcomers for example, where one's characteristics can be maintained but can also be enriched by mutual mixing and interaction" (Interview IT.A.3).

This suggests that integration is understood as a two-way process that requires a willingness of the host community and refugees to "know each other and develop something jointly together." As a professor at the University of Valencia says, "building bridges and not building more physical and symbolic walls is the key to fighting exclusion, marginalization, and racism against migrants and refugees. Therefore, facilitating meetings, fostering social cohesion, and exchanging experiences, stories, and tangible and intangible heritage seems fundamental to me" (Interview ES.A.1). During interactions between refugees and host groups, shared meanings are developed. Despite differences of approach, there is a general recognition among academics that the "possibility of sharing spaces and languages" creates obligations and responsibilities that permit intercommunity exchanges and "intercultural coexistence" beyond formal policies.

3.2.1. Cultural heritage in the context of forced migration

There is a consensus that intangible cultural heritage such as storytelling, songs, music, recipes, oral traditions, art, rituals, or festive events can be used as research instruments to investigate migrant representations, memories, and narratives. One of the participants noted that "when they talk about their culture, we will see how close we are [...] The traditions of the peoples have tremendous wealth, and we should study them'' (Interview EL.A.3). Another scholar argued that "it serves us like an intercultural activity, to raise awareness, and to show how this person is contributing with cultural value to our society. He is in a situation of asylum or being a refugee, in complicated situations. They can show that, despite not being in the desired circumstances" (Interview ES.A.2). By contrast, cultural heritage is an instrument that must be handled with great care. One of the more dangerous risks in cultural heritage

seems to lie in the possibility of the exoticization of non-Western cultures. "It is dangerous to do folklore for other people and to think that because you show how Afghans dance, you are promoting something" (Interview EL.A.1). In the same line of thinking, the chief executive officer of the Legal Aid Centre in the name of Halina Nieć Association noted:

> Throughout our activities, we are primarily concerned with culture and what is worst for me, and what I notice in schools is this very folklore, boutique treatment of other cultures. For example, it hurts me when the teachers boast that they made African days and a black girl came in a straw dress and danced, so I wonder how they really see this Africa. But there are a lot of projects that are not to treat these cultures as such an oriental, strange, interesting creation, but to really take it seriously. There is one such teacher in Krakow who does it on a high level, inviting for example minority scientists. This is not such a stereotypical approach. (Interview PL.N.3)

When asked about how promoting and supporting the conservation of the cultural heritage of incoming populations can contribute to the integration of refugees, many academics stressed the importance of cultural heritage to forge a sense of common identity based on common values, shared experiences, and memories. The use of cultural heritage to construct an idea of group identities could be instrumental in facilitating mutual understanding between different cultures and promoting peaceful cohabitation between people. As Stefano Boni, professor of the UniMoRe University, told us: "cultural heritage is important because it allows [us] to trigger memories connected to segregation, discrimination, or racist dynamics [that were] already experienced. In Italian history, they are part of the past but [have] already been forgotten. But they are a heritage. Cognitive resources can be enhanced in order to try to figure out a more welcoming behaviour or, if we want to be less ambitious, a peaceful approach" (Interview IT.A.2).

The mutual recognition of one another's cultures can help host communities to define who they are as a group but also lead to promote the creativity of host communities. According to this perspective, "an integration process must be able to shift its gaze from our own centrism to the significant presence of the other. Ego-ethnocentrism must have a good dose of doubt, of criticism towards the obviousness that accompanies it. It is not that things are done this way because we do them this way. And on this, more or less, we all agree apart from some extra-dogmatic or politically extreme right-wing realities. Everyone agrees. Opening up to the reality of the other in a relativist logic, however, also raises questions and puts us before new limits" (Interview IT.A.3). In other words, it is assumed that refugees' experiences commonly take shape around their insider/outsider positioning and they are considered active agents capable of forging knowledge that is useful as well as distinctive. In this sense, the presence of refugees is seen as critical for outside points;

it is essential in order to prevent conformity and to stimulate creativity. As one academic put it, "seeing oneself from outside is a fundamental critical resource for reorientation and working better" (Interview IT.A.1).

When we asked academics to share with us their opinion on strategies that would be necessary to secure a two-way interaction between the cultural heritage of the refugees and the receiving society, they commonly mentioned learning the language and education as preconditions to secure interaction between refugees and host communities. According to this viewpoint, the linguistic knowledge of the host country's language is necessary for integration within the new community and is a means through which relationships with the locals can be established. The Greek sociologist, Theodoros Fouskas, held precisely that view when he said "people who are going to stay in the country should be strengthened in any way, to receive as much teaching and knowledge of the Greek language as possible. This will facilitate not only their daily lives but also the further steps of their integration process in Greek society" (Interview EL.A.2).

Nevertheless, the knowledge of languages is not sufficient to allow fluent communication with local people. Another factor that was especially accentuated by participants was mutual knowledge and recognition. This was echoed in the observation of Lina Ventouras, professor of sociology and history of migration, who said "the host society should recognize that these populations have their own cultural system, their own references" (Interview EL.A.1). A similar conclusion was drawn by another sociologist, Elli Ioannidi, who found that "in order to accept someone, you must know them. Because it is obvious that the unknown always causes fear" (Interview EL.A.3). According to interviewees, this mutual recognition could be fostered and facilitated through the medium of inclusive education, "a country that wants to invest seriously in integration makes a plan, a multi-year national policy and begins to invest in resources and skills in some strategic sectors, first of all, education" (Interview IT.A.1).

The importance of cultural heritage as a resource in the process of integration is also underlined by several NGOs. The basic medium of social integration, according to these organizations, is an interaction based on cross-cultural communication and mutual understanding. This gives rise to the view that the NGOs should seek to advance the status and cultural capital of refugees by providing them with cultural experiences that encourage consciousness-raising, empowerment, and voice through interactive and innovative activities. A cultural mediator in the Next Generation Association, gave a concrete example:

> At first, we did this type of project about their journey and tied it with emotions. Then we made the same approach about the city of Bologna, asking them to draw or to show us on a map the places in Bologna that they know and what emotion they tie to those, for example: police headquarters, danger, fear,

Piazza Maggiore, sociability, and so on. Then, based on their reference points, we took them on a Migrantour to places they didn't really know. For example, you say 'I know Piazza Maggiore,' and you take them to Piazza Maggiore. Then I take them to via Delle Drapperie or via degli Orefici, those small alleys. And they say 'We never even came here. Because I get off the bus, take a ride here because there is Wi-Fi, and then I go back to the reception facilities.' This with the aim of doing what? To open them up to the possibility of also knowing more deeply the place where they are, because sometimes they get used to routines that are perhaps unknowingly handed down by their operators who teach them a path [...] And precisely because they are in a situation of vulnerability, even psychological, they are not yet ready to be enterprising to know, to do, then they forbid themselves certain experiences. Instead, with this path that we have done with them, we realized that with less than ten meetings of a project like this, you really can open a Pandora's box, where maybe a person brings out even all those traumas that he has not been able to tell to his operator, and he does it in a different way, and by sharing them he also tells you about the need to do something else, and he no longer needs only pocket money or documents. [...] People actually need to open up but don't find the right keys with which they can open up. (Interview IT.N.3)

Cultural heritage is a field of interaction. To incorporate refugees' heritage into a heritage of the receiving society, there must be a mutual interplay between these communities. According to cultural institutions, among other things, the main challenge for fostering a two-way interaction was being able to accept the other as she/he is. In this respect, the school manager of CPIA Piacenza pointed out that: "the starting point is acknowledging the other and his/her story, then his/her interests and the possibility to connect what we present – our cultural heritage – with the cultural heritage of the home country. They have an individual culture full of richness and experience. Therefore, a presentation such as 'here is this monument and I'll explain its importance in European terms' is something that is poor. It would be better to connect what we present to our cultural and social evolution and look for connections and differences with the story of people we work with" (Interview IT.CI.4). As another interviewee also explained "because we have incorporated elements from our own culture so much and it is too difficult to accept the other. In fact the other, all the years of our lives we have received stimuli that he is inferior. That his own culture is inferior. Then something negative can come out reflexively, it is very difficult to be able to listen to it, to accept it, let alone not to mock it" (Interview EL.CI.3). As a consequence, the supposed superiority and desirability of the host country's culture could characterize a refugee's culture as "folkloric," "different," or "inferior."

The analysis of interviews with cultural institutions revealed that the recognition of refugees proved to be an important prerequisite for their continued engagement in

cultural activities. Some cultural institution representatives were aware of the importance of acknowledgment as a means of social integration:

> We are interested in the fact that they are themselves bearers of an individual and community memory which, we say, somehow flows into the memory of the country in which they find themselves. So, let's say, they also represent a memory resource for us. I think that having attention for your story is a great vehicle for trust and availability. So, I think that first of all, the effort to collect and listen, to collect these memories is to give recognition to these people and therefore you could say the first step towards socialization. (Interview IT.CI.1)

The underlying idea is to enhance the participation of refugees by developing more cultural recognition and expressions. In this process, everyone, especially refugees themselves, is expected to participate actively. They "[…] must participate from the beginning in the concept creation and in the project design, and then they must also participate in the performing, in the execution of activities" (Interview IT.CI.2). One way this challenge of actively participating can be addressed is through initiatives such as providing language courses and holding practical workshops for refugees and asylum seekers. However, stable financial and institutional support remains key and a major guarantee for cultural inclusion.

There was a conviction that the arts enhance the inclusion and cultural integration of migrations and refugees. Members of cultural institutions view the arts as a universal and strong tool for promoting intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding, and believe that practicing the arts is a powerful way of socializing with others (Interview EL.CI.1). From this point of view, the universality of art allows us to look beyond our diversity to find similar and shared values, without, however, abandoning the richness of this diversity: "it is always a language that we tend to say is less mediated by pre-knowledge or prejudices" (Interview IT.CI.1). In this vein, the arts allow interactions beyond geographical and cultural borders because when it seems accessible to everyone "art can make things more understandable than a book or a lecture. The artist, when the artist is a creator who has processed and thought, can reach many people with very little" (Interview ES.CI.1).

Although most individuals who were interviewed assumed that familiarity with the arts tends to be universal, cutting across boundaries of region, gender, and profession, one interviewee, the project manager of the Malopolska Institute of Culture, believes that the arts reveal a different society:

> It seems to me that art is generally such a problem that it is hard to understand. If there are people who live art, who help and need it, who cannot imagine life without it, then for them art is certainly the medium that builds bridges and opens up to other perspectives. I think that in spite of everything, art is not always an effective tool for the majority of society, but rather an

accessory. There are other ways, for example, the art of gastronomy, the language of cooking. Cuisine is certainly something more universal. If this can be considered art, then I think it is conducive. Certainly, informal situations, or spaces in which all people feel welcome, favour integration. In this sense you can invite people to an art gallery, but if you are not an art lover, you don't really know what you can do in it. (Interview PL.CI.1)

With regard to the importance of cultural heritage and the integration of refugees, the policymakers interviewed generally emphasize the positive aspects of this (see interview EL.P.2; Interview EL.P.3; Interview IT.P.3; Interview PL.P.2, and Interview PL.P.3), as this enables a person to be known more and better, and thus to forge closer ties (Interview EL.P.1). Moreover, cultural heritage makes sense according to one interviewee, because people "do not want to lose their identity" and it is there that "the other person feels that he or she belongs to the country in which they have arrived, because people also embrace them and are interested in their own culture" (Interview EL.P.4). In the same vein, it is stressed that "we should all maintain our cultural identity first, because when we talk about integration we are not talking about assimilation [...] integration is two-way, both refugees and society want to be able to meet" (Interview EL.P.5). The battle then consists in affirming "equal rights based on the awareness that these differences exist and must be valued. This is a great cultural challenge and, as such, cultural institutions are the natural place to develop paths of inclusion" (Interview IT.P.2). To some, the cultural heritage of refugees must come from their own reasoning so as not to be too standardised from an identity point of view (Interview IT.P.5) since "it is an important part of who they are, and it is a resource that they have to integrate" (Interview IT.P.6).

3.2.2. Memory of past forced displacement and migration in Europe: "good refugees and bad refugees!"

Many cultural institution members suggested that the memory of past forced displacement and migration in Europe could contribute to the promotion of mutual understanding between forced displaced populations from past and present conflicts. The memory of forced migration enters into social life through the means by which individuals, organizations, and communities interpret, commemorate, and recall the past and reconstruct it for present needs. Within this broad consensus, some emphasize the way that memory can contribute to the social integration of refugees, while others place greater weight on the way that the historical memory is used, exploited, or even manipulated for specific purposes.

From the first perspective, the role of memory is to recall traumatic experiences that have harmed the host society; thus, they try to avoid them at the present time and in the future. Among those who emphasize the importance of memory to mutual understanding, we can quote the words of Mirco Carrattieri, the director of the Istituto Storico Nazionale Ferruccio Parri:

Clearly, even for the work I do, I think [memory] can contribute. First of all, as I said before, the memory of the events you mentioned helps us identify long-term strategies. Wars, civil wars, genocides, and genocidal practices lead to forced displacements. Therefore, this is already a fundamental teaching because it means that it is normal for this to happen and thus it is urgent that we try to avoid these dynamics. Secondly, it can trigger an identification as I said in the fact that practically all populations during the twentieth century were involved in forms of forced or induced migration. Therefore, on the one hand, the Italian community can think of what their experiences of forced displacement have been and understand the condition of these people who are forced to leave their homes, and thus precisely create empathy with this situation. I believe that the study of history is also very useful, beyond the specifics of displacements, to understand that it is necessary to always acquire a plural point of view with respect to phenomena and if possible, try to identify with the other. (Interview IT.CI.1)

The second perspective is that the role of memory in intercultural comprehension depends on "how you use and present it" (Interview IT.CI.3). Thus, special attention needs to be given to the social and political context of remembering. In this respect, the executive director of the Onassis Foundation, Stegi argues:

I think it worked to some extent. I want to say that in the great refugee crisis in 2015, I was surprised by the positivity of Greek society. I did not expect it. I was convinced that it would be a disaster. The symbolism of the passage from Asia Minor to the islands played a special role in the collective memory, what a refugee means, and I think that functioned as one of the reasons that there was no mass, but only individual, violence and reactions to an admittedly very critical situation. That is, what happened was not simple. If we compare the media coverage in 2015-16 with the political situation in Evros this year, we will see something completely different with the violation of their rights to asylum and their instrumentalization by the state that gives a level of complexity to history. One could see in the newspaper: Ankara is encouraging refugees with COVID-19 to go to Greece. It's an attempt to identify the refugee with the dangerous, the infected, and so forth, which never existed in 2015. So, there may be a liking for people to think that I once left and went to America, but this easily changes from the way they are presented by the media. (Interview EL.CI.1)

A small number of NGOs believe that today's solidarity toward refugees can be partially explained by the collective memories of refugee experiences of the host country's communities: "I have seen that there are stories on islands, or stories of grandmothers who were refugees themselves, and how this creates a sensitivity and a sense of solidarity" (Interview EL.N.6). Accordingly, memories affect an individual's

ability to understand the information necessary for engaging in solidarity initiatives with refugees and migrants.

This later vision assumes that a person with painful memories of war and displacement does not necessarily have more solidarity with today's refugees. In this regard, the head of advocacy, policy, and research of the Solidarity Now organization cited the example of Hungary that, according to him, "has been in crisis several times in its history, people have left, and so on. But it is completely hostile [to refugees]. […] We need to adapt this historical fact to a new practical reality and find ways that can bring the world into contact with that reality" (Interview EL.N.1). For the same purpose, another interviewee took the example of "the Pontian genocide," and argued, "If we make a leap mentally, we will see that the Pontians in Greece are conservative people. If we make another leap, we will see that these people are in conservative political parties, which are also the most reactionary parties, and I have my father-in-law, who is a first-generation refugee in Greece. I do not think that memory alone can help society move in that direction unless there is a discussion that has never taken place to understand why all this is happening. And secondly, we want this debate to go ahead, because we see it not only in Greece, but in America for example, the former Irish or Greek immigrants belong to the conservative party and treat, for example, Mexicans as outcasts. So, the political system is what should promote such an agenda and serve it'' (Interview EL.N.2). Some participants went even further, recognizing that these memories could be used to create anti-refugee narratives and binary relationships between host communities and refugees: "it is often the case that many people in Poland don't know who the refugees are and most of the information they have about them is from the media, from politicians, and that's where the prejudices may come from. They do not know them, they have no contact with them, so they cannot 'test' them. They may think that once our Poles were 'good' refugees and now we have 'bad' refugees'" (Interview PL.N.6).

Many academics have also stressed the importance of memory. Using cultural heritage and memory of forced displacement and conflicts in European history is extremely important for awareness-raising and "building today's cooperation and relations with people who find themselves in such a situation and have to flee their own countries, who are threatened by various kinds of dangers" (Interview PL.A.1). This is due to the fact that many events share a "certain similarity with all the causes that create refugees today, which could influence the path of integration" (Interview IT.A.3). Furthermore, cultural heritage is a testimony of similar dynamics that happened in the past, so remembering and updating it might be something that helps to decode the present. It would be interesting to work on the heritage of Italian emigration, it is not a complete shift, but it is not considered important enough. At least not the importance it had in terms of demography. To see us not only as a welcoming society but a leaving society" (Interview IT.A.2).

Participants from Greece reported how refugees have found a warm welcome from locals in the North Aegean islands due to the fact that residents there have themselves lived a situation of leaving their homes during conflict, having established themselves as refugees in Syria in the past. The memory of this exile is still alive in their memories and when they had the opportunity – or need – to support refugees, they did not hesitate in doing so:

In the islands of the North Aegean, in Mytilene, and so on, in the beginning the inhabitants showed great solidarity with the refugees. The reason for this was in World War II, the islanders could cross to Turkey by boat because there was a terrible famine in the islands, and they were headed to Syria. So, when they saw the boats from Turkey, they remembered the same boats they had travelled in and showed great solidarity. In this case, an image worked positively. But in general, we see that the experience does not guide. That is, what I went through, let no one else go through, just as many times they say what I went through, let the other person go through to see how it is. That is, it essentially works on both sides. I tell you, at the beginning, the islanders helped not because of experiences but mainly because of the image they saw. Of course, then this solidarity was lost as they watched their islands turn into places where thousands of people are stacked together. So, the experience does not help, but the image does. (Interview EL.A.3)

The results showed that policymakers tend to give greater place to the memory of the past than the experience of the present. In response to the question about the importance of reviving the memory of forced displacement and migration in the European past, it is pointed out that it would be a very good movement of awareness, empathy (Interview EL.P.2 & IT.P.3), dialogue, and inclusion (Interview IT.P.2 & IT.P.5), "especially if there are testimonies of people who are now 80-90 years old, and there are some refugees next to them who are experiencing the same situation" (Interview EL.P.1). For "when there is a reminder in all this, it touches many citizens because we all have relatives who were immigrants [...] Therefore, in order to remind previous generations a little of what they experienced [...] and also to emphasize that they also experienced the same difficulties as today's refugees, we must remember that they are human" (Interview EL.P.5). Another interviewee adds, "if there is no political narrative, political subject, party, in other words, the masses forget [...] And even on the subject of refugees, there are associations with refugee roots that hate and resent refugees, as if they did not know how their grandparents suffered" (Interview EL.P.6).

In fact, there are some policymakers who believe that "it is not a rule of thumb that a refugee's own life experience guarantees sensitivity in this area" (Interview PL.P.1), or that it can change anything (Interview EL.P.4). However, the majority of policymakers think that "a nation that does not remember its past cannot create a responsible social policy, a policy of memory" (Interview PL.P.3). In other words, says

one interviewee, "we need to study our past to better understand the present. It can be a pedagogical tool" (Interview ES.P.4).

3.2.3. Culture and memory sharing

In responding to the question, "would you like to share a specific message with the host/local communities," most interviewed refugees and asylum seekers said they would like to share their history and cultural heritage, including traditional dress, food, recipes, songs, music, poetry, and dance.

Some, like a Sudanese refugee in Italy, emphasized the need to create the opportunity for refugees to participate in society and express their distinct culture and share their experiences with local communities: "What I think is useful is the history and also the culture, because the culture of Africans, of Europeans, is a bit different, so we can't know without sharing with another and it is also difficult to know the culture of these people when we can't give them an opportunity to share, so what I ask [to be done] for refugees, all the projects that work with refugees… they must organize many groups, a historical group, a culture group, a language group […] all [of these] groups [should] try to share, to talk; you learn many things with refugees. When I participate in the culture here in Europe, when I speak with other people, I feel that we are all equal, but I don't get to know the culture of Italy if they don't give me a good opportunity to interact with them and […] I don't feel good, because I want to practice my own culture, I want to participate [in society] with the experiences that I have, [so] […] I have asked to set up many groups" (Interview IT.R.4).

Several participants noted that it was necessary to correct the dominant picture of refugees as free riders who abuse the system by demanding a disproportionate share of services. A woman from Ukraine, who was forced to seek refuge in Poland said: "I would like Poles to see Ukrainians from another side. Not the side that we come here to make money, but the side that we have something to share. We have something to show. First of all, culture, songs, dances, cuisine, which we would like to share. I would like Poles to understand that they have a different life, they can appreciate it and enjoy it. They do not have a war in the country. Thank God that they did not experience it" (Interview PL.R.6).

This problem of a distorted image of refugees was also felt by another Afghan woman seeking asylum in Greece. Like many other refugees from the Muslim community, she rejects all reductionist thinking that leads to view refugees as "Muslim fanatics" who wish to Islamize Europe: "when I said I was from Afghanistan, they thought I was a Taliban. And I was saying that I wish people understood that I escaped from the Taliban. I don't like being a Taliban. I really want people to understand that I don't want to be a burden in this society. I don't like to have handouts, a house to give me. I also want them to [...] help me contribute to this society. That's what I want them to understand" (Interview EL.R.2). Another interviewee from Chechnya argued

that: "Nobody, nobody will leave his or her native land if there is peace there. I did not come because of my wishes, I was forced. I ran and so I had to run. If we were not killed and we ran away, then this does not mean that we are terrorists. This does not mean that I have to pull off a hijab, go in shorts. It does not mean that my children, who are not involved in any bad things, who respect another culture, have to listen that they are terrorists every day" (Interview PL.R.27).

Most interviewees insist that coming to Europe wasn't a voluntary decision and they had been forced to leave their homes, villages, and cities. For them, insecurity was the main concern, and they left their countries to escape conflict, war, abuse, violence, and persecution. An Afghan woman who arrived in Greece in 2014 clarified that: ''I want them to understand that these restrictions that exist especially for women in Afghanistan, scarcity, the difficulty of accessing education, all if they understand here about my country, then they will understand what it means to be a refugee and why. Lack of security and peace […] And then they will understand that we are not here for the walk, because we wanted to come here. To understand that I am here precisely because some reasons pushed me here. It is insecurity, restrictions, war, bloodshed, all of which pushed us here. The history of Afghans is full of pain and suffering. You can see, war, insecurity, financial disaster all exist" (Interview EL.R.24). Others sought to raise awareness about the stereotypes and gendered assumptions that women refugees, in particular, face: "I want to tell them that refugee women are not so [...] They are not as weak as you think. We are very strong. And do not have this image that [...] that we are alone and [...] oppressed by our men" (Interview EL.R.1).

The challenge for others is to dispel misconceptions (Interview ES.R.1) about the reality of life in the country of origin, by reminding of rich cultural heritage and millennia of historical experience:

"I want the Greeks to know that my country, my homeland has a history of thousands of years that is very important. And traditions, music, and other very important traditions, and if they learn about them, they will love it very much. I wanted to say do not look with pity [...] with a look of sadness towards refugees, that they are people who only ask for help and food and a place to sleep. See them as dynamic people who can offer and look for opportunities. There are talents and skills in refugees, they just need an opportunity to be able to use their skills" (Interview EL.R.4).

In this respect, oppressed people and minorities, like Kurds, sought to share their historic knowledge of suffering and persecution ingrained in their collective memory. A Kurdish refugee from Iraq recounted: "for at least the last 100 years, the Kurds have been trying to gain the rights that all peoples have. […] We have a proverb that says, he who has no past has no future. We need to talk about our history so that we can talk about our future. Nearly 200,000 people were buried alive just because they were Kurds. They dropped chemical weapons on a city. In one day, in two days, 5,000 people

were killed. We are doing all this to get a democratic country, although it is not easy in the Middle East. But still, we keep trying and fighting" (Interview EL.R.13).

Some believe the fact that the people of the host community remember the wars they lived through in the past could facilitate mutual understanding. Following this line of reasoning, the memories of violence in the past implies that more and more people reflect on a shared collective future. A Syrian woman, 49 years old, explained: "I would like them to know our history because Syria is, due its geographical situation, a place that has been invaded by many nations. And of course, this has enriched the culture […] I was in Malaga, until now. When I met people, elderly people, they asked me where I'm from. When I tell them Syria, they started crying. They told me 'we are so sorry about what is happening in Syria, we lived through the war and we know how it is' […] And people who judge me or judge other people for leaving their homes and going to Europe they said 'oh, they should go back to their country.' No! Spanish people who lived the war, they know the meaning of leaving your country, leaving your house, leaving your family, and going to another country and starting your life over and learning a new language […] I was thinking about writing a story about my experience" (Interview ES.R.27). Sometimes, historical experiences of the host country were used to raise public awareness and consciousness. As an Afghan refugee stated: "I want to say that history repeats itself and not to forget it. Especially for Greece, I would like to say that in order for society to understand what being a refugee means, go back a little in the past and see that they themselves were refugees and the country that hosted them the most was Syria" (Interview EL.R.22).

Most interviewees explained the civil wars, the war of decolonization, the colonial history and the impact of colonialism, and the political and social situation in their countries of origin, when they asked which historical episodes they think would be useful for European societies to learn more about. An interviewee from Syria made a link between colonialism and today's wars: "That conflict that we had in the Middle East, or other parts of what you call the Third World is like, you know, the history of the colonialism of the European countries and everything we see now is its consequences" (Interview ES.R.27). Several refugees from Chechnya preferred to speak about "the war and the deportation of the Chechen people" (Interview PL.R.12; Interview PL.R.19; Interview PL.R.21). They want to explain it so as to prevent it from happening again: "From our history, I would like to say about the eviction of the people in 1944-1947. It's not just about our people. This is a very scary historical episode and I don't want it to happen again" (Interview PL.R.13).

Ethnic and national minorities such as Kurds and Hazara refugees explained that it was important for them to inform people about the story of suffering and the resistance of their people. For instance, a Hazara refugee in Greece commented that: "Europeans need to know about refugees […] First of all, about Afghanistan, about the tribes that belong to Afghanistan. Especially Hazaras, because the Europeans know

very well, this race faces difficulties both in the country and in other countries. And in the cities where we live, we have peace, we have no war. They put us at war, the state" (Interview EL.R.18). Several Kurdish refugees denounced the oppression and violence of the states. A Kurdish refugee who arrived in 2018 in Greece, expressed: ''I would like to talk about the Kurds, not the refugees in general. There was a massacre in Iraqi Kurdistan, and I mean looting, genocide. They dropped chemical weapons. They are executed in Iranian Kurdistan. They are being killed in Syria. In Turkey, they are put in prison. In all four parts, the Kurds are being wronged and their rights are being violated. This is what I want the Europeans to know about the Kurds'' (Interview EL.R.17).

When asked about what they like to learn about host societies, most participants responded that they were interested in gaining more knowledge about cultural practices, language, music, literature, social activities, modern history, archaeological sites, mythology, ancient history, and civil wars. For some, comprehension of the past provides insights into the present and serves as a basis to understand the problems and challenges of the host country. Some wonder "how did a country with such a rich history come to this situation, it is the weakest country in Europe economically, socially" (Interview EL.R.2). One point emphasized by women interviewees was about the relationships of the women with the family and society in the host country. When one woman was asked to describe what she wanted to know about Greeks, she explained: "I would really like to know how the relationship of families and couples are here. Is it really what we say that women and men respect each other and are [...] really equal? It is like that?" (Interview EL.R.1). In this case, the condition of displacement and the new environment raised several new questions concerning gender relations.

The analysis reveals that interviewees were aware that their heritage and memories need a stronger voice. Based on the results of the interviews, the needs of refugees concerning cultural heritage may be summed up in this way:

- It is important not only to protect the cultural heritage of forced migrants but also mechanisms are required to insert refugees' heritage into the sphere of identity and belonging of the host country.
- Refugees need to take a more active role in framing and implementing cultural heritage practices in receiving societies.
- The intangible cultural heritage of refugees such as history, music, art, stories, rituals, or festive events is a key element in the overall strategy to establish bidirectional communication between refugees and local communities.
- There is a necessity to strengthen connections between the refugees and cultural and educational institutions such as museums, schools, libraries, memorial sites, and cultural centres.

3.2.4. Cultural participation

The changing composition of national communities, through migration, from "culturally homogenous populations" to mosaics of national, ethnic, and religious diversity, pose problems of social and cultural integration. Today, the question of social inclusion is directly associated with the idea of migrant community participation in cultural, artistic, and educational spaces. It is based on the premise that migrants are active owners and modifiers of culture and not just passive recipients. By engaging in cultural activities, people are simultaneously constructing their own individual consciousness as well as their collective identities.

The interviewees mentioned a wide variety of cultural activities, ranging from cooking to theatrical performances and festivals, from reading and listening to music to creating visual arts and crafts. A woman from Iraqi Kurdistan, who arrived in Greece as a refugee in 1995, explained how cultural activities facilitate social interaction and create a feeling of identification with other members of society: "I remember it was in 2002. We had done a fairy tale, a Kurdish fairy tale for children, and four other countries had participated. Italy, Spain, and I think Germany. No, it was not Germany. We were with two other countries, us and Roma. So, it was a fairy tale from the Roma and a fairy tale from children who are from Iraqi Kurdistan. It was both theatre and storytelling at the same time. My daughter was six years old then, she also participated, and we did it at a hotel in Chania [a city in Crete] I remember. It was a good experience to tell a Kurdish fairy tale to so many children. Of course, we spoke Greek, but the story was Kurdish. It was a traditional fairy tale" (Interview EL.R.7).

Some, like a Syrian refugee in Poland, seek to continue their interests in the cultural field in the new country: "I like concerts and festivals the most. I am a cinema fan; I like cinema very much. I even write film music by myself because I am a composer. I like music the most. I like going to the opera in the philharmonic hall, opera houses in Wrocław, Katowice, Warsaw, Kraków. I have been everywhere […] In Syria, I sang in the opera for eight years and worked as a teacher at the Academy of Music in Damascus. I played in many concerts. Before the war, there were many cultural events in Damascus" (Interview PL.R.11). Others have begun to experience new artistic practices in the host country: "Earlier, I used to say that the theatre is not mine. However, when I started to participate in the performance myself, I liked it. Then I started to play by myself. Maciek invited me to the theatre. Everyone sang there. I love the theatre very much" (Interview PL.R.17).

Some refugees do not participate in the cultural life of the host country because they are too busy with practical matters and they sometimes come from a personal background where it was not usual to take part in cultural activities as is done in the host country. Reflection on cultural participation is often intertwined with community and family traditions that are difficult to replicate in the host countries due to the lack of context. Some interviewees explained that their professional and family

responsibilities do not leave them enough time to participate in cultural activities. This is the case, for instance, for an Afghan refugee in Spain: "I don't have free time to join cultural activities. I leave my house around seven in the morning and I come back late. I don't have free time, but I would love to study" (Interview ES.R.13). In the same line of argument, another interviewee stated: "Now that I have a child is a bit challenging to join cultural activities but before I loved going on hikes" (Interview ES.R.15). Some mentioned problems arising from language and communication as the most serious problem. A 23-year-old man of Nigerian origin who has been a refugee in Italy since 2016 explained: "Here in Italy… now I don't know because to go out, to talk with other people… with Italian people it is hard for me, I always want to be alone, yes. To speak Italian now… I don't understand anything" (Interview IT.R.12). Another interviewee commented that there is a significant cost to participate in certain cultural activities: "I like museums, I have a thorough approach to it. For example, I was planning to go to Oświęcim, before that I was in the Schindler Museum, I read 'Schindler's List,' I saw a movie and then I went. I really like things such as ballet, the circus, I went twice. Everything, I really like classical music, David Garrett, Sylwia Grzeszczak. It's terrible for me now that there are no such concerts. Of course, they differ. They were not there. Not a weak offer, I had no money. No communication. Because to get to Lviv or the mountains, you have to take a train for one or two days to make it cheaper. This is not intercity. It is very expensive there" (Interview PL.R.7).

It should be emphasized that all refugees, notably women, don't have an equal opportunity to participate in cultural activities. Our findings suggest that the gender division of household labour plays an important role in cultural participation. In this regard, it is enough to remember that the conventional gender-biased public-private dualism influences women's activities and practices: ''I am a housewife, I like cooking. I like to take care of my house, my children, and always have it clean. […] I have not been to such a festival nor have I participated, it's true. I am the one who takes care of my home, my family, my husband, and my husband's guests'' (Interview EL.R.25). To give another example, a Ukrainian woman explained that she suffers the same limitations: "I take care of my grandchildren because my daughter works. Most events take place in the evening when I take care of my grandchildren" (Interview PL.R.15).

3.3. DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND INCLUSION

Social media has the power to boost and strengthen the "concept of community," meaning that it promotes and recreates encounters of different realities and people from different background in the same sphere. It helps refugees feel accepted and part of a community, and it is also a tool for communication with their families that are possibly split apart and living in different regions around the world. The important downsides to note are the facts that it should not replace face-to-face and physical interactions that are very important for human sociability, and simplifying complex

realities in a reductive manner to spread information should be avoided, which could cause a "deformation" of issues lived by individuals and, above all, the very negative effect of fake news and hate being spread in social media:

> Let's not forget that the concept of community, in addition to its theoretical imaginary form, has received, at least from the existence of the Internet, the concept of virtual community, which always plays an important role in information. (Interview EL.A.2)

Although the discussion about social media does not have a general agreement, the majority of Academics interviewed widely agree that it is an important tool for social integration. However, it needs improvement and a detailed assessment of needs and implementation before becoming widespread as a fundamental source for cultural institutions, associations, or any other party working with the integration of refugees and asylum seekers.

Technological tools offer people fast, nearly instantaneous communication: "It offers people immediacy, it offers communication at any time, either in writing or orally or through images. Let's not forget that in many cases, the information is even easier to transmit, as there is no cost. All you need is a connection and a suitable device to support it," yet attention should be placed on the meaning of face-to-face communication that cannot be easily replaced by digital technology: "interaction takes place on a real level. Seeing culture through your mobile phone is good, but not if you do not get in touch with others, sit next to each other to talk, to find common ground, to cook, to dance" (Interview EL.A.3).

Gamification is an important asset of pedagogical tools and strategies that has gained a lot of attention in recent years as an interesting solution to enhance interaction between different people. It provides scenarios in which participants are placed in equality and deals with situations of problem-solving, storytelling, and healthy competition that can help *put one in someone else's shoes*. These innovative solutions can boost integration and also teach lessons of empathy, curiosity, and sharing realities. They can be used to review material from the past, but in recent years, gamification solutions became the spotlight of several training and education projects aiming to promote engagement and work with scenarios, "broadening knowledge (through) different kinds of games, competition, cooperative opportunities" (Interview PL.A.1).

3.3.1. Potential of technological tools to enhance connections

All academics agree that digital technologies play an essential – or basic – role in intercultural exchange and in the implementation of activities related to the integration of asylum seekers or newcomers to a society. As stated, these tools "promote mutual understanding" (Interview EL.A.1), for several reasons. They provide updated and interactive information about the lives of refugees and other groups

about which it would not normally be easy to have more information. These tools could be "digitally showing what was happening, that we are refugees and so on, have an impact because they are not the only ones, but we once asked for help. We have gone through this and it is important, and with new technology, it could be made more beautiful and comfortable" (Interview EL.A.3).

It must be stressed that digital tools are very important for safety and the right to correct information about migration and access to networks of cooperation between refugees. "Without technology, people have suffered much, much more. People who have been disoriented, lost, exploited in a thousand ways, and killed, murdered [...] with mobile phones, orientation, self-defence, connection with the country of origin, or connection with the communities or other people of the landing countries have been greatly facilitated" (Interview IT.A.3).

Social media, which is mainly or solely accessed through digital tools, is an important resource for networking, community development, and it has "a qualitative effect in undertaking a path of integration […] it's a very empowering element" (Interview IT.A.3).

It has been unanimously agreed by academics that a repository of life stories is a very important tool to track and to follow in-depth dialogues with refugees and displaced populations. "That would be part of filling in some kind of historical knowledge gap that's escaping" (Interview PL.A.2). The life repositories could be a tool for education and university students – European and foreigners – to break their conceptions of the world and meet other realities by "break[ing] stereotypes, breaking psychological and cultural dimensions, but not just that. There should be other dimensions" (Interview EL.A.2). However, some participants from cultural institutions are not sure about the possibilities of using technological tools for connection or interaction. There have been some interesting findings about how technology could not only *be* the means of communication, but also *promote* the interaction and communication itself, such as the example of an activity of collaborative video-making activities:

> Technology can be used to create empathy if there is a relationship, a real relationship, an exchange, an encounter with people, a relationship at an equal level. If technology can embed this relationship in various ways that can be within the format as in the case of participatory video-making […] because there is a relationship at the base, in the way the process of creating the video was conceived. So, if there wasn't this relationship, the video would not have that strength. (Interview IT.CI.2)

Policymakers reported wide support for technological tools to promote the integration of refugees and for awareness-raising, mainly for communication purposes and for the establishment of direct communication strategies with marginalized groups

as these groups are already using technological tools in their own reality. "I see unlimited possibilities. Today, actually, a smartphone with Internet access is the source of everything" (Interview PL.P.3).

An interesting proposal emerged from policymakers, who highlighted storytelling as a strategy for digital technology development for refugee integration. Storytelling could be recreated in online platforms to help spread ideas and break stereotypes, creating awareness-raising of the situations lived by refugees: "initiatives that may focus on promoting a story or a positive example which are disseminated through online platforms. That is a good way to raise awareness for the Greek population" (Interview EL.P.4).

Activities of storytelling can be merged with innovative technology and should be highly interactive, using a "methodology of interaction and listening, that surely works for all migrants and even more for asylum seekers, so the creation of the class, the relation with the group, once defined the linguistic levels works through a biographic narration. The first objective also linguistic is being able to narrate themselves in the language of the hosting country, this involves also the teachers, they are used in doing this kind of work and familiar with narrative and experiential dimension" (Interview IT.CI.4).

And for this interaction during storytelling implementation, the co-creation is an important side aspect "to involve our so-called target group, to use this expression, from the very beginning, from the conception, in a process of co-creation, then from the conception keep the analysis of the needs of our recipient firmly in mind and co-create because if co-create means to have an exchange, in this process exchanges are born, relationships are consolidated and then expressed in the final product." (Interview IT.CI.2).

Using digital technology can also be used not simply as the main tool for the integration of marginalized populations, but as an integrated approach through a gradual process: "during the path of emancipation [of refugees], slowly […] meaning the fact of being able to give them tools with which to become more and more autonomous is also essential to communicate different pieces of information" (Interview IT.P.3).

Notably, other policymakers stated that it is important to be careful regarding which tools are being adopted by refugees as some digital tools have been previously designed for other collectives and should not or do not fit into communication or integration strategies for refugees: "Each tool must be designed for a specific situation. I can't imagine that every technology fits all migrants. We had migrants here on ICORN Scholarships who couldn't use a computer or couldn't learn English, even though we offered such lessons. There is no universal tool or universal technology, because technology is also an obstacle, a problem" (Interview PL.P.3). Another participant

highlighted the issue of physical interaction for social activities, which cannot be always replaced by digital tools: "Some kind of virtual bond may be strengthened, but is that all? I take the position that all the bonds will not be transferred virtually" (Interview PL.P.5).

3.3.2. Use of digital technology and social media by cultural institutions, NGOs, and policymakers

Cultural institutions reported the widespread use of several digital tools and social media for cultural activities, and many of them have been enhanced or recently implemented due to the impact of COVID-19. Regarding how it relates to the integration of refugees and migrants, "for digital literacy projects with migrants, the aim was precisely to provide them with enabling technologies so that they can move better, with awareness, in today's world that is a digital world" (Interview IT.CI.2).

The main platforms reported have been Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook for Social Media; Virtual Exhibitions, Virtual Tours, Historical E-Books, Google Workplace, Virtual Classroom, and Moodle Platforms for Online Education and engagement with the public; and Gamification strategies reported have been the desire to implement Augmented Reality and Video Games, and the reason of this desire is that "Guided tours are [the] strong points of traditional activity. We say the places of memory that are connected to the network and have fielded virtual visits. Virtual visits also, yes, but here too the same goes for augmented reality: if done well they have an efficacy, if it takes so much to make them, since they cost, they risk being ineffective" (Interview IT.CI.1).

NGOs reported a traditional use of digital tools to implement their activities and to communicate and disseminate their activities. Resources are often insufficient to create sophisticated digital tools or to buy gadgets and update hardware, but regarding the communication and diffusion, there is widespread use of Social Media and engagement with their public and users: "In general, we use social media, we produce various videos as part of various campaigns. For example, in the context of 'Diversity in the workplace,' we made a video about diversity in the workplace. We made a video about citizenship., Most recently, in the 2019 elections we did an update on rights and how we vote. Today, due to the pandemic, we transferred all our services digitally, specifically to Zoom and Skype" (Interview EL.N.5).

The main use of digital tools by policymakers is Social Media and some interactive content that has been recently developed to be implemented in a joint-collaboration of museums and social media: "We have the Krakow Museum, which tells the story of heritage. We have the 'Herito' monthly, which tells the story of heritage. The International Cultural Centre, Villa Decius. That is, institutions that have their own programmes and communicators to tell the story of our city's heritage. Krakow has one main Facebook blog 'Krakow Heritage'" (Interview PL.P.3).

Other interactions implemented by policymakers indicate an engagement with local community through applications that provide feedback and forums about themes of public interest: "We have created an app on the topic of international cooperation, where all the municipalities' best practices are collected. There's an interaction with young people, with questions and answers. In order to bring young people closer to themes and experiences of international cooperation and volunteering. And of course we use social media, but not really interactive digital tools" (Interview IT.P.6).

On the other hand, policymakers reported the attention gained by digital tools in the past year for the refugee communities and interaction between locals and foreigners: "We had signals that members of the Ukrainian minority often set up their own Facebook groups and this is the place where the flow of information takes place, so we came up with the assumption that these social media must be, and their operation must be dynamic. I think that our portal is already recognized all over Poland, which is very welcome" (Interview PL.P.4).

3.3.3. Use of digital technology and social media by refugees and asylum seekers

During this section, we will review the main aspects concerning the use of digital technology and social media by refugee participants and illustrate their access to devices and how they are used and for what purposes.

3.3.3.1. The use of the Internet by Refugees

Among refugees, the use of the Internet is very broad and present in their daily lives. All refugees, with the exception of two individuals – both women, one who does not use the Internet and prefers to take care of the household, and the other who does not know how to use it and has her son help her – use the Internet at least two hours a day in their daily lives. It should be noted that this cannot be generalized beyond the individuals interviewed in the present study.

Most of them reported using the Internet for around one to two hours per day, and another significant number of them use it during the entire day or during work shifts. Besides using the Internet as a means of fun, a hobby, and leisure, nearly all refugees reported that the Internet is very important for them to read news about refugees' situations in their host country and also to search for news about their home country, and the Internet is a tool that helps them feel in contact with their home country, keep in touch with their origins, and feel "alive": "Although I try to avoid it, but you can't, because my parents are there. As much as you push it away, you are there. A part of me is there. So mostly, information. Of course, there are fun parts, like music and movies, as well. It's also something that makes me feel alive" (Interview EL.R.28).

Although the fact that technology should not be used in place of human-to-human contact has been stated as one of the pillars of integration for individuals, it provides information about the host country and helps with cultural shocks, learning language,

using translation tools for daily tasks, solving doubts about habits and legislation, and many other aspects of the culture of the host country during integration period:

> Technology is one of the most important means that helped us to learn the culture of the country that we are in. Every day I learn something about this culture, I can integrate with it more. Because if there is something that I don't know, I will be scared of it, as we said before. For sure, the first role of technology is to learn about the language, the customs, the culture, about religion. Why they are doing so, what's the story, what is this show, what's happening, for what reason? So, for sure, number one is technology, but technology is not enough by itself. The most important role is to connect people in a direct way, to live with people, to meet them, to see them, go out together, have dinner together, to drink coffee together. This is the most important to integrate in any community, to have a direct relationship, without any means of technology, a direct relationship between one person and another person. (Interview IT.R.1)

Slightly more than half of the refugees who participated in the interviews use only smartphones to access the Internet and any other digital tool used in their daily lives. Another important number reported that besides smartphones, computers and laptops are also used for access. Smaller numbers reported using only a computer, and very few cases did not have devices that connect to the Internet.

3.3.3.2. APPs: use/difficulties

Several apps have been reported as being used or being desired to be used by refugees. The collected data consider any mention during the specific question about use/difficulties of apps during the interviews and it is understood that information might differ according to an individual's understanding of technology or mobile applications.

Cultural activities including museums, learning more about archaeology, reading books, traditional music to connect with roots, theatre, and even publishing a book have also been mentioned and this category is the most important in this section.

Following Culture, we have Learning and Information as the second most mentioned category, which has been created combining all activities that refer to learning something new that could be used during the integration process, learning a new hobby or work-related activity, and also information about the country of origin, destination, or situation of refugees. The most important learning activity was language learning, especially for adults during the integration process, and also several complaints about the needs of a well-developed tool to help refugees find information for their daily lives and/or translating important information.

Regarding information, it is important to highlight that the usage of apps to look for information about the current situation of the home country is extremely important to

maintain contact with their origins, and learning or writing about the refugees' situation and journey is considered by several participants as a crucial right to information that needs to be enhanced, as stated below:

> I think that the most important thing people could need is information. Applications with updated information about the current situation in Greece. Like, it could be even a little bit political life in Greece, as well as some culture advice, culture things, and most important, what's going on with rules for refugees, what's changing day by day. […] There are people, but I don't think they are the majority, who cannot use technology. So, I think the challenge is more financial. They don't have free access to the Internet. Especially at the camps. And if there is, it never works well. And there are always problems with that. I could see that wherever I worked. So, I think technology is the most important, and if they don't have money, some of them, they cannot have access to the Internet. And if they do have money, they don't have a telephone or any kind of device to use. (Interview EL.R.28)

Another interesting aspect about information is that mobile phones and apps are often used to learn more about the culture of the host country, mainly for the integration of the adults and their kids, but also to establish a contact between the refugee and the local community through understanding cultural aspects and daily life: "what would interest me is how a normal family lives in Greece. How children live, how they grow up" (Interview EL.R.15).

This highlights how families and people from different origins have so much in common and how technology could be a factor in showing this to facilitate common ground instead of pushing people apart due to their origins or migratory status.

Using the smartphone to watch videos about recipes and cooking has appeared often in the interviews and we could also highlight that a few participants even shared their desire to start blogging about food from their home country. However, although it has been mentioned several times, we did not have a lot of participants explaining this experience with enough depth to add in the report, which uses narrative-based interviews. We would like to add this theme to the list of topics to be deepened, but probably using another methodology that would fit better in the material we have collected - maybe even a methodology related to speech analysis because keywords like "food", "recipe", "cookbook" are very common indeed.

The lesser mentioned categories include leisure activities, negative opinions about the Internet, in which two participants mentioned that the use of apps is bad for their kids or for their health, and work-related issues, in which one participant mentioned apps as a source of income.

3.3.3.3.   Social media

Generally speaking, there are two main uses for Social Media reported by the refugees participating in the study. The first is connecting with loved ones, which is mostly done through WhatsApp, Viber, Facebook, and Instagram" "It's WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram. WhatsApp mostly is to communicate with my family and work. Facebook is to connect with my outside world and my world in Syria or elsewhere, as well as family. Also, Instagram is mostly related to family, but family and friends" (Interview EL.R.28). The second use, which has been highlighted by almost all refugee participants, was gathering more information on the asylum process and bureaucratic issues: "Social Media helps a lot in the asylum process. Although there is a lot of information to listen to, it is the asylum process. Although there is a lot of information to listen to, there are many refugees who do not know the language or know how to read it all. From the videos and the images, they learn a lot about the asylum process" (Interview EL.R.2).

The main reasons are that information is shared through groups of refugees and other foreigners and all this information is available in languages that they can speak and understand, unlike the official websites of host country governments:

> When refugees first arrive, they turn on GPS, looking to find an organization. Those who have experience, who have been granted asylum and write what is happening, try to form teams themselves. They ask me for example, I want to go there. I give them the address and explain to them how to go. For example, if someone wants to go to the hospital, we send him through Social Media. It helps a lot. If a refugee, for example, wants to go somewhere, he sees that I have been here for many years, he sends me a message and I write to him, I help him without knowing who he is. (Interview EL.R.30)

4. CHALLENGES AND NEEDS

Based on the main results identified, it is possible to highlight persistent challenges that need to be addressed in order to better serve the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. This section attempts to address the needs and challenges cited by respondents.

4.1. REFUGEE-RELATED RESEARCH AND PROJECTS

Current controversies about migration involve a complex array of scientific researchers working in several specialties, as well as members of government and non-governmental organizations and various popular and social media. Many academics defend the explicit engagement of researchers in the public debate to raise public consciousness concerning migration and stress the important role they play in developing public policies that could promote a higher level of intercultural tolerance. As sociologist Theodoros Fouskas put it, "for me, it [scientific research] is a channel that we must use to raise awareness and have political influence" (Interview ES.A.2).

Another sociologist, Elli Ioannidi, underlined that "the key is to research to identify needs and build a strategy based on them'' (Interview EL.A.3). There are three core themes in this view: first, the notion that to know what is happening in society, we need deep and impartial social research; second, scientific knowledge itself arises through a collective process of exchange between scientists (bearers of *expertise*) and other actors (bearers of *knowledge*); and third, social scientific knowledge should be used to guide action and the formulation of social policies.

A common assumption among academics' standpoint is that forced migration studies and migration studies are two complementary research fields where disciplines meet and overlap. In other words, there is a lot of overlap between refugee studies and the sociology of international migration: both emphasize international mobility and its causes, consequences, and constraints. They support the idea that the insights of migration theories can benefit refugee studies, yet, that refugees are fundamentally different from migrants because of the push factors that impel their movement "they are all migrant and displaced people, but […] it should [be] combined because, both in origin, transit, and destination, countless occasions, the realities are inseparable. There is no need to separate. At the same origin, it is sometimes very difficult to discern the reason for a person leaving her country: economy, politics, war, violation of rights, etc. All this on numerous occasions goes together" (Interview ES.A.1). However, with the exception of some, many of those interviewed were of the view that it is necessary to distinguish between refugees and other types of migrants. Some of the replies point out that this dichotomy makes sense because it has social and legal consequences for the life of forced migrants. Others support the idea that "the concept of the immigrant and the refugee should not be intertwined as it used to be" because this distinction "gives further specialization" and "it's a good idea for research tools to be specific to cognitive objects" (Interview EL.A.2).

In sum, despite being a field which has grown greatly in recent decades, respondents noted several gaps in migration and forced migration studies, including, among others: the lack of research regarding a "large number of immigrant communities which have not been extensively researched" (Interview EL.A.2), "the gap between academic research and mainstream culture" (Interview IT.A.2), doing academic research "without relying on local people or the protagonists" (Interview ES.A.2; Interview ES.A.1), or the lack of a "data warehouse" providing a multidimensional view of data regarding forced migration (Interview PL.A.2). Some challenged the "Eurocentrism of some approaches," arguing that "the interpretation of the world goes beyond the European interpretation of the world" (Interview ES.A.1) and "there are things we cannot imagine because we always think the Western way" (Interview EL.A.3). Others are concerned by the lack of a clear definition of "forced migration" and the absence of various situations of forced migration (like the

migration of people driven by disease, famine, drought, poverty, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc.) in the recognized refugee status (Interview IT.A.3).

4.2. CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS AND NGOS: CHALLENGES

NGOs face diverse and multidimensional challenges while trying to provide essential services to refugees. The organizations in this study reported a lack of coordination and coherence between different levels of government involved in migration integration. Given the complexity of integration policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring, NGOs, in some cases, feel isolated or alone in refugee reception and integration. They remain concerned about administrative difficulties and unresponsive bureaucracies that decrease the effectiveness of third-sector actors and NGOs that contribute to policy implementation. During interviews, the NGOs providing services to migrants and refugees also identified the limited financial and human resources available to civil initiatives in support of migrant populations as the main cause for a lack of continuity in their activities.

We should also note, however, that given the lack of material resources, they often require the support of broad networks of civil society organizations and some sort of connection with public authorities to receive government funds. As a result, they could lose the possibility of conducting independent work in the field. In this context, on some occasions, feelings such as frustration and fatigue could start to prevail among NGO members.

In general, in response to the question about the role of NGOs in this area, most interviewees agree that NGOs can play a very important role in the integration process but cannot substitute state policy. While some respondents believe that NGOs play an essential role at various levels (local, national, regional) in collaboration or competition with governments, some of the others criticize these organizations for being too paternalistic with regard to refugees.

Cultural institutions outlined several difficulties they experienced in working with refugees. These include the lack of continuity in projects and programmes (Interview EL.CI.1); the ability to establish a relationship of confidence over time (Interview EL.CI.2); professional incompetence (Interview IT.CI.1); difficulties in achieving mutual understanding (Interview IT.CI.3); weak refugee involvement (Interview PL.CI.1). Also, linguistic differences were cited as a further barrier to building relations with refugees and asylum seekers.

The provision of inclusive and participatory access to cultural heritage was cited as a challenge facing cultural institutions. A crucial concern is how to foster cooperation with civil society and the participation of asylum seekers and refugees in the cultural arenas of the society. That requires the sustained engagement of the refugees themselves and the wider communities in cultural activities. For some, the origin of this problem lies in the current cultural, economic, and political context. Others insist

on the importance of internal issues of civil society organizations, especially issues of competence and resources to face the challenges they encounter.

4.3. CULTURAL HERITAGE: STEREOTYPES AND EXOTICIZATION

There is a vision shared by all those we interviewed related to the appropriate use of cultural heritage as a resource in the process of refugee integration and inclusion. However, some warned that the attitude underpinning heritage promotion tends to turn cultural expressions into the exoticization of cultural differences. In their view, representing culture can be seen as the construction of a complex ideological apparatus that reinforces unequal social relations of power. Heritage may also be a resource that is used to build barriers and walls rather than breaking them down. As one interviewee pointed out: "[…] the local community is tolerant of some things and less tolerant of others. African percussion instruments are fun. If you were trying to incorporate something that would be more in line with the traditions of Islam, I think you would immediately have a different approach. They would no longer see you as something positive'' (Interview EL.CI.1).

Some interviewees cited stereotypes and biased images of migrants, xenophobia, securitization of migration, and criminalization of migrants as key challenges. In the opinion of the informants, in addition to anti-migrant rhetoric and xenophobia, the lack of a coherent policy on the promotion of cultural exchanges and practices is also frequently described as constituting a challenge for fostering a two-way interaction between local communities and refugees. In this regard, an advocacy officer for the Generation 2.0 For Rights, Diversity and Equality argued that ''the negative narrative about immigration is the most important challenge as there is no room left in the public debate for the positive contribution of immigrants to the economic and social development of countries. Also, there is no reference to their contribution of cultural heritage and diversity. When you are constantly dealing with negative narratives and the problem, there is no room to discuss anything else'' (Interview EL.N.5). The possibility of cultural exchange within the framework of the common values of a pluralistic society is hindered by the idea that the newcomers are culturally incompatible with the values and traditions of Europeans. This "particular narrative of a state, a nation, all this construction of the West and the imaginary nation," as said by an activist of the HumanRights360, is "something terribly homogeneous and compact" (Interview EL.N.3) and can reinforce a kind of insider-outsider perspective which ignores, denies, or marginalizes the cultural heritage and experiences of migrants. In the best-case scenario, this binary relationship of insider-outsider eventually ends up confusing cultural diversity with an exotic representation of non-Western cultures.

4.4. CHALLENGES TO INTEGRATION

Forced migrants have different needs and face diverse challenges and opportunities after they arrive in Western Europe. It is important to mention that the experiences of

forced migrants depend upon the geopolitical and socio-economic context of the host country. One difference highlighted by interviewees was that recent asylum seekers are more likely than the earlier asylum seekers to receive some humanitarian assistance. Comments from some interviewees (Interview EL.R. 7; Interview EL.R. 8; Interview EL.R. 9; Interview EL.R. 10), all arrived in the 1990s in the host country, noted that they received little or any support from government and NGOs. A refugee from Iraqi Kurdistan, who arrived in Greece in 1995, explained: "I had not reached 18 and I was a child on the street without help. It was very difficult then. I slept for a week in a square. I remember that, I can't forget this until I die. Then things were not as they are now, asylum services, organizations, nothing. There was nothing. And then we were going, they were throwing papers, you would get a paper, you did not know whose data it was. You just then stuck your photo on it." (Interview EL.R. 10)

Another point to underline is the importance of the 2015-2016 refugee crisis which changed the political context tremendously. This "crisis" has not affected all the European countries, with the same intensity. The exposure of some countries like Greece, Spain, and Italy to the migration trajectories during the refugee crisis had left asylum seekers and refugees in an unstable and critical situation in these countries. In addition, for many asylum seekers, these countries were only transit countries since their economic situation makes them less attractive than the Northern European destinations. While the situation was difficult for asylum seekers refugees residing in Poland, however, it has been less affected than those in other countries by the so-called refugee crisis. All these countries have one thing in common, however: after 2016 anti-migrant rhetoric progressively replaced the initial empathy of 2015 towards refugees. Faced with strong institutional closure at the national and European level and opposition from many local communities, recent asylum seekers seem to find themselves in an increasingly difficult situation.

The most important challenges for the refugee population interviewed are generally grouped into two areas: first, access to basic rights (healthcare, education, work, and housing), and second, more intimate issues related to their own life experiences around the forced migration process.

Access to basic rights (housing, healthcare, work, education) is mainly conditioned to "having papers" and the time it takes to formalize these bureaucratic processes, such as the use of language to access benefits or get a job that helps cover the rest of the needs of the individual or family unit. Often, the situation becomes cyclical since, if the person does not speak the language, they cannot get a job, and therefore do not have a home, threatening their rights and deepening other challenges they experience as refugees.

With respect to other challenges they experience as refugees, it is pointed out in the interviews that language barriers continue to be a serious obstacle to the inclusion

of refugees and asylum seekers. The accommodations in which refugees live in the destination country are often irregular due to restrictions on renting an apartment, lack of available housing for refugees and displaced persons, and living in the streets or in an irregular situation in sub-human conditions are very common. After months or years of travelling, seeking medical attention is also very important and refugees often arrive with late-stage diseases due to the impossibility of maintaining regular treatment, or even diseases caught during the journey up to the country of destination. In general, the first contact several refugees have with the institutional apparatus of the destination country is the police or the armed forces. Asylum seekers are exposed to significantly higher risk of abuse than national citizens.

One important point to be stressed is that sexism and inequality due to gender is very present during the journey, and this issue should be addressed and openly discussed. There are several threats that women face during their journey, during the accommodation, during the long travels, and notably in the destination countries when female asylum seekers and refugees are overwhelmed, tired, and vulnerable to aggression and sexual violence, which can come from their partners, men in refugee centres, and also police officers. When asked about the specific problems experienced by refugee women, some pointed out that there are no specific problems for women, or that they are even welcomed, for example, by Spanish society as recipients (Interview ES.R.5; Interview ES.R.20; Interview PL.R.5). However, from a more critical point of view, one interviewee synthesizes by pointing out: "If they arrive in Europe by plane, they have no problems" (Interview ES.R.14). In other words, and reiterating the statement about the intersectional perspective, religion, economic means, country of origin, sex, sexual orientation, and age, among many other factors, will affect how a person experiences their refuge process, which is already difficult. But being a woman, in view of most testimonies, does imply having specific difficulties with respect to male peers (Interview ES.R.10; Interview ES.R.7), which does not imply that the latter will not experience complex situations in relation to their situation as a refugee.

4.5. REFUGEES' VOICES

Most NGOs interviewed stressed the importance of acknowledging refugees' voices, encouraging policy makers and other actors to listen to their needs. In their view, migrants' voices and experiences have been largely ignored. In the words of Vasiliki Katrivanou, social unit coordinator in the Greek Council for Refugees, "let them speak for themselves […] To talk about their experience, to tell their stories, but also not to be identified as victims, to be able to show their strength and the wealth of their lives and their abilities. Because, for those outside of all this and the media, it is as if they are just the victims, the unfortunate, the persecuted. Yes, but they also have a lot of power and a lot of experience. Many times, there are refugees who want to say that they made it and this narrative process is a manifestation of their power. When I read an article and it also has a refugee quote, it always helps me. So, the refugees when

presented only as numbers, capturing information, and having no people behind is a problem. And all this cannot be done by others, they must speak for themselves" (Interview EL.N.6).

Too often, the rhetoric used by media and public officials excludes the experiences and voices of migrants and evokes imagery of a threat to social cohesion and internal security. This willingness to create alternative bottom-up knowledge on migration and asylum is considered by interviewees as a crucial opportunity to deconstruct anti-migrant rhetoric, which frames migrants as posing a threat to social stability and portrays them in a negative light, using dehumanizing language and stressing the problematic aspects related to their presence. Drawing on his own experience, as an immigrant to Italy, a cultural mediator in the Next Generation Association emphasized the importance of stronger voices to fight against marginalization and practices that silence migrants' voices and exclude them from narratives of the host country:

When it comes to immigration, migration, the discourse is done only from one point of view. It is never done ... or better put, for a long time, asking migrants how they preferred to be defined or what they felt has not been done. It was just done. He is a migrant, he is an illegal immigrant, he is a non-EU citizen... And for a long time, I have not accepted this definition, unconsciously. I arrived in Italy when I was five or six years old, we are talking about the mid-90s, and in those times I was always the only one, the different boy in all the schools I attended. So, I didn't feel this word about myself, because nobody labelled me as an immigrant. [...] Growing and developing a different maturity, I realized that there was something wrong, that is, there was something I missed: I watched TV and migration and migrants were told only from a point of view, only as... either as workers or as problems. And I said: 'Ok, migrants...' But I didn't feel like a migrant, so I didn't feel that theme. I said: 'Oh well, we are talking about migrants, who knows...' But then it happened one day, on one occasion, someone pointed out to me that I too am a migrant. I'm not Italian because I don't have Italian citizenship. At that point something broke in my head, because up to that age, 18-19 years old, I had lived an Italian life: I had Italian friends, I played football, and all Italian neighbours and blah blah blah, so an average Italian practically. But at that moment, someone pointed out to me that I was not Italian, because I lacked a document where it was written 'Italian citizen': only those few words excluded me from the right to be Italian. And there something broke: 'But I'm not even Pakistani, because when I go back to Pakistan, they see me as Italian, as European, and they treat me in a different way than the others. So, who am I?' [...] From that moment I started to see the storytelling about migration in a different way because at this point it was also about me because I was an immigrant as they said, they had opened my eyes and I didn't see myself in what was being told, in what it was said. Indeed, I was wondering, since I didn't have friends like me, with a migratory background, if

there were other boys and girls like me in this situation. Because I felt alone and isolated. [...] Clearly a counter-narrative is needed to also show everything that is not emerging today from the migration theme because every time we talked and talk about migration, we only do it in one way: only about how much does it cost us? What does it entail? The danger it poses for Italian identity, the mixed-race... Instead, we want to make a totally, very different speech. That is to start from what enriches. What it also brings in economic but above all in cultural and artistic terms. (Interview IT.N.3)

4.6. MAIN DIFFICULTIES IN TERMS OF USING DIGITAL TOOLS

Digital tools and some sorts of sociability that have emerged in recent years have been creating several controversial opinions and harsh consequences on societies. Although admitting that digital tools are very positive, academics remarked that it feels like "The rise of social networks didn't bring more democracy or more tolerance. It is rather going in the opposite direction" (Interview IT.A.2). This is due to the high rise of hate crimes, political campaigns using rumours and fake news, and growing intolerance in the digital environment.

For daily life interactions, and when it comes to refugee integration, the issues of access to digital tools and the inequality gap on national and international levels are very concerning and access is considered an important barrier for integration. Regarding accessibility, there is the issue of funding to access devices and technology in addition to digital illiteracy for socially excluded populations.

 Nearly all participants reported that the main difficulties are financial. There is a lack of access to technology, and when it comes to asylum seekers and refugees, starting with the simplest, most accessible tools is needed. The participants confirmed that the main difficulties in using digital tools, developing apps, or adapting the integration projects to digital means of communication, such as social media, are basically due to lack of financial support, as stated by a participant. The participants that reported being able to easily use digital tools are the ones who have managed to establish positive integration between their communication strategies and social media for communication matters, which is a cheaper and easier option than development.

4.7. TECHNOLOGICAL NEEDS: FACTORS THAT PREVENT INTEGRATING MORE TECHNOLOGY

Nearly all policymakers reported that the area of cultural integration and refugee integration is not at political priority as it is not considered an important area. The main issue reported was a lack of funding or a lack of strategic interest in combining innovation and integration for marginalized populations.

As regards the NGOs, the main factors that prevent them from integrating more technology are funding and resources to train their staff to use more technology. NGOs reported that their main need for technology and mainstreaming technology in

their daily lives is having expert support to design, develop, and maintain tools for the organization. Several of them already have the concepts and the ideas of tools to be mainstreamed, but do not have resources to hire new staff to perform these activities.

The need for innovative actions has appeared for several cultural institutions that are aware of the new possibilities on the market, but cultural institutions are also concerned on how to implement it in their realities, mainly due to lack of support or sponsoring. A few participants promoted Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality as important tools for cultural institutions: "Technologies that focus on so-called wearables, we have done several things about it, technologies related to the composition and shaping of sound. We have done more such things" (Interview EL.CI.1). Other partners presented other innovative technologies that could be very helpful, such as technologies that allow institutions to reach remote areas that they could not normally go to or bring participants and technologies that are enhanced by "operators of human, linguistic, and cultural mediation, including historical ones" (Interview IT.CI.1). It is important to mention that "human resources in this field are central" and need to be integrated in any innovative solution that comes up for cultural institutions.

It should also be noted that gamification has been mentioned by some as a great alternative for refugee integration because it promotes engagement with a different public and helps create empathy between different participants through engagement. Another possible interaction mediated by technological tools is awareness-raising activities that prompt local populations to interact with refugees through digital activities.

To sum up some of the key lessons identified:

- Applications in different languages are necessary,

- Smartphones play an extremely important role as a connection to the world,

- Single platforms with all knowledge collected from cultural institutions are very useful,

- Cloud-based applications are the basis of coherence in the modern workplace and allow teams to work properly in adverse situations,

It should be highlighted that some respondents disagree that new technologies can assist integration and believe that digitalization is promoting distancing between people. This opinion is also shared among some cultural institutions which believe that digital tools play an important role for cultural institutions but human interaction requires face-to-face contact: "nothing substitutes direct contact, direct knowledge" (Interview IT.CI.3), and even new technologies need to take into account that human mediation is very important and needed for innovative proposals.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The most important concluding remark to be made is the importance of sharing and storytelling of a wide variety of experiences that all the refugees and asylum seekers who have participated in the study have offered. The quotes presented in this report are small portions of their lives that generously have shared with the ultimate goal to prevent all those terrible episodes to be experienced again by those who might follow their paths. Similarly, all those gentile chapters to be promoted and reinforced to pave the road for those coming next. These stories and experiences are part of the real world, and acknowledging them is a potential tool to build a more welcoming and gentile society for all those who are already part of it. The SO CLOSE project can contribute to generate new spaces for this to happen and therefore to reinforce the full integration of these constituencies in the European society.

One perspective that emerged from fieldwork was the emphasis on sectored and fragmented national policies in place for managing and implementing asylum issues. This bureaucratic fragmentation of programmes for refugees and displaced people increases the difficulties in maintaining continuity and consistency between projects and obtaining an exhaustive plan for action.

In addition, asylum procedures and reception conditions may vary according to the country. However, despite these differences in the duration of the reception program, the kind of services, and the amount of assistance available, results showed that reception and integration programs can help ease the transition of newcomers into the host societies. Not only do they facilitate asylum seekers' access to some social support services, but they also help establish links with the local communities. The asylum applicants who have access to integration programs are hosted in reception facilities run by the NGOs or the public administration and have limited access to receive different services (such as education and language learning, healthcare,

and income). Asylum seekers staying at the reception facilities expressed some degree of satisfaction with their life in the new countries. Especially when they compare their current situation in the host country with that in their country of origin. Most of the respondents among the new arrivals insist that coming to Europe makes them feel better and that they no longer have many fears, especially regarding armed conflict and persecution. Several interviewees noted that they feel human rights are respected in the host country. The challenges that they face are nevertheless enormous. The most frequently mentioned obstacles by them during this phase include issues related to limited information, administration, financial barriers, adequate housing, language problems, contact with locals and their culture, racism, xenophobia, isolation, family separation, dependence on temporary help services, and in some cases mental health problems such as depression and anxiety.

In all cases, after a fixed time, the asylum seekers and refugees can no longer benefit from the integration program and must leave the reception facility where they were staying as applicants and, in most cases, they are not offered another place to go. The moment of leaving the integration program may be particularly critical if it changes the person's access to social support significantly. From one day to another, asylum seekers and refugees are expected to confront many difficulties with very little or no support. Even though the analysis of interviewees revealed that beneficiaries of integration programs feel more comfortable with the language and find it easier to build relationships with the local community, many challenges remain, including lack of network opportunities, lack of access to employment, difficulties to find an accommodation, use of new technologies, limited language skills, and administrative barriers.

While there are many differences in terms of needs and obstacles faced by asylum applicants still benefiting from the social integration support services and asylum seekers and refugees who have just left the reception programs, there are some important similarities. Numerous participants in both groups were affected by the lack of prospects within the context of their asylum procedure. Insufficient social support combined with uncertainty about the future causes a sense of precariousness and discrimination among asylum applicants and refugees. This can easily lead to isolation and social exclusion which in turn lead to loneliness and impede social integration.

The presence of different agencies and policies actually facilitates gaps between restrictive national immigration policies and discourses of solidarity, crisis, and emergency developed by NGOs supporting refugees. Within the context of the so-called "refugee crisis" of 2015, civic engagement and NGOs focused on issues related to refugees have gained broad interest. Currently, a wide variety of non-governmental humanitarian organizations are involved in providing protection and assistance to refugees. This assistance may take the form of language courses, host programmes, health care, language courses, and bureaucratic support in regularization procedures.

When asked what role cultural organizations and NGOs should play in improving social integration and mutual recognition, respondents mainly believe that these groupings provide important bases of actions and arenas for interactions with refugees. Their activities could supplement or even compete with states. Beyond the diversity of NGOs, what is important to highlight is that through their assistance they have created a network of social relations that acts as a bridge between different social spaces, provides refugees with the necessary access to society, and fosters community participation and access to culture. However, while none of the interviewees suggested that the culture is not important, some participants representing NGOs suggested that other topics are more important for asylum seekers. A central premise in this line of thought is that basic needs are existentially necessary to asylum seekers' lives and they contrast with more subjective or cultural aspects of life that are regarded as less essential. The main priority remains meeting the basic needs of asylum seekers and refugees.

On the cultural institution side, we have seen growing attention paid to encouraging the participation of asylum seekers and refugees in the cultural life of the host community. They also have placed a new emphasis on the importance of refugee narratives for generating better results within cultural initiatives. In this respect, storytelling can be considered a powerful communication tool and a traditional way of transmitting information about refugees and asylum seekers. In this sense, the main point of storytelling is to focus on the sharing of lived personal experiences beyond the "refugee category." This allows creating a sort of interaction that empowers and validates refugees and asylum seekers as the agents of their own stories and not only labelling them through the hard times they have been through or reducing their identities to the fact that they have been forcibly displaced. There is a need to fully acknowledge refugees' subjectivity and agency. By offering the possibility of showing a different panorama of personal experience, storytelling could promote integration and help to reduce stigmatization and rumours concerning refugees. Obviously, refugees' participation in the fight against racism, xenophobia, and discrimination would expand and enrich cultural arenas. It should also be noted that storytelling activities can be merged with innovative technology and could be highly interactive. Of course, co-creation is an important side aspect for this interaction in implementing storytelling.

Scholars raised some interesting issues to consider. The first point is "to get out of ethnocentrism and methodological nationalism." This means being engaged in the local and the global at the same time. There is a concern to give voice to migrants whose voices are generally excluded from the narratives of Western culture. The second point, related to the first, is conceptual ambiguity and confusion when it comes to migration, such as forced migrants, victims of trafficking, human trafficker, etc. A comprehensive understanding of migration requires that researchers not only study the social integration of forced migrants in the host country but also analyse the

situation in countries of origin. The third point brought up by academics concerns the need to promote understanding, exchanges, and cooperation between scholars and actors working with refugees and asylum seekers. Closer ties between research and practice are recommended to disseminate knowledge into widespread practice. Finally, in response to the question of "how So-Close could contribute to filling the gaps in terms of the information available," interviewed scholars indicated that this project has the potential to provide a solid base for generating social awareness about the reality of refugees' situation, especially about their culture. It can challenge people's negative stereotypes and prejudice about refugees and may promote a more welcoming attitude toward them which can encourage greater openness to exchanges between the cultures.

6. APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

Interview Guide- Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Preparation for interview

1- **Verify your internet connection and recording tool, if conducted online.**

2- **Be careful to introduce yourself and explain the purpose of the interview.**

Please introduce yourself to the respondent before beginning the interview:
Hello, my name is (….) I am working for (institution).
We are working on the H2020 European Project, known as SO CLOSE. The purpose of the project is to contribute to social cohesion and fight refugee marginalization or exclusion by fostering mutual understanding between refugees and the receiving European societies. The project will achieve this aim through the creation of a Memory Center (an accessible multimedia platform), to bring together the experiences of forced displacement and migration of recent refugees and that of many local communities in Europe. By sharing these common life stories, SO CLOSE contributes to providing inclusive and participative access to cultural heritage.

3- **How long the interview usually takes (60-minute format)**

The interview will last 60 minutes maximum, depending on the level of detail the participant is interested in providing. It is quite normal that each interview flows a little differently.

4- **Terms of confidentiality-Consent**
The participant should sign the consent form and the interviewer should provide a translated copy for the participant in a language that he/she speaks. He or she will also

Interview

This interview guide contains 47 open-ended questions all of which should be asked to each participant.

Note that it is not necessary to ask these questions in the same way or the same order to each participant. You can rephrase questions answered incompletely.

Contextual background

Introduce this section by saying:
I would like to start by asking you some questions about your person.
1. Where do you come from? Where were you born? Where did you grow up?
2. What is your mother tongue? What language(s) do you speak?
3. What is your highest grade of formal education completed? If you would like to mention any relevant education outside of school curriculum, we are open to listen as well.
4. We will talk now gender, is that okay?
   a. If positive, what gender do you identify yourself most with?
5. What is your present relationship status? (single, dating, cohabiting, married, divorced, widowed, separated, etc.)
6. What is your professional situation? What type of work do you carry out?
7. Status (asylum seekers, person with refugee status, humanitarian protection or subsidiary protection)

Situations in the country/area of origin & Migratory journey

Introduce this section by saying:
I would now like to ask you some questions about your country?

1. When did you decide to leave your country/region? In what year did you leave your country for the first time? Why?
2. Thinking about your country, how would you describe it?
3. What do you miss the most from your country? What is the most important thing you left behind?
4. If you could, would you return to your country?
5. Do you belong to a minority group in your country of origin?
   a) If positive, how this affected your life and your experience as a refugee or/and asylum seeker?
6. During the past five years, what countries have you been living in? How was it? Were you by yourself or family or other people?
7. What was the most valuable support you got throughout your journey? Did you have the chance to connect with local people or other refugee communities? How do you communicate with them? How important was this experience for you?
8. Based on your own experience, how does gender affect migration experience?
9. When did you first arrive in… [Italy, Spain, Poland, Greece]?

10. Once you arrived in [Italy, Spain, Poland, Greece], what were the main problems/difficulties (medical care, police, accommodation, police, classes, asylum procedure) you experienced?
11. How did the authorities treat you?
12. Did someone help you? (friends, organization/NGO, etc.)
13. Did you stay in a refugee specific arrangement (i.e. reception center, refugee camp)? Where, how long? How was life in there? In your experience, how similar or different the everyday life of women and men was there?
14. Where did you find comfort when you were in trouble or facing personal problems (i.e. seeking mutual support, friendship, family, songs, books, memories, leisure activities, company, prayer and spiritual activities)?

Situation in the host country/area

Introduce this section by saying:
I would now like to ask you your opinion on several aspects of life in [Italy, Spain, Poland, Greece].

Integration processes

1. For how long have you been in the (Italy, Spain, Poland, Greece)?
2. What relationship do you have with the people from your home country/area?
3. How easy has been for you to meet people from local/host communities?
4. In your opinion what do most people in (Italy, Spain, Poland, Greece) think about refugees?
5. What were/are the most important challenges (work, social protection, access to health care and education, housing, etc.) you have faced? Why?
6. What were/are the most important sources of support (work, social protection, access to health care and education, housing, etc.) you have encountered? Why?
7. With your experience, what are the specific challenges faced by refugee women in their migration and integration experience?

Access to cultural heritage

Let's now discuss your participation in cultural activities in [Italy, Spain, Poland, Greece].
1. What cultural activities do you enjoy? (such as going to the cinema, concert, theatre, visiting the library, historical monuments, museum, reading books, participating in traditional events like food festival, carnival, puppet theatre, floral festival, etc.) Can you provide an example? Why?
2. What cultural activities did you participate or create in your country/region of origin? Were you able to maintain them in your host country?
   o **If not**, what barriers (information, language, time, cost, interest etc.) prevent you from participating in these activities? How are these to be overcome?
   o **If yes**, how come?
3. What in your culture/traditions/way of life is most valued for you?
4. What would you like the [Greek, Italian, Spanish, Polish] people learn about you?
5. About old or recent history of your people/group? What do you think it would help to society to learn about your experience? Would you like to share a specific message with the host/local communities?
6. What would you like to learn about the [Greek, Italian, Spanish, Polish] people' histories, traditions and ways of life?

7. If you could, would you explain your history to other people? How?
8. From your understanding and experience, which historical episodes do you think that would be useful for European societies to learn more?

Personal narratives and perceptions of the current situation

1. How satisfied are you with your current situation in [Italy, Spain, Poland, Greece]? Looking back, what would you do different? What would you think that would have been more helpful and supportive to you?
2. How close do you feel to [Italy, Spain, Poland, Greece]?
3. Do you think that your country of origin/community's culture is being respected and taken as an expression of cultural diversity in your host country? Why/why not?
4. What are the differences and similarities that you can see between yourself and the people in your host country?

Use of digital technology and social media

Introduce this section by saying:
I would finally like to ask you some questions about social media and digital technology.
General internet usage
1. Do you use the internet? How often? What do you use the internet for mostly?
Ownership of and access to ICTs
2. Which devices do you use to connect to the internet (Smart phone, tablet, computer)?
Apps
3. What digital tools (web-based projects, virtual museum, videogames, apps, serious games, interactive media, etc.), technologies (virtual reality augmented reality…), or audiovisual resources (immersive videos, short films…) would you like to use ?

4. What are the main difficulties you foresee in terms of using digital tools (web-based projects, virtual museum, videogames, apps, serious games, interactive media, etc.)?
Social media
5. What social media platform do you use the most (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter…)? What are the reasons you use social media?
6. Do you use social to communicate with the local people? Do you think the use of social media is contributing to interact, stay in touch and share experiences with local/host communities?
7. From your point of view, how could digital technology and social media facilitate the first reception and the asylum procedure?

Please ask the participant if she/he has any question.

Lastly, I would like to ask you if you are interested in participating in a 'focus group' integrated by refugees, cultural institutions, academics and media-tech experts?
That's all for us, do you want to add anything else?
Thank you very much for your cooperation.

After interview

- Verify if the interview has been successfully recorded.
- Please write the interview information and add this data to the excel template provided for this purpose located in OneDrive (see Quick guide: upload and save files).

- o Country of origin:
- o Institution:
- o Interviewer name:
- o Interview date (dd-mm-yyyy):
- o Interview start time (hh: mm):
- o The language used in the interview:

- The interviewer should record the following characteristics of each interviewed and add them into the excel template:
  - o Interviewed pseudonym/name:
  - o Interviewed contact/email:
  - o Gender:
  - o Age:
  - o Level of education:
  - o Main activity:
  - o Country/region of origin:
  - o Mother tongue:
  - o Year of arrival in the host country:
  - o Status (asylum seekers, person with refugee status, humanitarian protection or subsidiary protection)
- Please upload the completed consent form to NEBULA (see Quick guide: upload and save files).
  The file name must include de following components, in the following order:
      [YYMMDD]_[Country]_[Name   of   organization]_[Participant group]_[Consent]_[Number]
  Example of filename based on this convention:
      200512_Poland_VDA_NGO_Consent_1

- Please upload the audio file of the interview using NEBULA (see Quick guide: upload and save files).
  The file name must include de following components, in the following order:
      [YYMMDD]_[Country]_[Name   of   organization]_[Participant group]_[Audio]_[Number]
  Example of filename based on this convention:
      200512_Poland_VDA_NGO_Audio_1

- Please transcribe the interview and save a copy of the transcription in NEBULA (see Interviewing tools document; Quick guide: upload and save files).
  The file name must include de following components, in the following order:
      [YYMMDD]_[Country]_[Name   of   organization]_[Participant group]_[Transcription]_[Number]
  Example of filename based on this convention:
      200512_Poland_VDA_NGO_Transcription_1.doc

- Please prepare a summary of interview material in English using Interview summary templates and save a copy of the summary report in NEBULA (see Quick guide: upload and save files)
  The file name must include de following components, in the following order:
      [YYMMDD]_[Country]_[Name   of   organization]_[Participant group]_[Summary]_[Number]
  Example of filename based on this convention:

Interview

This interview guide contains 18 open-ended questions all of which should be asked to each participant.

Note that it is not necessary to ask these questions in the same way or the same order to each participant. You can rephrase questions answered incompletely.

I would like to start by asking some questions about the mission and activities of your organization.

1. What is the mission of your organization? What are the activities of your organization relating to refugees and migrants? What projects have you carried out in this area?
2. What are your specific objectives? What services (reception, information, emergency accommodation, legal and medical attention, supporting social integration, etc.) are currently being provided by your organization and to whom?
3. What has been the impact of your projects on the lives of the refugees?
4. What communication /storytelling needs do you have to address relating to those refugees and migrant projects?
5. In your opinion, what worked well or went wrong in projects that dealt with forced migrants?

I would now like to ask you your opinion on the constraints and expectations of NGOs.

1. What role NGOs should play in the integration or inclusion process?
2. What do you think are the most important issues facing the NGOs working with refugees?
3. In your opinion, what are the key challenges for foster a two-way interaction between the cultural heritage of the refugees and the receiving society?
4. What do you see as the main obstacles to a stronger engagement of civil society in promoting values based on integration, dialogue, and tolerance?
5. From your point of view how the promotion and support of conservation of the cultural heritage of incoming populations can contribute to the integration/inclusion of the refugees?

6. In the 20th century, Europe was a place of forced migration due to wars, genocides or political, religious and/or ethnonational persecutions. The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), the Italian Civil War (1943-1945), the Greek Civil War (1946-1949), the Holocaust, the Balkan wars, etc. all led both to expulsion and inner forced migration. In your opinion, how this memory of past forced displacement and migration in Europe could contribute to the promotion of mutual cultural and life experience understanding between forced displaced populations from past and nowadays conflicts.

I would like to remind you that the main objective of SO-CLOSE is to identify, analyze, and match similarities of personal and collective traumatic experiences through storytelling between former and current refugees in Europe. The project will achieve this aim through the creation and implementation of innovations in digital cultural heritage applications focusing in cultural exchanges between forcibly displaced populations of past and nowadays. I would like to ask you some questions about the implementation and exploitation of digital technology to promote mutual cultural and life-experience understanding.

1. Does your institution use any of the following tools?
   (Web, mobile Apps, serious games, augmented reality, virtual reality tools, videogames, social media, digital books, video production, visitor guides, chatbots, automatic translation)

2. How can technological and digital tools facilitate the access of migrants to social services (education, information, accommodation, legal and medical attention, employment, etc.)? What are the main difficulties in terms of using digital tools in this area?

3. What do you think about the potential of technological and digital tools to enhance the connection between forced migrants and the host society? What tools could be developed in this regard?

4. The use of digital technologies has been increasingly important in the field of cultural heritage. Do you have adopted formal strategies and new practices to enhance the use of new technologies to promote larger access to cultural heritage?

5. What digital tools (web-based projects, virtual museum, videogames, apps, serious games, interactive media, etc.), technologies (virtual reality augmented reality,…), or audiovisual resources (immersive videos, short films,…) do you currently use to do this?

6. What are the factors that prevent you from integrating more technology into your activities?

7. What kind of technological and digital tools do you need to develop your cultural, educational or artistic activities?

8. From your experience what advice would you give to other professionals who would like to promote refugee's integration through culture? What should they be careful about?

Finally, I would like to ask you some questions about yourself.

1. Main activity: (Could I ask you, what is your professional situation/ your occupation?)
2. Institution:
3. Level of education: (Can I ask you, what is the highest level of studies that you have completed?)

4. Do you want to be informed about all the So-Close developments? Please provide your email:

Please ask the participant if she/he has any question.

That's it for my questions. Thank you very much for your cooperation. Do you have any comments?

Interview

This interview guide contains 18 open-ended questions all of which should be asked to each participant.

Note that it is not necessary to ask these questions in the same way or the same order to each participant. You can rephrase questions answered incompletely.

I would like to start by asking some questions about the activities of your organization.

1. What is the main focus of your institution and what is your role?
2. What are the activities of your organization relating to refugees and migrants? What projects have you carried out in this area?
3. What has been the impact of your projects on the lives of the refugees?

4. What communication /storytelling needs do we need to address relating to those refugees and migrant projects?

I would now like to ask you your opinion on the constraints and expectations of the cultural institutions.

1. In your opinion, what are the key challenges for foster a two-way interaction between the cultural heritage of the refugees and the receiving society?
2. What are the main challenges cultural institutions face when focusing on migrants and refugees?
3. How can refugees and local communities be included in developing your activities?
4. What do you see as the main obstacles to a stronger engagement of civil society in promoting values based on integration, dialogue, and tolerance?
5. In your opinion, what worked well or went wrong in projects that dealt with forced migrants? Why? What are the main difficulties in terms of working with refugees?
6. From your point of view how the promotion and support of conservation of the cultural heritage of incoming populations can contribute to the integration/inclusion of the refugees?
7. How would you evaluate the power of the arts in enhancing inclusion and the cultural integration of refugees and migrants?

8. In the 20th century, Europe was a place of forced migration due to wars, genocides or political, religious and/or ethnonational persecutions. The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), the Italian Civil War (1943-1945), the Greek Civil War (1946-1949), the Holocaust, the Balkan wars, etc. all led both to expulsion and inner forced migration. In your opinion, how this memory of past forced displacement and migration in Europe could contribute to the promotion of mutual cultural and life experience understanding between forced displaced populations from past and nowadays conflicts.

I would like to remind you that the main objective of SO-CLOSE is to identify, analyze, and match similarities of personal and collective traumatic experiences through storytelling between former and current refugees in Europe. The project will achieve this aim through the creation and implementation of innovations in digital cultural heritage applications focusing in cultural exchanges between forcibly displaced populations of past and nowadays. I would like to ask you some questions about the implementation and exploitation of digital technology to promote mutual cultural and life-experience understanding.

1. Does your institution use any of the following tools?
   (Web, mobile Apps, serious games, augmented reality, virtual reality tools, videogames, social media, digital books, video production, visitor guides, chatbots, automatic translation)
2. How can technological and digital tools facilitate the access of migrants to social services (education, information, accommodation, legal and medical attention, employment, etc.)? What are the main difficulties in terms of using digital tools in this area?
3. What do you think about the potential of technological and digital tools to enhance the connection between forced migrants and the host society? What tools could be developed in this regard?

4. The use of digital technologies has been increasingly important in the field of cultural heritage. Do you have adopted formal strategies and new practices to enhance the use of new technologies to promote larger access to cultural heritage?
9. What digital tools (web-based projects, virtual museum, videogames, apps, serious games, interactive media, etc.), technologies (virtual reality augmented reality,…), or audiovisual resources (immersive videos, short films,…) do you currently use to do this?
5. What are the factors that prevent you from integrating more technology into your activities?
6. What kind of technological and digital tools do you need to develop your cultural, educational or artistic activities?
7. Based on your experience, what advice would you give to other professionals wishing to become more involved with the subject of refugees and to create cultural initiatives in this area?

Finally, I would like to ask you some questions about yourself.
1. Main activity: (Could I ask you, what is your professional situation/ your occupation?)
2. Institution:
3. Level of education: (Can I ask you, what is the highest level of studies that you have completed?)
4. Do you want to be informed about all the So-Close developments? Please provide your email:

Please ask the participant if she/he has any question.

That's it for my questions. Thank you very much for your cooperation. Do you have any comments?

Interview

This interview guide contains 17 open-ended questions all of which should be asked to each participant.

Note that it is not necessary to ask these questions in the same way or the same order to each participant. You can rephrase questions answered incompletely.

I would like to start by asking some questions about the social integration of refugees and asylum seekers in…[Italy, Greece, Poland, Spain].

1. From your point of view, what are the main factors in the integration of the incoming populations?
2. What strategies would be necessary to secure a two-way interaction between the cultural heritage of the refugees and the receiving society? (Magda-GFR).
3. What role do you think cultural organizations and NGOs should play in improving social integration and mutual recognition?

4. From your point of view how the promotion and support of conservation of the cultural heritage of incoming populations can contribute in the integration of the refugees?
5. What do you think about the potential of social media in making known the experiences of refugees and in helping them in their integration processes?

I would now like to ask you your opinion on the research tools and resources in the area of migration and asylum.

1. Going by your experience and knowledge, to what extent do you think that migrations studies and refugees' studies could be merged or combined into a single concept?
   - ▢ Anyway, *if you don't identify yourself with any of those approaches*, which ones could be useful in order to tackle realities like migrations or expulsions?

2. What are the gaps in migration and refugee studies research?
    ▢ Generally speaking, what are the gaps in the academia when dealing with these fields and explaining it to other colleagues, students and society?
3. What are the gaps in terms of the information available? How the SO CLOSE could contribute to fill these?
4. How may scientific research contribute to improving the social integration of refugees and asylum seekers?
5. Do you think that oral history is a valid and relevant form of research for studying forced migration and refugee experience in Europe?
6. In your opinion, how intangible cultural heritage (storytelling, songs, music, recipes, oral traditions, arts, rituals, festive events, etc.) can be used by researchers to investigate forced migration?
7. Do you consider serious games, arts and other innovative forms as proper tools for research on cultural heritage, social identities or political contexts (in the past and the present)? Do you have any former expertise on this?
8. Would you be interested in using a repository of life stories and experiences of forced-migration-refugees for future research?
9. In the 20th century, Europe was a place of forced migration due to wars, genocides or political, religious and/or ethnonational persecutions. The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), the Italian Civil War (1943-1945), the Greek Civil War (1946-1949), the Second World War and its aftermath (1939-1953), the Nazi genocidal and eliminationist policies including the Holocaust (1939-1945), the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War (1946-1989), the Balkan wars (1991-1999), etc. all led both to expulsion and inner forced migration. In your opinion, how this memory of past forced displacement and migration in Europe could contribute to the promotion of mutual cultural and life experience understanding between forced displaced populations from past and nowadays conflicts.

I would like to remind you that the main objective of SO-CLOSE is to identify, analyze, and match similarities of personal and collective traumatic experiences through storytelling between former and current refugees in Europe. The project will achieve this aim through the creation and implementation of innovations in digital cultural heritage applications focusing in cultural exchanges between forcibly displaced populations of past and nowadays. I would like to ask you few questions about the implementation and exploitation of digital technology to promote mutual cultural and life-experience understanding.

1. What role can the digital technologies play in promoting mutual cultural understanding between forced displaced populations from past and nowadays conflicts?
2. How can technological tools (apps, virtual reality, augmented reality, virtual museum, immersive videos, short films, videogames, serious games, interactive media, interactive cookbooks, digital books, chatbots, automatic translation, etc.) facilitate the access of migrants to social services (education, information, accommodation, legal and medical attention, employment, etc.) and to cultural heritage? What are the main difficulties in terms of using digital tools in this area?
3. What do you think about the potential of technological tools to enhance the connection between forced migrants and the host society? What tools could be developed in this regard?

Finally, I would like to ask you some questions about yourself.

1. What projects have you carried out in this area or related in some way to it? Can you tell us about your latest works or projects in progress that have some relationship with the topics of forced migrations and expulsions?
2. Based on your experience, what advice would you give to other researchers wishing to investigate the subject of forced migration?
3. Are you interested in participating in a 'focus group' integrated by refugees, cultural institutions, academics and media-tech experts?
4. Level of education: (Can I ask you, what is the highest level of studies that you have completed?)
5. Main activity: (Could I ask you, what is your professional situation/ your occupation?)
6. Institution: (Which type of organization do you currently work for?)
7. Do you want to be informed about all the So-Close developments? Please provide your email:

Please ask the participant if she/he has any question.

That's it for my questions. Thank you very much for your cooperation. Do you have any comments?

Interview

This interview guide contains 17 open-ended questions all of which should be asked to each participant.

Note that it is not necessary to ask these questions in the same way or the same order to each participant. You can rephrase questions answered incompletely.

I would like to start by asking some questions about the services and benefits are available to asylum seekers and refugees.

1. What services (reception, information, emergency accommodation, legal and medical attention, supporting social integration, etc.) are currently being provided by your institution to asylum seekers and refugees?
2. Does the government provide equal access to welfare benefits (Social security, public education, health care, employment) and rights to the refugees?
3. Does the government take any measures to improve social cohesion and promote mutual understanding between refugees and their local communities?

I would now like to ask you your opinion on the integration and inclusion of the incoming population.

1. In your opinion, the majority of [Italian, Greek, Polish, Spanish] population think your country should accept fewer or more refugees? How can this be explained?
2. What are the main challenges you are facing in the integration/inclusion of the incoming populations?
3. Which is the government (appropriate level) strategy to promote inclusion or integration of refugees? What are the strengths and weaknesses?
4. What policy measures has the government adopted to encourage or facilitate the inclusion of refugees? What projects have you carried out in this area?

We have been talking about the current situation and now I would like to ask you your opinion on the perspectives for asylums and migration policies.

1. What should be the priority in the… [Italian, Greek, Spanish, Polish] asylum and migration policies?
2. What role the cultural institutions and NGOs should play in the integration/inclusion process?

3. What strategies would be necessary to secure a two-way interaction between the cultural heritage of the refugees and the receiving society?
4. From your point of view how the promotion and support of conservation of the cultural heritage of incoming populations can contribute to the integration of the refugees?
5. In the 20th century, Europe was a place of forced migration due to wars, genocides or political, religious and/or ethnonational persecutions. The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), the Italian Civil War (1943-1945), the Greek Civil War (1946-1949), the Holocaust, the Balkan wars, etc. all led both to expulsion and inner forced migration. In your opinion, how this memory of past forced displacement and migration in Europe could contribute to the promotion of mutual cultural and life experience understanding between forced displaced populations from past and nowadays conflicts.

I would like to remind you that the main objective of SO-CLOSE is to identify, analyze, and match similarities of personal and collective traumatic experiences through storytelling between former and current refugees in Europe. The project will achieve this aim through the creation and implementation of innovations in digital cultural heritage applications focusing in cultural exchanges between forcibly displaced populations of past and nowadays. I would like to ask you some questions about the implementation and exploitation of digital technology to promote mutual cultural and life-experience understanding.

1. How can technological tools facilitate the access of migrants to social services (education, information, accommodation, legal and medical attention, employment, etc.)? What are the main difficulties in terms of using digital tools in this area?
2. What do you think about the potential of technological tools to enhance the connection between forced migrants and the host society? What tools could be developed in this regard?
3. The use of digital technologies has been increasingly important in the field of cultural heritage. Do you have adopted formal strategies and new practices to enhance the use of new technologies to promote larger access to cultural heritage?
4. What technological tools (apps, virtual reality, augmented reality, virtual museum, immersive videos, short films, videogames, serious games, interactive media, interactive cookbooks, digital books, chatbots, automatic translation, etc.) do you use to do this?
5. What are the factors that prevent you from integrating more technology into your activities?
6. Based on your experience, what advice would you give to other professionals wishing to become more involved with the subject of refugees?

Finally, I would like to ask you some questions about yourself.
1. Main activity: (Could I ask you, what is your professional situation/ your occupation?)
2. Institution: (Which type of organization do you currently work for?)
3. Level of education: (Can I ask you, what is the highest level of studies that you have completed?)
4. Do you want to be informed about all the So-Close developments? Please provide your email:

Please ask the participant if she/he has any question.

That's it for my questions. Thank you very much for your cooperation. Do you have any comments?

Interview summary template- Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Interview information

Interview number:	
Country:	
Institution:	
Interviewer name:	
Interview date (dd-mm-yyyy):	
Interview start time (hh: mm):	
The language used in the interview:	
Transcriber/summarizer name:	
Date of the preparation of this summary	

The process to be followed

The purpose of the interview summary is to provide a summary of interview material in English of no more than **seven pages** (font: Calibri; size: 11).

The goal of the template is to reduce and then shape the material into a form in which it can be shared and analyzed. It is to be noted that summarizing the interview material is one of the most important steps in the project because it constitutes the basis of the following analysis.

The role of the transcriber/summarizer is to transcribe and summarize the data collected based on the interviews. The process of summarizing and transcription consists of three steps:

Step one: participant profile
➢ Present the participant profile information gathered through the interview.

Step two: summarizing the interview
These reflect the thematic organization of the interview schedule that was used to collect data. The general steps could be as follow:
➢ Read the transcripts to get a broad picture of the opinions expressed in the interview.
➢ Mark passages of interest.
➢ When reading is finished, group together all references below to each major theme.

- ➢ Summarize the main points covered by the interview by using direct quotations.
- ➢ In quotations, it is important to be faithful to the words of the participants.
- ➢ Sometimes, you may wish to add your own words to make transitions between passages or you may want to clarify a passage. In these cases, please use brackets to insert your words.
- ➢ Review the full transcript and the summary that you have once again to ensure that all relevant points are covered.
- ➢ Finally, it should be noted that given the qualitative nature of this research, it is quite possible that you don't obtain all the necessary information to fill out all subthemes. In such cases, please leave these fields empty.

Step three: notes
- ➢ Add any additional notes with a length that does not exceed ten lines.

Please upload the completed interview summary template to Nebula (see Quick guide: upload and save files)**.**

The file name must include de following components, in the following order:

[YYMMDD]_[Country]_[Name of organization]_[Participant group]_[Summary]_[Number]

Example of filename based on this convention:

200512_Poland_VDA_Refugee_Summary_1.doc

Participant profile

Interviewed pseudonym/name	
Interviewed contact/email:	
Gender:	
Age:	
Level of education:	
Main activity:	
Country/region of origin:	
Mother tongue:	
Other languages	
Year of arrival in the host country:	
Relationship status (single, dating, cohabiting, married, divorced, widowed, separated, etc.)	
Professional situation	
Status (asylum seekers, person with refugee status, humanitarian protection or subsidiary protection):	

Themes

Theme 1: Situations in the country/area of origin & migratory journey

Subthemes	Direct quotations
Leaving the country/area of origin: When? Why?	
Thinking about **home country**: description/most important	

thing/return/minority group	
Journey: countries/support received/gender impact	
Arrival: when?/difficulties/treatment by authorities/support received	
First reception: where?/how long/experience	
Deal with personal problems	

Theme 2.1: Situation in the host country/area- Integration processes

Subthemes	Direct quotations
Duration of stay	
Relationship with the people from home country	
Relationship with people from local/host communities	
Most important challenges	
Most important sources of support	
Specific challenges faced by refugee women	

Theme 2.2: Situation in the host country/area- Access to cultural heritage

Subthemes	Direct quotations
Cultural activities	
Share culture, history, experience, message	
Learn about host country	
Historical episodes useful for European societies	

Theme 2.3: Situation in the host country/area- Personal narratives

Subthemes	Direct quotations
Opinion on the **current situation**	
Cultural acceptance in the host country	
Differences and	

similarities between home and host countries	

Theme 3: Use of digital technology and social media

Subthemes	Direct quotations
Internet usage	
Ownership of and access to ICTs	
APPs: use/difficulties	
Social media	

Interview summary template-Academics

Interview information

Interview number:	
Country:	
Institution:	
Interviewer name:	
Interview date (dd-mm-yyyy):	
Interview start time (hh: mm):	
The language used in the interview:	
Transcriber/summarizer name:	
Date of the preparation of this summary	

Themes

Theme 1: Integration and inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers

Subthemes	Direct quotations
Main factors in integration/inclusion	
Strategies necessary to secure a two-way interaction	
Role of cultural organizations and NGOs	
Cultural heritage and integration of the refugees	
Potential of social networks	

Theme 2: research tools and resources in the area of migration and asylum

Subthemes	Direct quotations
Migrations studies	

and refugees' studies	
Gaps in migration and refugee studies research	
How the SO CLOSE could contribute	
Contribution of scientific research to social integration	
Oral history as a relevant form of research	
Intangible cultural heritage used by researchers	
Serious games, arts, etc. as proper tools for research	
Using a repository of life stories	
Memory of past forced displacement and migration in Europe	

Theme 3: implementation and exploitation of digital technology to promote mutual cultural and life-experience understanding

Subthemes	Direct quotations
Role can the digital technologies play in promoting mutual cultural understanding	
Main difficulties in terms of using digital	
Potential of technological tools	

Theme 4: Projects carried out or in progress in this area

Subthemes	Direct quotations
Projects carried out or in progress in this area	
Advice to other researchers	
Participating in a 'focus	

group'	
Comments	

Themes

Theme 1: The activities of the organization

Subthemes	Direct quotations
Activities of the organization	
Services provided	
Impact of projects on the lives of the refugees	
Communication /storytelling needs	
What worked well or went wrong in projects	

Theme 2: Expectations, main challenges and difficulties

Subthemes	Direct quotations
The role of the NGOs in the integration	
Important issues facing the NGOs	
Key challenges for foster a two-way interaction	
Obstacles to a stronger engagement of civil society	
Cultural heritage and integration of the refugees	
Memory of past forced displacement and migration in	

Europe	

Theme 3: Technological tools used, and digital tools could be developed

Subthemes	Direct quotations
Use of the tools	
Main difficulties in terms of using digital tools	
Potential of technological tools to enhance the connection	
New practices to enhance the use of new technologies	
Factors that prevent from integrating more technology	
Technological needs	
Advice to other professionals	

Interview information

Interview number:	
Country:	
Institution:	
Interviewer name:	
Interview date (dd-mm-yyyy):	
Interview start time (hh: mm):	
The language used in the interview:	
Transcriber/summarizer name:	
Date of the preparation of this summary	

Themes

Theme 1: The activities of the Institution relating to refugees and migrants

Subthemes	Direct quotations
Focus of the institution	
Activities of relating to refugees and migrants	
Impact on the lives of the refugees	
Communication /storytelling needs	

Theme 2: Expectations, main challenges and difficulties

Subthemes	Direct quotations
Key challenges for foster a two-way interaction	
Main challenges cultural institutions face	
Inclusion of refugees and local communities	
Obstacles to a stronger	

engagement of civil society	
What worked well or went wrong in projects	
Cultural heritage and integration of the refugees	
Power of the arts in enhancing inclusion	
Memory of past forced displacement and migration in Europe	

Theme 3: Technological tools used, and digital tools could be developed

Subthemes	Direct quotations
Use of the tools	
Main difficulties in terms of using digital tools	
Potential of technological tools to enhance the connection	
New practices to enhance the use of new technologies	
Factors that prevent from integrating more technology	
Technological needs	
Advice to other professionals	

Themes

Theme 1: services and benefits are available to asylum seekers and refugees

Subthemes	Direct quotations
Services provided	
Equal access to welfare benefits	
Measures to promote mutual understanding	

Theme 2: integration and inclusion

Subthemes	Direct quotations
Opinion of the population	
Main challenges you are facing in the integration	
Government strategy to promote inclusion	
Adopted policy measures	

Theme 3: perspectives for asylums and migration policies

Subthemes	Direct quotations
What should be the priority	
Role of the cultural institutions and NGOs	
Strategies to secure a two-way interaction	
Cultural heritage and integration of the refugees	
Memory of past forced displacement and migration in	

Europe	

Theme 4: implementation and exploitation of digital technology to promote mutual cultural and life-experience understanding

Subthemes	Direct quotations
Main difficulties in terms of using digital tools	
Potential of technological tools to enhance the connection	
New practices to enhance the use of new technologies	
Use of the tools	
Factors that prevent from integrating more technology	
Advice to other professionals	

Photo, video and sound recording release and consent form for so close

UNIVERSITAT AUTÒNOMA DE BARCELONA PHOTO, VIDEO AND SOUND RECORDING RELEASE AND CONSENT FORM FOR SO CLOSE

Project	SO CLOSE (Enhancing Social Cohesion through Sharing the Cultural Heritage of Forced Migrations)
Main Researcher	Javier Rodrigo Sánchez – Dept. of History, Autonomous University of Barcelona
Ethical Adviser	Ainhoa Flecha - Dept. of Sociology, Autonomous University of Barcelona
Description	SO CLOSE is a research funded by the European Commission H2020 Programme that has the aim to collect the experiences of former and current refugees in Europe and to design interactive tools for the preservation of cultural heritage.

By signing this Photo, Video and Sound Recording Release and Consent Form, I am irrevocably giving permission to the Regents of the UAB officers, agents, employees, successors, licensees, and assigns to take and use photographs, video or sound recordings of me for the following project: SO CLOSE. This is completely voluntary and up to me.

My consent to the use of the photographs, video and sound recordings and my image, likeness, appearance, and voice is during undetermined time, but I acknowledge that the information will be managed by and saved in encrypted data coordinated by UAB. I will not receive compensation for the use of my image, likeness, appearance, and voice now nor in the future. The University may use the photographs, video and sound recordings containing my image, likeness, appearance and voice in any manner or media, including web pages, interactive platforms, virtual and physical museums. The photographs, video and sound recordings may be used in whole or in part, alone or with other recordings. The photographs, video and sound recordings may be used for any educational, institutional, scientific or informational purposes whatsoever, but not for commercial uses. The University has the right and may allow other members of SO-CLOSE Consortium to copy, edit, alter, retouch, revise and otherwise change the photographs, video and sound recordings at the University's discretion. All rights, title, and interest in the photographs, video and sound recordings belong solely to the Regents of the UAB.

I further give permission to the University to use my name, biography, and any other personal data, events, or other material in or in connection with any such uses of the photographs, video and sound recordings.

I understand and agree to the conditions outlined in this photograph, video and sound recording release and consent form. I irrevocably give consent to the Regents of the UAB and the University's officers, agents, employees, successors, licensees, and assigns forever to make use of my image, likeness, appearance, and voice in photographs, video and sound recordings as described above. I acknowledge that I am fully aware of the contents of this release and am under no disability, duress, or undue influence at the time of my signing of this instrument.

This research respects the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

- ☐ I agree with the audio/video recording and photographic production for research and diffusion purposes.
- ☐ I agree with the use of literal quotes of my interventions with no mention to my name.
- ☐ I agree with the use of the audio and video recordings for purposes of research dissemination as long as mechanisms to guarantee my privacy and security are adopted.

Main researcher: Javier Rodrigo (Javier.rodrigo@uab.es)

Ethical adviser: Ainhoa Flecha (Ainhoa.flecha@uab.cat)

_____

Name of the participant   Date   Signature

_____

Name of the researcher   Date   Signature

Consent form (interview)

CONSENT FORM (Interview)

Project	**SO CLOSE (Enhancing Social Cohesion through Sharing the Cultural Heritage of Forced Migrations)**
Main Researcher	Javier Rodrigo Sánchez – Dept. of History, Autonomous University of Barcelona
Ethical Adviser	Ainhoa Flecha - Dept. of Sociology, Autonomous University of Barcelona
Description	**SO CLOSE** is a research funded by the European Commission H2020 Programme that has the aim to collect the experiences of former and current refugees in Europe and to design interactive tools for the preservation of cultural heritage.

Dear Mrs, Mr,

Please read carefully the information and consent forms before agreeing to participate.

SO CLOSE: Enhancing Social Cohesion through Sharing the Cultural Heritage of Forced Migrations (Financed by H2020 programme, European Commission).

SO CLOSE is a European project led by the Autonomous University of Barcelona (Spain) that has the aim to collect the experiences of former and current refugees in Europe and to design interactive tools for the preservation of cultural heritage.

Your participation in the interview is absolutely voluntary. You can discontinue your involvement in the study at any time without prior justification. This shall have no repercussions or negative consequences of any sort.

You have the right to revoke access to all the data you have provided at any point of the research. To do so, you only have to identify yourself and communicate with Ainhoa Flecha or Javier Rodrigo.

The participation in the interviews does not involve any kind of economic compensation.

The interview will have an approximate duration of 90 minutes.

If you agree to participate your identity will be kept confidential and only members of the research team will have access to the project data. The publication and the dissemination of the results will use pseudonyms and hide personal data to guarantee anonymity.

This informed consent and the material produced will be kept in a secure and encrypted location managed by the Autonomous University of Barcelona and will be destroyed

5 years after the end of the research. All databases will be anonym zed and made available to other interested researchers.

This research respects the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- I agree with the audio/video recording of the focus group for research purposes.
- I agree with the use of literal quotes of my interventions with no mention to my name.
- I agree with the use of the audio and video recordings for purposes of research dissemination as long as mechanisms to guarantee my privacy and security are adopted.

Main researcher: Javier Rodrigo (Javier.rodrigo@uab.es)
Ethical adviser: Ainhoa Flecha (Ainhoa.flecha@uab.cat)

You can contact Ainhoa Flecha and ask for more information about the project and the project results.

The researcher administering the test is (NAME and SURNAME).

If you are willing to participate, please confirm the following statements by signing at the end of this document.

- I have read and understood the information given for this research or have had the information read to me,
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research.
- I consent to take part in the research sessions.

_____

Name of the participantDateSignature

_____

Name of the researcherDateSignature

CONSENT FORM (Focus group)

Project	SO CLOSE (Enhancing Social Cohesion through Sharing the Cultural Heritage of Forced Migrations)
Main Researcher	Javier Rodrigo Sánchez – Dept. of History, Autonomous University of Barcelona
Ethical Adviser	Ainhoa Flecha - Dept. of Sociology, Autonomous University of Barcelona
Description	SO CLOSE is a research funded by the European Commission H2020 Programme that has the aim to collect the experiences of former and current refugees in Europe and to design interactive tools for the preservation of cultural heritage.

Dear Mrs, Mr,

Please read carefully the information and consent forms before agreeing to participate.

SO CLOSE: Enhancing Social Cohesion through Sharing the Cultural Heritage of Forced Migrations (Financed by H2020 programme, European Commission).

SO CLOSE is a European project led by the Autonomous University of Barcelona (Spain) that has the aim to collect the experiences of former and current refugees in Europe and to design interactive tools for the preservation of cultural heritage.

Your participation in the focus group is absolutely voluntary. You can discontinue your involvement in the study at any time without prior justification. This shall have no repercussions or negative consequences of any sort.

You have the right to revoke access to all the data you have provided at any point of the research. To do so, you only have to identify yourself and communicate with Ainhoa Flecha or Javier Rodrigo.

The participation in the focus groups does not involve any kind of economic compensation.

The focus group will have an approximate duration of 90-120 minutes.

If you agree to participate your identity will be kept confidential and only members of the research team will have access to the project data. The publication and the dissemination of the results will use pseudonyms and hide personal data to guarantee anonymity.

This informed consent and the material produced will be kept in a secure and encrypted location managed by the Autonomous University of Barcelona and will be destroyed 5 years

after the end of the research. All databases will be anonym zed and made available to other interested researchers.

This research respects the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

- I agree with the audio/video recording of the focus group for research purposes.
- I agree with the use of literal quotes of my interventions with no mention to my name.
- I agree with the use of the audio and video recordings for purposes of research dissemination as long as mechanisms to guarantee my privacy and security are adopted.

Main researcher: Javier Rodrigo (Javier.rodrigo@uab.es)
Ethical adviser: Ainhoa Flecha (Ainhoa.flecha@uab.cat)

You can contact Ainhoa Flecha and ask for more information about the project and the project results.

The researcher administering the test is (NAME and SURNAME).

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I have read and understood the information given for this research or have had the information read to me.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research.

I consent to take part in the research sessions.

_____

Name of the participantDateSignature

_____

Name of the researcherDateSignature

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