



# Evaluation note

## Refugee's Inclusion Mouves Europe



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In a European context where the rejection of others is on the rise, where xenophobia is becoming more and more prevalent in political programmes and after each electoral campaign in the voting, where national public policies are becoming increasingly hardened towards migrants, leaving little priority to the central theme of reception, despite the ongoing conflicts that are increasing the number of refugees on the roads to exile, it could have seemed like a challenge to devote a European project to the reception of new arrivals.

However, this is what this heterogeneous group, made up of researchers, teachers and adult educators from various European universities (France, Sweden), as well as leaders of cooperatives and associations active in the fields of immigration and intercultural dialogue (France, Italy, Greece, Malta), has managed to do with great intelligence and operational insight in the framework of the Erasmus project "Refugees Inclusion Moves Europe" (RIME). The presentation of the project and of a significant part of the deliverables in all the languages of the group (English, French, Greek, Italian, Swedish) is an extremely positive point to be underlined from the outset, as it facilitates the international and intercultural apprehension of the approach and its resources.

Understanding how to overcome prejudice, how to welcome refugees in dignified conditions is of course a major issue; but understanding how to overcome these prejudices over time, how to welcome these refugees over time, how to enable them to settle and stabilise a situation in a sustainable manner, and to do this, adopting this major factor of duration in the approach, notably through the validation and development of skills enabling professional integration, is without doubt the major success presented by the deliverables of this project. Indeed, far from a moral or even moralising approach, it is indeed an immediately practical approach aimed at inclusion so that the foreigner becomes a cohabitant, a colleague, or even, in the long run, a fellow citizen

## THE COMPLEXITIES OF SUSTAINABLE HOSPITALITY UPDATED

1. Following the success of the *Refugee Guide* set up by "Welcome Bordeaux", it might seem necessary at first sight, for those who want to reflect on the conditions of a quality reception over time, as well as on the possibility of distributing these guides more widely, that a real inventory of the situation in the 5 countries concerned by the project (France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Sweden) be presented. The inventory is a critical analysis tool that is a prerequisite for the global work proposed in the framework of the project, as it provides a synoptic and transversal view of the refugee problem in the five countries concerned, and of the actual conditions of reception under the aegis of national law. The situations are diverse, and the countries themselves are diverse, but the detailed presentation of the national particularities allows for a finesse in the beginning of the reflection which is extremely beneficial for the future.

The analysis of each of the countries is very clear and precise, while being synthetic and dense. It shows not only the blind spots or bottlenecks in each country, but also the areas of focus and future development for better inclusion through housing and employment. The academic support for this overview is felt while not overwhelming the entry into the project with a mass of unassimilable elements. On the contrary, it provides a solid and intelligible foundation for the other, more practical and operational, deliverables of the project, while at the same time fully justifying these foundations.

2. Prior to any possible entry and stabilisation, it is important in all cases to obtain the relevant information. This is what is contained in the *Refugee Guide*, which the project team proposed should be used as a source of inspiration for the partner countries. The aim of this collective work on the existing document in France was to learn from an experience that had been relatively successful, to see if this experience could be transmitted, translated and/or shared more widely and to test the partners' feedback on this presentation of the existing document and its possible duplication, adapting of course to the national context on the basis of the fundamental elements recalled in the previously evaluated document, and reflecting for this purpose on the most appropriate methodology.

The interest lies mainly in the critical exchange that is set up on the opportunity to reproduce a successful experience, and on the enhancement of the role of comics as a universal explanatory medium. The importance given to the migrants (old and new) themselves in the collective work carried out to produce the integration guide should also be stressed. Finding the most effective

way of sharing essential information, and ensuring that the information transmitted is indeed what is expected, is undoubtedly the best way of producing a tool that is immediately operational, concretely disseminable and undoubtedly useful for all new arrivals.

Nevertheless, the overall presentation of the resulting report may seem a little surprising, and sometimes lacks clarity and perhaps links to make the overall structure more fluid. The document unfolds in a sequence of elements that all seem equally important, but with a feeling of sometimes somewhat unfinished implementation. This is undoubtedly the main interest of this document: to be part of a work in progress, and undoubtedly in progress because the adaptations of the guide have only just begun, by giving the most elaborate toolbox to make a quasi turnkey guide. The interviews with migrants are of undeniable interest, but are not really exploited, for example. In short, there is perhaps a feeling of unfinished business or work in progress in this deliverable, which is undoubtedly due to the very exercise that the partners were obliged to undertake, and which also bears witness to the vitality of the reception process underway. The formal surprise is therefore at the same time a guarantee of the quality of the reflection carried out and the collective work put in place.

But the real satisfaction here is in the experimentation of designing a guide for Malta for asylum seekers. The information is simple and clearly presented. And the possibility of looking at the short, medium and long term is confirmed as the pages go by. After the priority arrival procedures, the issues of schooling for children and all the worries that this type of subject can generate in newly arrived families are quickly addressed. Questions relating to housing and employment come immediately afterwards, as these two methods of economic and social integration are crucial to promoting sustainable inclusion. Information on health, public transport and culture, as well as associations and NGOs specialising in the reception and support of migrants, are not forgotten, making this guide, which is singularly adapted to the concrete conditions of inclusion in Malta, a perfectly suitable tool a priori.

## **THE PARTICIPATORY METHOD: BUILDING WITH THE MIGRANTS THEMSELVES**

1. The production of this guide for Malta was based on a method similar to that used for France. One particularly decisive element emerges from the methodology used and which will be used for the other materials: the immediate inclusion of representatives of the migrants themselves in the project team responsible for producing the guide. This participatory choice seems to us

particularly welcome. Indeed, the collective work intended to address migrants could hardly be done without including the voice of the first concerned.

But it is one thing to state it, and another to put it into practice. And it is true that in this area, there is often a difficult step to take from the statement to the practice. This is all the more true when the subject is complex and often the subject of uneasy debate in society. In this case, the idea is not simply to participate as an actor in one's own existence, but to take the opinion of those concerned into account from the outset of the guide project, i.e. for its design, reflection on its content and implementation. From then on, both the content and the form of the tool were entirely examined through the eyes of the migrants, which gave the document a much less overhanging dimension than similar tools usually proposed, and much more *in medias res*, i.e. at the very heart of the issues and the realities dealt with.

2. One of the means proposed to encourage this participatory inclusion is to conduct interviews with refugees. By getting as close as possible to the experiences of those who have been received, by drawing on their experience to analyse how things went and possibly see how they could be amended, by freeing up the word on a very important stage in the lives of those forced into exile, namely the arrival in a new country, and by the same token the discovery of new habits and a new culture, these interviews have proven to be a rich and stimulating way of advancing the collective project. Moreover, the cross-referencing of stories and the controlled compilation of individual narratives makes it possible to put together a collection of extremely rich data for all the host countries and member structures of the project, which is likely to enrich the joint work. In particular, this is how the life stories feed into the comic strips, to which we will return later.

There is perhaps only one limitation at this level: the fact of having fixed identical questions for each interviewee undoubtedly restricts the possibility of development. Indeed, by fixing the interviews (which is more comfortable for the interviewer), i.e. by conducting them through a directive approach to questioning, we necessarily limit the ability of the interviewees to fully free their speech, as the framework is likely to appear restrictive. The so-called comprehensive interview method, which favours answers to questions, the interviewee to the interviewer, and the possibility of allowing free speech to emerge which takes precedence over the initial questioning, would probably have been welcome here in order to include the refugees even more adequately by projecting themselves onto their situation through an interview approach which is itself more emancipating.

## THE UNIVERSAL TOOL FOR CONVEYING ESSENTIAL INFORMATION: COMICS

1. The strong attention of the actors of this project to adapt to the people to be welcomed, always with the concern to be understood as well as possible, by proposing elements of welcome and integration as close as possible to the expectations and as comprehensible as possible, is confirmed by the use of the comic strip. An almost universal art of expression, it allows us to position ourselves in the best possible way to welcome with dignity and respect the complex life experiences that such a project confronts us with. Each comic book is adapted to the host country and to the experiences lived in the country. The aim is to include the refugee in one of the partner countries. The fact that each comic book is based on the refugees' own experiences is particularly important and convincing in confirming the success of the project in its ability to adapt to the real-life situation, both individually and collectively. Nothing is forgotten in the drawings, including references to the tragic moments of exile, or to the complexities of reception, with the challenge of stabilisation in mind. Creative unity is ensured by the use of the same pen stroke for all the albums, that of the Franco-Cameroonian comic book writer, Christophe Edimo. The choice of this artist, co-founder and president of the association L'Afrique dessinée, is particularly relevant because of his long-standing humanist commitment as an artist and creator to social, civic and intercultural issues and his awareness of the educational support dimension of comics.

2. Beyond the quality of this medium in terms of creative content and messages, what should be particularly emphasised is the extent to which this production fulfils what comics are all about, namely a popular art form, which addresses the greatest number of people, and is capable of proposing messages with a universal dimension, which can probably be understood through images, even beyond the language barrier. Of course, the role of interviews is essential here, upstream of the artistic work, in order to grasp in the most precise detail these stories of a life shaken and worried about a future that is only written by the yardstick of the constraint of having to change living conditions and the environment in which they exist. The approach is both hyper-realistic at times, and at the same time gentle enough on the whole not to offend the reader by going into the raw detail of a trying reality. Nor is it a question of using this medium to relive the traumatic experience; it is a question of evoking it in the background in order to focus on the positive, namely the discovery of the other, the gradual inclusion in a new environment, with rules unknown until then, a new culture or cultures; in short, interculturality



in its unifying completeness plays the role of a band-aid on reality in order to better think about how to welcome the other through all the mechanisms that allow one to be socially integrated when one has lost everything, or almost everything. Sometimes the somewhat idyllic portrait of the integration situation that the comic strip renders could give the impression of distorting a reality that can remain much more complex in the medium and long term. But this is where the primary objective of the medium should not be misunderstood: to help train peer helpers through simple and clear messages that accompany a dynamic of voluntary and more than welcome amendment of reception conditions. In this respect, the gamble is perfectly successful.

## FROM MIGRANTS TO CARERS: THE DYNAMICS OF INCLUSION

1. As the issues of inclusion are central to this project, the actors had the excellent idea of pushing them to the limit, by reflecting on the inclusion of newcomers by peers, and on the way to train these peer helpers. This is probably the most innovative proposal of this project, along with the comic book support, as it goes straight to the heart of the successful integration process, by offering effective and quality educational tools for adult training, with a special focus on integration through employment in the catering industry.

This was not an obvious approach. Indeed, the helper is often confused with the embodiment of otherness, since hosting is so much like a humanitarian work that requires the hosts to be already there, settled, living and perfectly acclimatised to the culture and the local context. But this is precisely where innovation in adult education is of great operational value. Indeed, the challenge is first of all to remember that in the category of "already there", there may be former refugees themselves, now settled, who are willing to help those who arrive, and who have the double advantage of having already experienced this often eminently tragic existential situation from the inside, and of possibly sharing the culture of the newcomers. We know how important the intercultural dimension of reception is. However, it is also conceivable that it would be easier for former refugees to take charge of the reception process, in particular to facilitate the first contacts and to accompany the arrival in the host country with as little apprehension, misunderstandings and difficulties as possible. The success of the integration itself depends on it.

Consequently, the strong proposal made by the team behind this project, supported by the COS Alexandre Glasberg Foundation, is to develop skills linked to peer support, by training former refugees who wish to do so, with the catering trade being given priority here as an example in terms of inclusion through employment. The collective work carried out to this end is not without difficulties. And the strength of the restitution proposed in the experience report is precisely that it does not hide them, but on the contrary uses them and relies on them to advance collective reflection and practice.

2. Two tools are proposed to promote and make concrete the challenges of peer support, and to extend the adult training by a more global opening on the Sustainable Development Goals implied by the reception of asylum seekers, and more globally the link between migration crisis and ecological crisis.

The first tool is a mentoring experience guide that provides a safe and caring way of acquiring the elements necessary to engage in peer support. The guide and accompanying videos are aimed at trainers and refugees to help them understand the essential skills they need to acquire in order to help future arrivals. The overarching context for this is in the origins of peer support itself. It is important to recall and explain, as it is very well done, that this process initially comes from a medical environment and a frame of reference where suffering is primary and aims to be overcome. This makes it possible not to omit the tragic context in which exile is experienced, which even when it is voluntary constitutes a wrenching away of what was around us, often from birth, always already there. The similarity of life experiences is the founding element of the *peer* community, and therefore conditions the possibility of relevant help. The healing process and the integration process intersect here to give a goal of recovery/stabilisation, and thus offer a possibility of valuing the life course with a view to promoting integration here through work. The testimonies are concrete, and the videos are very instructive on the process. The only regret is that the abundance of material sometimes makes it difficult to understand the details of how to implement such training. However, they have the merit of testifying to the ongoing and extremely fruitful work of peer support training in the field of welcoming new arrivals. The implementation of solutions to stabilise the pathways, in the context of individual follow-up, is an objective that is more easily achieved in this context, allowing for the most detailed understanding of situations and respect for the identities of each person. The link with concrete examples of migrants who have become carers helps to illustrate the dossier and is particularly welcome in order to understand in the greatest detail the impact of these new practices and the points to be monitored. The bibliographies provided at the end of the analysis of this training module are particularly noteworthy in terms of the quality of the dossier, as they allow us to go further in our thinking.

The second tool is a mapping of inclusions against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Based on the 7 fully identified SDGs in the 2030 Agenda, the UN's universal programme to raise global awareness of these major environmental and social challenges, the website <https://rime-refugees-inclusion.eu/inclusion/> also features 7 videos related to goals 3 *good health and well-being*, 4 *quality education*, 5 *gender equality*, 8 *decent work and economic growth*, 10 *reduced inequality*, 11 *sustainable cities and communities*, and 12 *responsible production & manufacturing*. Of course, these items are well worked on and known around the world. But the major originality of their presentation here is in the articulation with the refugee issue and the way in which it is demonstrated that a reception that is not only decent but

constantly amended corresponds as adequately as possible to the global horizon outlined by the UN to overcome inequalities, eradicate poverty and respond as soon as possible to the climate emergency. Behind the humanism of welcome, the preservation of humanity itself is at stake. These videos are particularly enlightening and successful. They show a global approach to the problem of refugees and migrants which is perfectly articulated with the local responses proposed by the project's actors, based on studies which demonstrate their relevance in contrast to the prevailing xenophobic regression. Promoting the education of newcomers, gender equality, recognising their skills, ensuring their fundamental right to health, and aiming for a public policy of reducing inequalities and fighting climate change go hand in hand in the appropriate environment to be developed to favour inclusion and develop peer support as an operative solution. The social and economic integration of refugees and migrants cannot be achieved without a global understanding of the millennium challenges and their translation into actions identified according to local needs. The proposed training modules thus contribute, in a very successful manner, to making the SDGs concrete and to opening up the issues relating to asylum seekers by making the problem global.

## **CONCLUSION: FROM THE NEWCOMER TO THE RESIDENT, THE CHALLENGES OF A SUCCESSFUL SETTLEMENT**

The whole of this dossier, which is the result of the RIME project, is particularly well done, using rich and varied materials to highlight in a particularly concrete and operational way, while always being aware of the theoretical advances on the issue, the benefits of including newcomers in order to enable them to stabilise in a given space, but also in an appropriate socio-economic framework and to ensure their integration over time. The applicative dimension of the *Care* theory in this field of the socio-professional reception of newcomers is particularly well recognised. This policy of recognition, on which the human sciences have done a lot of work in recent years, modifies public policies from the inside by gradually encouraging an amended form of collective autonomy, since it does not require a uniform population but, on the contrary, includes the multiplicity of life paths, existences and development possibilities. The presupposition is that attention to the other in a dynamic that is that of benevolent and humanistic hospitality is essential to enable him or her to integrate; but to this is added the fundamental idea, specific to the notion of peer support and to the challenges of inclusion, that the more detailed the knowledge of the life paths experienced, the more adequate the solution proposed. As is often the case, we come back to the proximity of the proposed service, in this case a reception service for migrants, as one of the possible keys to being more attentive to individual lives. This proximity is not incompatible with an in-depth knowledge of global issues, on the contrary, it implies it. By relying on a guide that has confirmed its relevance in the field of refugee reception, by using the participatory method, by deploying the universal medium of comics, by supporting and encouraging the development of inclusion through peer support and educational resources geared towards the development of mentoring, by including the necessary Sustainable Development Goals in the training, this RIME dossier is not only part of a thorough, transversal and dynamic approach to the accompaniment of refugees, but also and above all it allows us to give a credible perspective to the major issue of the medium and long term stabilisation of new arrivals, notably through economic and social inclusion. Far from the sad passions that can lead European peoples to validate exclusionary policies, this dossier shows its relevance for the future and raises hope. It is the European nations that stand to gain from the operational capacity of these local actors, who are able to work in the European dimension of the project, and who effectively deploy a daily humanism adapted to the major problem of sustainable hospitality in the context of the migratory crisis.



Evaluation note on the Erasmus project "Refugees Inclusion Moves Europe" (RIME)

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**A European project that aims to develop the skills of people working for the inclusion and support of refugees.**

### Project partners



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