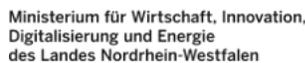


TREE PROJECT – PRACTICE ANALYSIS

Research Findings and Analysis of Practices and Training Needs among Refugee Support Workers in four sub-regions of Meuse-Rhine Euroregion

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Wallonie



MINISTERIUM FÜR FAMILIE, FRAUEN, JUGEND, INTEGRATION UND VERBRAUCHERSCHUTZ



TRAINING FOR INTEGRATING REFUGEES IN THE EUREGIO

Foreword

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Integration is defined as a two-way process by various levels of government as well as by civil society organisations. Despite the lip-service that is paid to adjustment from both the newcomer and the host society, in practice much less emphasis is placed on the adjustments that should be made on the part of the host society. Researchers have rarely examined the host society when thinking about integration, and politicians seldom acknowledge this element.

The innovation of the TREE project is that it does exactly this, drawing on the extensive experience of a range of service providers. It investigates what the host society does to welcome refugees and what can be done better, with a focus on training programmes for those who work in frontline services. Expectations for refugees and newcomers are increasing – we need only look at increased requirements in terms of official mandatory integration programmes across Europe to find evidence of this. In this context, fewer projects offer us a robust investigation of how the host society can and should adjust, how we can better welcome newcomers, and how we can support those who offer these services.

The findings in this report detail the outcomes of extensive, in-depth research into the views of practitioners who work with refugees and help us to better understand how they can be supported in their work of adjustment. In doing so, it highlights the value and importance of this work and the skills of those involved. While practitioners need to navigate specific local contexts, common themes emerge from across the four sub-regions of the Euroregion Meuse-Rhine. Indeed, it is not only those providing specialized services for refugees who must adjust to the changes in society and the public they now serve, but also those providing mainstream services. Both of these types of practitioners are involved in the study and it is clear from the findings that there is much more we can do, as host societies, to adequately welcome newcomers.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The TREE project endeavours to ameliorate the integration of refugees in participating sub-regions of the Euregio Meuse Rhine by creating new training programmes for frontline practitioners who work with refugees. These are people in various professions, such as social interpreters, language and integration teachers, social workers, health workers, employees in regional and municipal administrations, etc. who work in different institutional settings, from local public authorities to NGOs, and who could benefit from training programmes to work with refugees. To create the content of these training programmes the project has gathered information on the current state of integration policy in each involved sub-region – The Province of Limburg in the Netherlands, the Aachen Region and parts of Rhineland Palatinate in Germany, and the Province of Liège in Wallonia, Belgium. The findings of the investigation into integration practices and policies are outlined in the context analysis, and also inform the current report which details the findings of the empirical data that was gathered by interviewing more than 70 practitioners in the involved regions and observing their work. This research revealed practitioners’ priorities, strengths, and areas of growth. Several common themes emerged amongst practitioners across all sub-regions, professions, and types of services. These are explained in this report in general and more specifically with regard to each profession or type of service. Some practitioners count these commonalities as strengths, though they concede that more training in these areas is always useful, and others see them as areas for improvement where not much training exists. Despite the varying ways in which these themes arise, the fact that they are shared and highlighted by multiple practitioners is evidence of their importance.

The first section of this report explains the methodology that was employed in gathering and analysing data. The second section details the common training needs in each profession. Training needs for each section are followed by an explanation of why these training programmes would be vital to the specific profession as well as some further training suggestions from the researcher based on the gathered data. The reason for this professional focus, rather than analysing the training needs by sub-region, is that the category of profession and the field of work

had more commonalities in terms of training needs and existing resources than the sub-regional level, although some sub-regional differences exist. This way of comparing the training needs also emphasises the regional commonalities rather than differences, thus aligning with the INTERREG aims of cross border cooperation based on finding solutions to common problems and sharing best practices. Finally, the third section offers some conclusions and suggestions for future training.

It is important to note, as mentioned in the context analysis, that the trend of mainstreaming in Europe has meant that many integration related tasks now rest with professionals and offices who may have been, until recent years, unaccustomed to working in this field and with refugees. Services for refugees are now spread across various service providers leaving certain professionals unprepared to address the particular needs of refugees. In addition to the general language and integration issues that all migrants face, refugees need assistance with the trauma they've faced during forced migration. Special policies and programmes have in some cases been created. However, interviewees have expressed that they are not sufficient and the programmes are not robust enough for them to feel confident in their work with this population.

In Belgium, and therefore in the sub-region of the province of Liège, immigration is the responsibility of the federal government, but because integration takes place locally, concrete measures in terms of integration have been transferred to regions and municipalities. Recent changes in the integration policy and practice in Wallonia have led to the creation of a new integration pathway (becoming operational in 2016) and professionals who now have tasks in this young sector need training. Germany and the Netherlands, which have longer standing integration programs, are no exception to the European-wide trend of increasing language requirements, reducing time allotted for support and integration, and pushing for refugees to become 'independent' as quickly as possible. These trends, therefore, also affect the included sub-regions of Aachen and parts of Rhineland Palatinate in Germany, and Limburg Province in the Netherlands. This, coupled with the move to mainstreaming services, means that newly arrived refugees often receive services without appropriate assistance. This happens, for

example, when they access health care and, in some cases, when seeking training or employment assistance. These services are provided by people who may not necessarily be specialised in working with newcomers or refugees. This does not mean, however, that public service providers have had no new or specific training to work with this population. Different forms of intercultural training courses have been implemented (see appendix 3) and there have been efforts to 'sensitise' service providers. For TREE, this means that it was necessary to see what training programmes were already available and in which areas training could be added or improved based on the direct input of the professionals providing services to refugees.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology used to gather data for this project was mainly semi-structured interviews (Heyl 2001). The data collection began with interviewing project partners and then collecting information and contacts for interviews to be conducted with other institutions. This form of data collection can be described as 'opportunity sampling' followed by 'snowball sampling'. In other words, the people interviewed were initially chosen because they were available and relevant (project partners), and then their relevant contacts and connections were also interviewed. The project application was quite broad and did not explicitly lay out the target actors in the field. The target group was defined as "those involved in integration". Given this, the most logical way to proceed and discover the significant actors was to begin with the partners' own knowledge of the integration sector in their local area. After these initial interviews, and subsequent project meetings where the target group was further discussed, we attempted to choose particular fields of work that should be investigated in each sub-region. This can be described as 'purposive sampling'. This attempt was less successful, as it was very difficult to get responses and to schedule interviews in a limited time frame during the summer months. The result was 71 interviews conducted with 29 different organisations and offices representing the partners' networks and important actors in the sub-regions, though not the exact same types of actors in each sub-region.

Interviewees - Regions and Organisations	71
Province of Liège	28
CRVI (Regional Integration Centre of Verviers)	5
Red Cross	3
Le Monde des Possibles	3
FOREM (Unemployment Office)	2
CRIPPEL (Regional Integration Centre of Liège)	2
University of Liège	1
Lire et Ecrire	1
La bobine	1
SETIS (Social Interpretation Services)	8
DG05 (the Directorate General for Internal Affairs and Social Action)	2
Aachen Region, North Rhine-Westphalia	17
Industrie - und Handelskammer (Chamber of Commerce and Industry)	2
Division of market and integration	2
VHS (Community College)	3
City of Aachen - Dept. housing/social affairs/integration	2
AWO (Workers' welfare organisation)	2
University of Aachen	1
Medinetz	1
Primary school	1
VHS (Community College) HASA (Secondary school completion program)	1
PSZ (Psychosocial centre for Refugees)	1
PAZ (Pedagogical centre Aachen)	1
Rhineland – Palatinate	13
AUL (Work and Life training provider)	7
Neustadt Project	1
Job Centre	1
AUL (Work and Life training provider) translator pool	1
South Eifel Region	1
City of Bitburg	1
Foreigners Agency	1
Dutch Limburg	13
DRC (Dutch Refugee Council)	8
The municipality	2
Public health org. (GGD)	2
Standby	1

The semi-structured interviews consisted of a list of 19 questions used by the three researchers who conducted interviews (appendix 1). The researchers were instructed to ask all the questions on the list, but had the freedom to ask further questions, to ask for more detail, or to skip questions that were entirely irrelevant to a certain type of work or organisation. They were

encouraged to follow the thread of the conversation where it led them in order to uncover useful information. The interviews were conducted in French, English, Dutch and German with all translations by the researchers themselves. Due to the number of interviews and languages used, the primary researcher recruited two other researchers] with Dutch and German skills. The primary researcher conducted interviews in French and English. When permission was granted, interviews were digitally recorded. Notes were also taken and expanded on afterwards.

The content of the interviews was analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) based on the project's research question, which is essentially *what are the training needs in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine that would help practitioners to do their work better and thus improve integration of newcomers*. Initial thematic analysis was conducted based on the themes identified during the initial meetings of the TREE project. In the second round of analysis, emerging themes were identified in an inductive manner during the coding processes. These themes are identified in bold in the conclusion of each section. Due to the needs of the project and the specific nature of the research question a mostly semantic approach and discourse analysis were used in the analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). The analysis focused on what people said. Data was arranged and grouped according to patterns which were then summarised and interpreted by the main researcher according to relevance to the research aims (Patton 1990 – in Braun and Clarke 2006). Informed consent was gained either verbally or with a signature (appendix 2) after both written and verbal descriptions of the research aims were given to participants. Participants were told how their information would be used and informed that participation was voluntary, that their anonymity would be protected as far as possible, and that the name of their organisation and their role in the organisation would be included.

3. TRAINING NEEDS FOR HIGHLIGHTED PROFESSIONS

During the course of the fieldwork the research team encountered and interviewed people from 20 different professions in 29 organisations. The target group of the TREE project is described as professionals who work with refugees. Given the trend of mainstreaming, this includes workers from a wide range of professions. The organisations were chosen based on their connections to project partners, and in order to include a diverse range of services and professions. The interviewees included directors of organisations, policy advisors, and people in administrative capacities, as well as people directly providing services to newcomers – such as interpreters, social workers, healthcare workers, and teachers. Due to the diversity of professions, it was necessary to group them together into categories. This enabled us to speak more broadly about types of work rather than specific professions. The one exception is social interpreters who were numerous and whose job description is more or less the same in each country and organisation. The categories are: social interpreters; language and integration teacher; social workers and legal staff; health and welfare workers; and employees in regional and municipal administrations.

Each section of the report includes a brief introduction to the work of the group of professionals and the organisations. This is followed by a section describing the training needs as reported by the interviewees, and a section with brief conclusions and suggestions from the researcher for further training for that particular profile.

3.1 Social Interpreters

Introduction

Social interpreters from SETIS (Liege Province, Wallonia, Belgium), AUL (Rhineland Palatinate, Germany), and LMDP (Liege city, Liege Province, Wallonia, Belgium) were interviewed. Due to time and travel constraints, the researchers were not able to interview volunteer interpreters at the Dutch Refugee Council (Heerlen, Province Limburg, Netherlands), but information about social interpreters in the Dutch context, as well as at the Dutch Refugee Council, is included here.

“Interpreters are a very tough people because they have to listen to many stories and to survive and still go on with their job.” Interpreter SETIS, 28 June 2018

The issue of social interpreting (also known as Public Services Interpreting – PSI or Community Interpreting - CI) is contentious in all of the involved sub-regions. This is largely due to the fact that interpreting is rarely guaranteed - legally and with governmental support - outside of courtrooms. Interpreting in all other areas depends on a mix of actors, organisations, and often precarious funding. There are no common standards for the training of social interpreters in the EU. The only right to interpretation and translation set by EU regulations is for services in courts and during legal proceedings (Directive 2010/64/EU) (Rillof and Buysse 2015: 195). The SETIS in Wallonia has professional social interpreters who have contracts, but interpreters in the other organisations are volunteers, though in some cases they do receive some compensation or at least travel reimbursements¹. There is a widespread sentiment that those who are integrating properly will be learning the ‘host country’ language(s) and so should not become too dependent on interpretation and translation services (de Boe 2015). This sentiment goes hand in hand with the trend of replacing multi-culturalist policies with assimilationist programmes. For example, the implementation of official integration courses is increasing and the courses are becoming more demanding. The lack of common standards and training for social interpreters leaves space for critical misunderstandings, sometimes even life-

¹ DOOR: For interpreting assignments, the interpreters receive an allowance of 20.00 € per 60 minutes. LMDP: Interpreters receive reimbursements.

threatening ones. The interviewed interpreters highlighted the medical field as one of the areas where their services were in the highest demand, and where the necessity of having a well-trained interpreter was the most crucial. Family members or loved ones serving as interpreters may not fully understand medical jargon or technical terms, or have the ability to translate these specialised terms into their mother tongue. They may also be tempted to omit the most difficult health information in order to save the patient/loved one from troubling news.

Training Needs

Recommendations of interviewees

Training topics

- Coping with emotional strain
- Maintaining neutrality
- Improving lexical skills

Further supports

- Organised exchange of experiences with peers

Opening to further training programmes?

- Sceptical of the utility of further training programmes and too busy to have training outside of working hours
- Training and support from psychologists would be very welcome

Additional training suggestions

- De-escalation techniques
- Basics of psychology

The most important difficulties and areas for improvement cited by interpreters were dealing with **emotions**, maintaining neutrality, and improving their lexical skills. There was some disagreement on training needs however, but not on the themes/skills that interpreters felt they needed to improve. In terms of dealing with **emotional strain**, for example, most interpreters acknowledged that learning to deal with emotional strain was important for their work, but some felt that it could only be done through experience and were sceptical that any type of organised

training could help to prepare them for the emotional issues they will face in their work, as will be further explained in the following section.

Emotions

When asked what the hardest part of her job was, an interpreter from Arbeit und Leben (hereafter called AUL) was, without any hesitation, able to come up with a definite answer to the question – to be able to handle the **emotional problems** of refugees (interpreter, AUL, 24 July 2018). Many other interpreters also echoed this sentiment, putting this skill only behind language knowledge as the most important skill in their work. Interpreters sometimes spend an entire working day listening to and recounting the most intimate details of a person's experiences, and in the lives of refugees this often includes instances of violence, devastating loss, and despair. The social interpreters interviewed for this report regularly interpreted in medical settings and during psychotherapy sessions where they hear first-hand about a person's suffering. While there are some systems in place to help interpreters to cope with the **emotional strain** of their work (see below), many interpreters still expressed a desire to learn how to better deal with their emotions, both during and after interpreting sessions.

Also, how not to bring it home. This emotional day of hard stories and it's accumulating over the weeks, months and years. How to deal with it. Because that is a common point for both interpreters and social workers who deal in the first line with asylum seekers and refugees. [...] How to deal with stress, emotions, and still be capable of helping productively. Not getting into sympathy, but staying in empathy (Interpreter 1, SETIS, 28 June 2018).

Other interpreters echoed the same sentiment, stating that **handling emotions** was one of the greatest challenges in their work, but they were sceptical that training programmes on this issue would be effective. They felt that experience was the best way to learn this particular skill.

It's hard to react when people are angry or crying and you have to translate, but that's not something I could have learned at school anyway (Interpreter 2, SETIS, 28 June 2018).

An interpreter from Le Monde des Possibles (here after called LMDP) said something similar. When asked how she could improve her skills in interpreting she said that the best way was to work more and to gain more experience, even when it came to dealing with **emotions**. She said that the training at the organisation was already sufficient and she was only lacking **peer support** and the chance to share with and learn from other interpreters. It's important to note that she realises that opportunities for peer support exist at LMDP, but she simply has not had the chance to go to one of the organised sessions (interpreter, LMDP, 31 August 2018).

At the level of administration, organisations were cognisant of the need for further **emotional support** and training for interpreters but struggled with how to best implement this for their staff and volunteers. Some examples of steps that have been taken come from SETIS and LMDP. At SETIS there is a limit of five interpreting sessions per day in mental health services. But as one interpreter expressed, five a day is still difficult. The emotional strain of interpreting for mental health services cannot be overstated. This same interpreter, however, also felt that not much more could be done to alleviate this strain because they simply have to meet the demand. In addition to training programmes, SETIS would like to have a psychologist either on staff or freelancing in order to help interpreters with the emotional aspects and **mental strain** of the work. This is something that the Dutch Refugee Council (hereafter called DRC) also hopes to have for its volunteer interpreters.

One way to try to help interpreters to prepare for **emotionally difficult** interactions is to have training programmes with psychologists and to understand how psychotherapy sessions are structured. Being prepared for when difficult questions are coming can allow the interpreter to mentally prepare. Additionally, both SETIS and the PSZ² (a supra-regional counselling and therapy

² <http://www.psz-nrw.de/psz-netzwerk/psz-im-paez-aachen/>

facility of the Pedagogical Centre Aachen (PÄZ) which is a member of the nationwide working group of the psychosocial centres for refugees and torture victims) have systems where psychologists can meet with interpreters for a few minutes before and/or after a session in order to allow the interpreter to decompress and share their feelings. The researchers also spoke with psychologists who offer this debriefing service to interpreters. This resource, however, was often not taken advantage of due to time constraints on the part of the interpreters who often must go immediately to their next appointment. At LMDP and AUL there are meetings organised for the interpreters to come together and speak about their experiences, but the researcher did not speak with an interpreter who had attended such a meeting.

While sceptical of the potential utility of training programmes on coping with their emotions, the fact remains that this was an issue that even the most experienced interpreters cited as difficult. Experience, while very useful in this area, does not seem to be sufficient in making people feel they can remain **emotionally distant** from what they hear and not 'take it home' at night.

Neutrality

The hardest is not to take their part 100%. You have to stay neutral. And you aren't allowed to take them aside, speak privately, become friends (interpreter, AUL, 24 July 2018).

While this interpreter was the only one to say that neutrality was the *hardest* part of her job, it was an issue that came up in many interviews with interpreters. Neutrality is a clear mandate for interpreters and greatly valued by each interpreter in the study. It is also, however, something that weighs heavily on them in many situations. The above quoted interpreter then went on to describe an incident where she was called by a school to interpret for a meeting with a student's parents. She was not prepared for the meeting to be with a large group of school officials who were, in her view, obviously surprising the parents with bad news about their daughter. The

father became enraged and stormed out; the interpreter had a difficult time not simply defending the parents in what seemed to her to be an attack.

This particular interpreter was German by birth, but an interpreter with a migrant background stated that, “sometimes I see discrimination in the face of one of my compatriots and it’s a little difficult to accept this, but I don’t have a choice. I must be neutral” (interpreter, SETIS, 10 September 2018). While it appears that interpreters maintain their outward neutrality, they still struggle with the lingering **emotions** that result from staying neutral in difficult situations.

SETIS interpreters very much appreciated training programmes on radicalisation which they felt helped them to dismiss their own judgements. Daniel Martin, director of SETIS, gives lectures in radicalisation to support the interpreters. The goal of this training, in addition to ridding oneself of one’s own judgements, is to gain background knowledge about why people become radicalised and to understand the political and social situation in clients’ countries.

I had, for example, cases from Palestine who had been implicated in different cases of terrorism even, then you just look at it differently. You have maybe a more general approach and you understand more the reasons why people become-they get involved in it. It helps us become more neutral (interpreter, SETIS, 28 June 2018).

Lexical needs

When asked about the most important skill for their job, most interpreters highlighted the ability to understand and speak the two languages in question. In addition to a desire to improve their capacity in their non-native language, interpreters also spoke about the problems they encountered in their native languages. Particularly difficult is when people come from smaller places, villages, or regions, and interpreters do not fully understand their dialect and the unique terms they use. In addition, even when an interpreter has the right terminology in the native

language, the party they are giving information to may not understand specific jargon and technical terms, such as medical or legal terminology.

Section summary and conclusions

Whether volunteers or paid professionals, interpreters voiced similar concerns. The SETIS is the main professionalised social interpreting service in Wallonia, and therefore has a clear training programme for their interpreters. They can easily mandate participation in certain training programmes. All of the other services struggle with funding and working volunteer interpreters who are overtaxed in their work. Volunteers do not have enough time to both meet demand and take further training programmes. The schedules of interpreters are not regular, they simply go when asked and demands vary. As a result, they could not say when they would be more available for training programmes. The field of public service interpreting is underfunded in all sub-regions - but particularly in Dutch Limburg, the Aachen region, and Rhineland Palatinate. It is heavily dependent on the participation of volunteers and NGOs. This is the perhaps the main obstacle to providing further training programmes.

Additional training suggestions

In addition to more training in terms of coping with **emotional strain** and maintaining neutrality, the research brought to light some other areas where interpreters could benefit from training. Some understanding of **basic psychology** would bolster the training they already have on issues like radicalisation and how to interpret in psycho-therapy and medical sessions. A basic understanding of certain aspects of psychology could leave interpreters better prepared to face emotionally difficult interpreting sessions and their own responses to these sessions.

Additionally, it would be useful for interpreters to have knowledge of certain **de-escalation techniques**. While it is not the role of the interpreter to intervene in conflict, or to soften news or difficult information, techniques in terms of body language and non-verbal **communication** could be still be of use in maintaining a calm atmosphere and keeping everyone safe. Also, these

types of training programmes can help interpreters to be prepared for when escalated behaviour may occur by reading non-verbal cues.

3.2 Language and integration Teachers

Introduction

The researchers interviewed language teachers and integration teachers from the Volkshochschule Aachen (here after referred to as VHS Aachen) (city of Aachen, Städteregion Aachen, North Rhine Westphalia, Germany); the DRC in South Holland (Heerlen, Province Limburg, Netherlands); the Red Cross (Liege city, Province of Liege, Wallonia); AUL (Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany); the city of Bitburg (Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany); Lire et Ecrire (Verviers city, Province Liege, Wallonia, Belgium); and La Bobine (Liege city, Province of Liege, Wallonia, Belgium). The language teachers included are from both the official integration pathways and outside the official integration programs, and therefore have participated in a range of training programmes. These include topics such as integration, political information, working with illiterate populations, teaching adults, etc. These two profiles are combined as they worked in similar environments, often with newcomers and refugees, and cited many of the same training needs to improve their work.

Training Needs

Recommendations of Interviewees

Training topics

- Building and maintaining boundaries
- Gender
 - Gender issues and differences between cultures
 - Handling conflicts in the classroom
- Emotions
 - Coping with emotional strain
 - Handling students' emotions in the classroom
 - Questions to avoid/ which subjects are controversial
- Mixed classroom
 - Teaching classrooms of students with varying abilities - *Only applies to teachers*
- Motivation/ Psychology of learning
 - Motivating students/ learning the reasons why people aren't motivated
 - Psychology of learning/how the brain works in learning
- Trauma
 - Teaching students who have been traumatised
 - The impact of medications on people's classroom behaviour and performance

Further Supports

- Support for dealing with shared experiences

Open to further training?

- Open to having further training, but would only be available during school holidays

Additional Training Suggestions

- Basic Psychology
- Crisis intervention and de-escalation techniques

Boundaries

Setting and maintaining boundaries was a key concern for the majority of interviewed teachers. At the administrative level, organisations wanted to learn how to support teachers with special

demands from students who do not fit within the teachers' scope of work, and this is easily translated into the concerns of teachers.

Teachers are often refugees' main, or at least most frequent, point of contact in the host society. Unlike social interpreters, teachers are not required to maintain neutrality, but teachers in all the sub-regions would benefit on a personal level if they were able to **set clearer limits** in their work. The following examples illustrate this difficulty in the work of language and integration teachers.

One teacher, who also coordinates language classes at the VHS, gave an example of young men, ages 19 – 25, in a class of refugees who called their female teacher 'mum'. She felt that in this instance there needed to be better and clearer boundaries between the teacher and students. She explained that another problem is that new refugee students do not yet fully understand the rules of the host society, even after they have been explained by an interpreter. This means they take things personally when, for example, they are told by teachers "If you don't come we have to tell immigration and employment offices immediately" (teacher, VHS, 23 May 2018). She said that in addition to teaching, teachers are often doing the tasks of doctors, psychologists, and social workers. In her opinion, the current teachers at the VHS are experienced and do a good job of keeping professional distance, but teachers get close to their students quickly and this can lead to people not respecting office hours and teachers being overworked and over involved in the lives of their students.

An integration course teacher from the Red Cross in Wallonia stated that it's important to "keep a good distance with people" and also to be aware of the limits of one's own knowledge and abilities. Because people want to come to integration trainers with their problems and questions that are not part of the trainer's experience, it is important to learn to say "I can direct you to the right person but I can't do that for you" (trainer Red Cross 11 October 2018).

In addition to being important for the teachers' wellbeing, boundaries are important for the students/refugees. As the Red Cross trainer pointed out, it is not in the refugee's best interest if

the teacher tries to give information or assistance in areas where they are not experts. Teachers risk passing along incorrect or incomplete information which can gravely affect the situation of refugees. For example, teachers are often asked to assist with interpreting and completing legal documents or are asked for legal advice. Teachers begin to feel they are well versed in these areas because of their experience in the field of refugee support, but it is beyond the scope of their work and qualifications. Training teachers in ways to **maintain boundaries** and tactics in how to best say 'no' to their students would help both teachers and students.

Gender

Gender was an important topic for many of the types of professionals that were interviewed, but is especially critical for teachers who need to maintain order and a position of authority in classrooms. According to teachers, many of their male refugee students were not accustomed to having female teachers or seeing women in positions of authority. Another language teacher from the VHS also cited gender as an important component of intercultural differences and he said it would be useful to offer 'intersexual training' focusing on how 'western' women can work with men from a Muslim background (lang. and integration teacher VHS 17 September 2018). He has attended training programmes on this himself from the University of Köln and Bonn. These training programmes focused on how to handle conflicts in class, such as those between different groups, including conflicts between men and women.

Some female teachers stated that experience had helped them to understand gender differences between cultures and they had developed ways of navigating these differences in order to be seen as the authority figure in the classroom. They stated they were careful to avoid seeming timid. They also thought it important to avoid being seen as 'mother figures' to younger men in their classes. They still stressed however, that training on gender differences could alleviate certain pressures and misunderstandings that female teachers face when beginning their work with refugees. Similarly, male and female teachers could benefit from understanding which topics might not be appropriate to bring up in a mixed classroom. If teachers are also being trained to deal with requests from students and learning who to refer students to for certain

issues, it would benefit them to understand which issues may require an expert of the same gender.

Emotions

Teachers see their students regularly and spend a great deal of time with them. This, coupled with the fact that integration and language teachers often meet refugees and asylum seekers when they have recently arrived in the country and are at their most vulnerable point, means that students often trust their teachers and share a great deal about their lives. In fact, language teachers encourage students to share a certain amount of information about their personal lives for the benefit of language learning, but they often hear more than they are prepared for. Like other professionals working with refugees and asylum seekers, teachers struggle to cope with the **traumatic** life stories they hear. Teachers expressed a desire to learn coping strategies for the **emotional strain** of their work, but also how to better handle students' emotions in the classroom.

“Because refugees have a lot of problems, I don’t want to suffer with them because I don’t help them if I’m suffering also” (DRC language teacher 2, 9 July 2018).

This sentiment was expressed by an experienced teacher at the VHS who said that ideally teachers would have access to psychological/therapy services in order to process the things they have heard, and at the same time to learn what topics to avoid and what might be controversial (teacher VHS 23 May 2018).

A similarly experienced teacher at the DRC explained that over the years he has learned that his own emotional suffering does not benefit his students.

Because refugees have a lot of problems, I don’t want to suffer with them because I don’t help them if I’m suffering also. But I want to be a good listener and give them something so they can solve the problem (DRC language teacher 2, 9 July 2018).

In addition to his own experience, which helped him learn to cope with the emotional aspects of his work, he had taken a course on dealing with emotions that he found useful. He also relies a great deal on his background in **psychology**. Instead of focusing on the emotion, he focuses on the problem and what potential solutions there may be. There are also instances in which teachers of integration courses may have to share bad news with their students (trainers at the Red Cross are sometimes tasked with telling asylum-seekers that their applications for refugee status in Belgium have been rejected) and this can be very emotionally taxing for the teacher/trainer.

How to work with a mixed-level classroom

Unique among the service providers in this project is the challenge that teachers face in working with a large group of people at one time. Especially in language and integration classes, where it is difficult to separate people based on their skill level, teachers have to work with classrooms of people with diverse levels of ability.

The hardest part is to differentiate. Because you can start with a group of 15 people all the same level, but in two or three months you have three or four who are advanced and the others who can't read (language teacher, DRC, 9 July 2018).

A Red Cross integration trainer in Wallonia (11 October 2018) said the levels in his class ranged from those who are illiterate to those who had master's degrees and that this made it hard to keep everyone focused and engaged in class. While this issue was one that many teachers in all the regions noted as being a key difficulty, and an area in which they would appreciate a training. This is a structural problem. As long as teachers do not have homogeneous learning groups, they urgently need support in dealing with heterogeneous groups.

How to motivate people

Related to working in mixed ability classrooms is the issue of how to keep people **motivated** and engaged while in class. A Red Cross integration trainer said that there is always more to learn in this area and that learning new methods of motivating and engaging people would be the most useful training he could have. He has already had a training on this from the University of Liège that he found useful.

A language teacher at the DRC said that hardest part of his job was “to get people self-activated” and motivate them (language teacher 2 - 9 July 2018). “They seem to be passive, not active. They don’t know how to put in the right efforts to get the best results.” Because of this, he would like to learn more about the **psychology of learning** and the actual brain functions that occur while learning and how people learn. When he spoke about how he has changed his approach to the job over the years, he realised that in the beginning he had a very different approach.

I think I had too much trust that if I told them to do so and so, it would be ok. Because they are grown-ups, they are not children. ... I am the teacher I have to tell them to do so and so, and ... that's not the point. They have to do the things themselves. Not because I told you, but because you want to learn. That's the real motivation. I trusted too much that I told them 'you have to do so and so' and I was astonished [that they did not do it] (language teacher 2, DRC, 9 July 2018).

He went on to say that “*Most of them are, I hate the word, I don't like it, but they live in a bubble*” and that he was astonished at how little his students knew about current events. He struggled with how to get them interested in the world outside their daily lives of school and home. Another language teacher at the DRC had the same concerns about motivating students. When asked what the hardest part of her job was, this teacher responded,

...to motivate them. They have to have discipline to study the language each day. They come to school 9 hours a week, but they have to also do homework. They have to practice. And very few do that and the amount that is needed. So, to make them realise they have to practice, practice, practice (language teacher 1, DRC, 9 July 2018).

This same teacher also stated that she understood there many reasons behind the behaviour when people were unmotivated in class and acting differently. Sometimes she heard something about their family situation or something difficult happening in their lives and then would understand why they were acting a certain way. Given these sentiments it becomes clear that, in addition to learning techniques on how to motivate and engage students, it would be useful for teachers to understand the reasons why refugees stay in their 'bubbles' and may appear to be apathetic about the wider world and unmotivated.

Trauma

Teachers of all kinds expressed that it is important to know how to work with people who have been traumatised and to understand how **trauma** manifests. A language teacher at a primary school in Bitburg, Germany said it was important for all teachers who might work with refugees to be prepared for traumatised children, but she felt experience was more valuable than training (language teacher, Bitburg, 14 August 2018). Even without dedicated training, teachers often learn from experience that certain topics and questions need to be avoided. Despite the value of experience, training in trauma and how to avoid **re-traumatisation** might save the students who would be present when teachers are new and making the mistakes that they will later learn from.

A particular difficulty for teachers, and especially language teachers, is that speaking about oneself, family, past, feelings towards the host society and current events are an important part of learning. One teacher set herself a weekly task for avoiding upsetting her students.

Every week I watch the news before the class and every item about the war I leave out. [...] And also, speaking about the family, I do that, but- [in a limited way] (language teacher 1, DRC, 19 July 2018).

Teachers in every region were concerned with how best to work with traumatised populations and how to avoid causing unnecessary stress and **emotional strain** to their students. Existing training programmes in this area were sparse³.

Section summary and conclusions

Language teachers and integration trainers were mainly open to having further training, but their schedules would only allow them have these during school holidays. Unlike social interpreters, integration and language teachers have fairly standardised profiles. In each sub-region they benefitted from some standards of practice and training. Despite this professionalisation/standardisation of the role, however, teachers still faced certain gaps in their training. As can be seen in the training resources chart (appendix 3) training programmes in the above-mentioned areas are not numerous in any of the sub-regions and, unsurprisingly, are not part of the required training for teachers in any of the sub-regions. The training programmes listed in the chart are those known to the interviewees and not an extensive list of everything available in each sub-region. This chart still shows, however, that even if teachers took the initiative to take training programmes on their own, it would be difficult for them to find a training that would help them to improve competencies in the areas mentioned above.

³ The DRC offers an optional training on this issue and so does the Municipal Integration Centre in Stadt Region Aachen.

Additional training suggestions

While some teachers specifically stated wanting to be trained in the **psychology of learning**, it is the suggestion of the researcher that teachers could benefit from training in **basic/general psychology** as well. Teachers mentioned being frustrated with students remaining in their bubble and being unmotivated to learn, and also being worried about how to approach and teach students who had been **traumatised**. All of these issues and their causes could be illuminated by a better understanding of some basic psychology. Teachers also mentioned that, tied to the issue of **gender**, there were sometimes difficulties in maintaining order in the classroom when there were misunderstanding between different groups of people. For example, it is sometimes the case that refugees of differing political opinions or from different groups who traditionally hold animosity towards one another are placed in the same classroom. To deal with these situations, and to perhaps be able to diffuse a conflict before it starts, teachers could benefit from **crisis intervention/de-escalation techniques**. Techniques relating to classroom layout, and understanding and utilising body language, would also be useful.

3.3 Social workers and legal advisers

Introduction

The researchers interviewed social workers and legal advisers (or people who do the tasks of these profiles) from the Workers Welfare - AWO (Übach Palenberg, Germany); DRC, the Red Cross; CRVI (Regional Integration Centre in Verviers, Liege Province, Wallonia, Belgium); FOREM – unemployment services (Wallonia, Belgium); CRIPEL (Regional Integration Centre, Liege, Liege province, Wallonia, Belgium); and the Pedagogical Centre Aachen (hereafter called PÄZ) (Aachen region, North Rhine Westphalia, Germany). Social workers and legal advisers have been combined here due to the similarities in the training needs and the struggles they face in their work. In terms of profiles/qualifications, legal advisors usually have a law degree or are law students, but there are few other common criteria and qualifications. While many people with

many different job titles do many types of social work without being official social workers, social work is an official job title with its own qualifications in the sub-regions.

Social workers and legal advisers included in the study had to have thorough and current knowledge of the quickly changing immigration/asylum/refugee/integration laws, procedures and policies. They were also very often tasked with giving asylum seekers news about their cases, advice on how to proceed, and information on how to access services. Being the main source of legal information for asylum seekers and refugees meant that people in these positions were often a key support in the lives of these newcomers. They needed to have the trust of their clients in order to help them complete the necessary tasks and procedures involved for staying in the country, reuniting with their families, completing integration programs, finding jobs, obtaining social assistance, etc. Building this trust put social workers at risk of becoming too close to clients and going beyond the scope of their professional role to assist them. People in these positions said that it was necessary to be empathetic in order to do their jobs, but it also required them to endure a great deal of **emotional strain**. They also had to continuously coordinate meetings and appointments for their clients and this included certain difficulties in **communication** and navigating cultural differences.

Training Needs

Recommendations of Interviewees

Training needs

- Boundaries
 - Creating and maintaining boundaries
- Emotions
 - Working with people who have been traumatised
 - Coping with emotional strain
- Communication
 - Saying no
 - Giving bad news
 - Ensuring understanding
- Cultural information
 - Basic knowledge of cultural practices and bureaucratic culture in clients' countries of origin

Further Supports

- Support for dealing with shared experiences

Open to further training?

- Willing to learn, but difficult to find the time for 'optional training programmes'

Additional Training Suggestions

- Basic psychology
- Crisis Intervention/de-escalation techniques
- Coping with anti-immigrant sentiment

Social workers and legal advisors have the privilege and burden of being the people to give asylum seekers and refugees important news and information about their lives. Sometimes they get to tell people that they will finally be reunited with their families and sometimes they have to inform people that their asylum cases were rejected. They have to learn a great deal about clients' lives, but are not able to spend time with them on a regular basis, like teachers, in order to build trust and rapport. It is necessary for them to stay informed of rapidly changing laws and policies, as well as information on available services, and they feel keenly the responsibility of giving people correct and current information and the best possible advice. Professionals and volunteers in this position therefore would benefit from learning to **cope with emotional strain**, **how to maintain boundaries**, and from improving their **communication skills** to ensure that critical information is understood and that they are trusted.

Boundaries

Sometimes social workers and legal advisers were tempted to get more deeply involved in a refugee or asylum seeker's case because of their knowledge of the systems that refugees and asylum seekers have to navigate. Legal professionals who had previously worked in the private sector explained that they had underestimated how different the work in the public sector would be. One lawyer said that in private practice there was a very well-defined boundary between her and her clients, and the relationship she had with clients was very different. She knew exactly what was expected of her and the demands of her clients were clear.

But when I arrived here, first for the appointments, people ask for a lawyer and it's something absolutely not legal but social. And I'm not going to say to people sorry, there's nothing legal in your question. Go back to the reception and take your appointment. And second, it's an NGO here and there's no border. Well, there is a border, but not that clear between the people and us, and so it's more of an equal relationship and people spill everything on my desk and I take everything- (Lawyer, CRVI, 4 September 2018).

A legal volunteer at the DRC had a very similar experience of these differences between the private and public sector.

The atmosphere is more open. I used to work in big companies and everything was appointment here, appointment there, and here [at the DRC] people they have class over there and then come here like 'hello, can I ask you something?' You try to make an appointment but sometimes I still do it like this. [...] Here it's a lot of ad hoc (Legal volunteer, DRC, 9 July 2018).

In such open, somewhat relaxed environments which endeavour to make people feel welcome and at ease, it is more difficult for professionals in these positions to **create and maintain clear boundaries**. The environment allows for more informal ways of working, which most people

considered a positive aspect of their work environment, but this way of doing things creates its own difficulties.

A team leader at the DRC, whose work involved providing certain social supports to refugees, was also concerned about the level of involvement that staff at the DRC had with clients.

Sometimes people get too involved with the refugees, like volunteers in more rural areas (Team leader, DRC, 23 November 2017).

According to her, in more rural areas where there are fewer supports and resources available, workers would take on more responsibilities than those outlined in their job descriptions. This often led to refugee clients becoming dependent on the worker and the worker feeling overtaxed. Maintaining clear boundaries and division of labour could help workers to feel less overwhelmed and therefore potentially stay in their positions longer, and refugees could then receive services from the proper sources and get more targeted supports.

Emotions

Another difference for legal professionals who moved from private practice is that the **emotional strain** of the work was much more manageable in private practice. Some people were unprepared for how drastic this difference would be, and one legal staff member said that she didn't realise the toll the emotional aspect of the work was taking on her until she noticed herself being short tempered at home with her family.

That's some advice I would give [to someone starting this work]. Maybe I was too proud or too self-confident. I was going to the interview at commissariat general where people were telling everything, every torture they had had, all the injuries and so I thought 'what can be worse than that?' But it's such a different relationship [at CRVI] that it kind of surprised me. It took a long time for me to understand that I had to do something for it (Lawyer, CRVI, 4 September 2018).

In order to cope with the emotional strain, she said that she speaks with her colleagues (**peer support**) but it's not organised. She feels that an organised way of supporting each other would be helpful for anyone working on the 'first line' with refugees and asylum-seekers. She went on to say that this job is perhaps less intellectually challenging than other jobs she has had, but it is definitely more emotionally draining. She cautioned other people doing this work to "*protect himself or herself. To really find the right balance, to acknowledge that it's a tiring job*".

This issue is also key for social workers. As one social worker stated,

The most difficult thing is being confronted with the histories of difficult lives. And to go home and live with this and you have to carry on (Social worker, CRVI, 4 September 2018).

Other interviewees working as social workers and legal advisers also said that the emotional strain was the hardest part of the job, but that they had very useful training programmes about this. When looking at the chart of resources mentioned by interviewees, however, training programmes on how to deal with emotional strain are limited or at least mostly unknown to workers in this field.

Experience of course also helped them learn to deal with this aspect of their work and one staff member was sceptical about whether or not training programmes in this area could be truly helpful.

The background stories from the clients [are the hardest part of the job]. When you read the file, it hits you. What they went through in the past. And related to that, when the IND says, 'No, we don't give permission for your family members to come here.' Because they don't know the language that good that they can analyse the letters they receive (legal staff, DRC, 9 July 2018).

This means that he had to tell them what their letters meant. During the years he's worked there he says he has improved in this area and it doesn't affect him as much as before. There were not, however, any particular techniques that he had developed and could share with the researcher that could be useful for other workers.

Just the experience. That you get more professional and your emotions decrease. It's something you develop yourself. You get a bit tougher (legal staff, DRC, 9 July 2019).

One volunteer said that what helped her was to focus on the good things from refugees' lives that often get overlooked.

When you talk to them [refugees and asylum-seekers] more, when they tell their story about how they got here, then they have also nice things in their country and in their life. It's not only stress (Legal volunteer, DRC, 9 July 2018).

Communication

How to say no

For legal advisors and social workers, a big part of **boundaries and communication** was **being able to say 'no'** to their clients and giving them bad news in the best way possible. In fact, one interviewee mentioned both of these skills specifically when he was asked what training he would like to see added to the curriculum in the DRC.

How to say no to a client. That's one of my weak points. And the other thing, how to tell bad news.. A long time ago we had that as part of a training (Legal volunteer 1, 9 July 2018).

People in these types of positions are often asked by clients to fix things that are beyond the workers' control, and to participate in ways that are beyond the capabilities in terms of time and

expertise. In addition to saying 'no' to requests for assistance or to intervene, they often have to tell clients when there has been a negative decision on their case, request for family reunification, etc. Interviewees stated that it was difficult to explain to people that certain things were out of their control, especially when a client had taken all the proper steps, for example in a reunification case, and was still denied. As a daily part of their work, interviewees would like to learn techniques for this type of communication. When looking at the chart of resources, however, it is clear that communication training programmes are more numerous in each sub-region than training programmes on emotions, trauma, and boundaries, but the focus of the communication programmes is not exactly what workers would like.

How to work with interpreters?

While it is obvious that interpreters need specific training for work in different fields, what is sometimes less obvious is that people who use interpretation services sometimes also need to learn about how this 'triangular relationship' works. Interviewees also expressed a desire to learn the languages of their clients, but stated that this was an unrealistic goal since clients speak many different languages and workers are time limited. This means they often work with interpreters and this sometimes feels strange to people.

Sometimes you hear people say a lot and then you get a translator and you hear one word
(Legal volunteer, DRC, 9 July 2018).

This legal volunteer said hearing such a short response from the interpreter made her suspicious about how her information was being transferred to the client. Later she learned that sometimes it really does work this way between languages. The DRC offers training on working with interpreters that interviewees found helpful. No interviewees mentioned training programmes that existed on this topic, and it is something that workers in many professions could benefit from.

How to build trust and obtain needed information?

When working on legal issues for clients, interviewees stressed that they needed to build trust with clients in order to gain the sometimes-sensitive information that is necessary to help them. Asking refugees and asylum seekers about their pasts is unavoidable. A key part of this, as one volunteer pointed out, is as much about being a good listener as it about asking the right questions. Interviewees explained that there were no training programmes specifically addressing these issues.

“Maybe I can listen quite well. I’m quite patient. Because I’m quite quiet and let people talk, it’s possible for me to create a situation in which the clients can feel comfortable. I think that’s the most important. The rest you can learn by doing.” Legal volunteer, DRC, 9 July 2018

How to ensure understanding?

Legal professionals and volunteers also have to give their clients important instructions and very specific information, the results of which may gravely affect their legal cases and life in the country of arrival. To ensure understanding, interviewees had developed some techniques, such as making the client repeat back instructions, but more could be learned in this area.

Sometimes you think that someone understood it. Like you told them something to do, and you have techniques to see whether somebody understood or not, and in many cases, you see that he didn't understand it. [...] There are cases where you expect someone to come with something and you find out they didn't understand (Legal Volunteer, DRC, 9 July 2018).

Cultural information

Interviewees appreciated having specific information on their clients' countries. The DRC 'country days' were very popular among staff and volunteers. Interviewees also seemed to have a good understanding of what may be unexpected for refugees in terms of the make-up and functioning of governmental and bureaucratic procedures. When asked about the obstacles the refugees faced in procuring services, one interviewee said the following,

“The language and the over structured society we have. Meaning so, so many rules and policies and when you're coming from Eritrea or Sudan you know there is hardly administration. So, people really get surprised that they ask something and I say, ‘according to this rule and this policy and this rule and this rule, and rules of municipality, and rules of the national government and the rules of this, and the rules of that.’ I think that's the most surprising thing for them” (Legal staff DRC, 9 July 2018).

In line with example above, what could be improved is the understanding of what is strange, confusing, or surprising for refugees and asylum-seekers in their new homelands. Issues such as how basic services work, rules and regulations, and even waiting in lines and waiting rooms are things some refugees may not be accustomed to. All of these things may impede their access to services.

Section summary and conclusions

In terms of willingness/ability to have further training, many workers of this profile were very self-motivated and already taking optional training courses. A potential issue highlighted by the administration of the DRC, however, was that friction exists in situations where team leaders cannot oblige volunteers to take additional courses beyond the basic requirements. The administrators said they saw a clear difference in the performance of volunteers who completed the additional training programmes and those who did not. While training programmes are

offered in certain areas of need that were highlighted by interviewees, such as **communication**, they did not often focus on areas that interviewees find most necessary.

Social workers and legal advisers often have very clear roles and tasks, but how to go about performing these tasks is less straightforward. For example, they have to set appointments with clients and to learn specific information about their lives and migratory situation, but they sometimes struggle with making themselves understood. They have to ask potentially upsetting questions and give clients difficult news. This is why they would benefit from training in communication and **dealing with emotions** (both their own and their clients).

Social workers and legal advisers also know a great deal about their clients' lives, legal situation, and migration prospects – in terms of likelihood of family reunification, granting of status, etc. They often know more intimate details of a refugee's or asylum seeker's life than any other kind of support worker. This puts them at risk of overstepping **boundaries** and offering more help than they are comfortably and successfully able to give. Interviewees spoke about 'taking work home at night' and wanting to go beyond the scope of their job to help people. People in this role, however, can do their work much better, and are at less risk of 'burn out', if they learn to create and respect boundaries between themselves and their clients.

Additional Training Suggestions

In this same vein, it is the opinion of the researcher that social workers and legal advisers would benefit from learning certain aspects of **basic psychology**. This would aid them in understanding why clients may not show up for appointments or why certain lines of inquiry might be upsetting for clients and not productive in terms of gaining the necessary information.

These workers also mentioned **facing anti-immigrant sentiment** in their personal lives. This sentiment may come from relative strangers – as one respondent reported being asked about his job by strangers at a pub and receiving negative reactions to his response – but also from close

family and friends. Training programmes focused on coping with this type of sentiment in one's daily life could help workers avoid burn out and learn when to engage in and when to avoid difficult conversations. It could also be useful for them to have training programmes in **crisis intervention/de-escalation techniques** to aid them in saying no or asking difficult questions.

3.4 Healthcare workers

Introduction

Health and welfare workers include volunteers and paid staff who support the mental and physical wellbeing of clients. Some of these workers could also be placed in the category of social workers, but they are not required to have knowledge of legal proceedings concerning new migrants. The types of information they have to learn about clients is also of a different nature. Included in this section are interviews from the GGD⁴, Medinetz Aachen⁵, PSZ⁶, the University of Liège, and Standby!⁷. The interviewees were nurses, psychologists and social counsellors, medical students, refugee coordinators, and consultants in social care and support.

Health and welfare workers, like some other professionals, have to ask very sensitive questions and learn a great deal of personal information about clients in order to assist them. They have to quickly build trust and overcome sensitive cultural barriers without much time to build rapport.

⁴ The GGD is a network of Dutch Community Health Services and they offer education and preventative measures to keep people healthy.

⁵ Medinetz Aachen is one of many such centres in German cities that provide medical advice and service as a mediation centre for refugees, whether or not the clients have residence permits and/or health insurance. It is composed mainly of medical student volunteers who gather information from clients and then direct them to doctors who are willing to see patients who do not have residence permits.

⁶ PSZ Aachen is the psychosocial centre for refugees and is a supra-regional counselling and therapy facility which is part of the Pedagogical Center Aachen (PÄZ).

⁷ Standby! is a cooperative of care and welfare organisations (Heerlen StandBy!) whose main task is to link families with organisations that can help them. Their focus is on health and well-being of people in their community of Heerlen, Netherlands. It provides all WMO (social support act) support for the municipality of Heerlen.

It is the job profile with the fewest training programmes for working specifically with refugees and asylum-seekers.

Training Needs

Recommendations of interviewees

Training Needs

- Communication
 - Creating safe spaces for people to ask sensitive questions
 - Learning new teaching techniques
- Cultural information
 - Getting informed of country specific information
 - Cultural and political background of refugees

Further Supports

- Peer support

Open to further training?

- Yes, but mixed feedback on when they would be available or if they would be able to participate outside of working hours

Cultural Differences

The two interviewees from the GGD, whose work includes teaching the public about general health, explained that when working with refugees and asylum seekers the main challenges are the language and culture differences (Nurse 2, GGD, 8 August 2018). They expressed a desire to improve their 'collaborative learning' (currently they use classroom learning) like 'the teach back method' (wherein participants teach what they have learned) and to include culture in their conversations and teaching (Nurse 1, GGD, 8 August 2018).

STAND-BY! currently has no specific training programmes on working with refugees and asylum seekers, and according to the interviewee from the organisation, they would like to have more information on this group. The interviewee stated that workers know little about refugees' culture and country of origin (30 August 2018). They have to give people sensitive information and knowing what topics are taboo would help them to craft and deliver their messages accordingly. In addition, they would like more training programmes in the areas of **family**

support and child psychology. Additionally, if they had further information about the political context in the regions where their clients are from, they would have a better understanding of what their clients might have endured. It would also allow them to avoid topics that might cause distress. They have a budget for each person to have training, but nothing is compulsory, so their workers have to take the initiative. In their work of linking families with organisations, they have to know a great deal about family dynamics and what type of assistance may be accepted.

Communication

In addition to being interested in learning new teaching/training techniques, the staff of the GGD would also benefit from learning how to create a safe space where sensitive questions can be asked. One of the interviewees stated that refugees are often ashamed to ask questions about their bodies so they have gaps in important health knowledge.

The student volunteers from MEDINETZ Aachen, who offer advice and connect refugees and asylum seekers with the appropriate medical service, shared similar concerns. They also wanted to learn how to improve their intercultural **communication** skills. In order to be able to give advice to refugees they need to ask sensitive questions and get honest and complete answers. They were concerned that their clients sometimes did not take their advice and did not show up for appointments. Interviewees wondered if this was due to misunderstandings or fear and mistrust on the part of the refugees. This behaviour could partly be due to past **traumatisation** (1 August 2018) and health and welfare professionals/volunteers would benefit from training programmes on intercultural **communication** and working with people who have been traumatised. There may be numerous cultural reasons for not being present at appointments and different cultures have different ways of coping with illness, health, and healthcare. These reasons may vary depending on age, religion, gender, etc. Learning about these facets of migrants' decision-making processes is key for healthcare workers.

Coping with emotional strain

Healthcare workers also need support in coping with **emotional strain**. Whether looking after clients' physical health, mental health, or overall wellbeing, interviewees had trouble disconnecting from work. Volunteers were sometimes able to take time off in order to emotionally decompress, which is what the volunteers at Medinetz cited as being necessary in order to continue doing their work (1 August 2018). Psychologists and health professionals, however, were less able to take these kinds of breaks. Psychologists from the PSZ have 'check in sessions' with one another to decompress and discuss their work (18 September 2018), but the researcher's opinion is that organised **peer support** could be of value.

Section summary and conclusions

Health and welfare workers have struggles similar to that of legal staff and social workers, such as obtaining sensitive information from clients in order to provide them with services. This puts them in a difficult position in terms of intercultural **communication** and dealing with emotionally charged subjects. This is why interviewees highlighted cultural differences, communication, and coping with **emotional strain** as their key training needs. Indeed, there are few training programmes available to assist them in working with refugees and the particular needs involved in this work. Interviewees were eager to have further training, but given their work schedules there was no consensus on when they could be available or the length of training that would be most reasonable.

3.5 Employees in regional and municipal administrations

Introduction

Employees in regional and municipal administrations do an array of different jobs, but included here are workers from job centres (the job centre in Bitburg-Prüm, Germany and the Forem in Liege, Belgium), the department of housing, social affairs and integration in Aachen, Germany;

Division of market and integration in Aachen, Germany; integration consultants from the Municipality of Heerlen, Netherlands; Security and Order Division at the Bitburg Foreigner's Agency, Germany; members of the advisory council for migration and integration for the South Eifel Region, Germany; Refugee coordinators from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Aachen, Germany; and officials working on integration from the DG05 (the Directorate General for Internal Affairs and Social Action) in Wallonia, Belgium. These workers do policy work, decide how best to use integration funds, and assist refugees with a range of things: securing housing, obtaining employment, job training/employment preparation, assisting people along the integration pathway, and helping them to access services.

While several interviewees had titles and job descriptions specifically related to immigration and integration, many served more general populations and their jobs had broader aims. For many interviewees, the concerns of refugees and asylum seekers were considered a federal (or regional) competence. Therefore, when refugees need local support, interviewees felt refugees should no longer need specifically tailored help. Interviewees felt that refugees could simply benefit from the same support offered to the wider population.

Training needs

Recommendations of Interviewees

Training Needs

- *Motivation*
 - Motivating members of their clientele
- *Gender Differences*
 - Understanding and navigating gender differences between cultures
- *Boundaries*
 - Creating and maintaining *boundaries*
- *Emotions*
 - Coping with emotional strain (for both the refugee and the support worker)

Further supports

- Peer support

Open to further training?

- Sceptical as to the benefit of specific training programmes on refugees

Additional Training Recommendations

- Basic Psychology
- What is unique about working with refugees
- Working with people who have experienced trauma

How to motivate refugees

It was easy for those who worked specifically with refugees and newcomers to identify their training needs. For example, the integration consultants from the municipality of Heerlen (22 August 2018) reported being surprised that refugees with a high level of Dutch often knew very little about current events (such as local news) – a sentiment also expressed by workers in other fields. They feel this lack of current local knowledge has the potential to hinder integration. Refugees may be less likely to speak with and get to know Dutch people if they do not have common topics to speak about. Interviewees also said the integration program allows refugees to be inactive for a long period of time, resulting in a rush to fulfil all the criteria at the end of the allotted time period. Another concern was that people sometimes receive benefits while being

inactive and not working towards their integration (22 August 2018). This also speaks to the issue of **motivation** and learning why refugees and newcomers might have difficulty being in active in their prescribed integration.

Issues Related to Gender

Gender was a topic that came up in different ways in numerous interviews with employees in regional and municipal administrations. Interviewees, both male and female, were concerned that female colleagues were not taken seriously (team leader, Job Centre Bitburg, 14 August 2018) or given as much respect as male colleagues (team leaders of the division of market and integration, Aachen, 22/23 August 2018). They also worried that younger female colleagues sometimes had difficulties in asserting themselves (head of security and order division - foreigner's agency, Bitburg, 14 August 2018).

At the same time, interviewees cautioned that service providers needed to be attentive to gender when offering certain services. For example, it may be important to ensure that women are offered support from other women when receiving psychological services (integration commission in the south Eifel region, 14 August 2018). In the interview referenced above, the interviewee was working specifically on integration and had experience in navigating cultural differences that sometimes involved concerns about gender differences. The interviewee also stressed that it is important to accommodate newcomers while also requiring them to adjust to the differences in the host society.

Boundaries and Emotions

Most interviewees brought up the topic of **boundaries** and **coping with emotional strain**, either explicitly or implicitly. For example, without expressly mentioning boundaries the interviewee from the integration commission in the south Eifel region stated that her clients sometimes come to her house. In order to do this type of work, she says one has to be open to this type of close

relationship with clients (14 august 2018). Many other participants said it's important to be open, to trust people, and to build trust (integration management, Aachen, 22-23 August 2018; integration management, Aachen, 22-23 August 2018). They also cautioned, however, that it's important to stay safe and to keep sufficient emotional distance between themselves and the people to whom they offer services (head of security and order division at the foreigner's agency, Bitburg, 14 Aug 2018). An example from the head of security and order division at the foreigner's agency (Bitburg-Eifel) was the case of a man threatening to douse himself in petrol and set himself on fire. This caused long lasting **trauma** for a colleague (14 August 2018).

The necessity of coping with emotional strain, both of workers and of refugees, was a key theme in interviews with workers from integration management in Aachen. They explained that it's hard for volunteers when people are deported (22-23 August 2018). **Peer support** services are offered in some organisations in the form of group meetings, but in general this could be more structured. At the division of market and integration in Aachen there is even a psychologist who comes to the job centre on a regular basis to offer support to the staff.

In addition to knowing one's limits in an emotional capacity, interviewees also cautioned that people in their line of work need to be aware of the limits of their skills and knowledge. This way they do not go beyond their area of expertise, overextend themselves, or to give the wrong advice/counsel to the client (integration management Aachen, 22-23 August 2018).

Section summary and conclusions

Several interviewees from regional and municipal administrations questioned the utility of targeted training programmes for working with refugees. For example, a job centre team leader in Bitburg Prüm, expressed feelings that were shared by many interviewees in this category. He stressed that in his position it's essential to have basic knowledge about the other person's culture in order to prevent misunderstandings. Despite this, he still believed that people will generally fit into the local structures that are set out for them:

Special training [to work with refugees] are not really necessary. At the end, the refugees are recipients of benefits just as much as everyone else. They are able to receive all the support just like everyone else (Job Centre Team Leader, Bitburg, 14 August 2018).

An interviewee from the integration commission in the south Eifel region (Germany) used to be a German teacher before moving to her current position. She also felt these training programmes targeted at working with refugees were unnecessary. She credited her work experience, rather than any training, for her intercultural competence. She said that in her work it's important to build trust, to be assertive, and to be open. There are currently no training programmes in these areas and she felt experience was the best way to build these competences. Similarly, a representative of the security and order division at the foreigner's agency – Bitburg-Eifel (Germany)- (14 August 2018) stated that there was no need for further training, and they are not obliged to take any specific training programmes on working with refugees and asylum seekers. They do, however, have support and financial means from the administration if there is a training they wish to take.

At the end, the refugees are recipients of benefits just as much as everyone else. They are able to receive all the support just like everyone else" (Job Centre Team Leader, Bitburg, 14 August 2018).

According to integration consultants at the Heerlen (Netherlands) municipality (22 August 2018), there is an induction programme for new workers that focuses on legislation. As the municipality has virtually no control over integration, there's no specific training on integration and refugees. In the near future, however, there will be a programme to teach employees about the situation of asylum seekers. They see the necessity for this because in 2020 the municipality, rather than DUO (national agency on education), will be placed in charge of educational matters. This means that they will have work with integration programming for and providing services directly to refugees and asylum seekers.

Additional Training Suggestions

Based on the above concerns and observations of the interviewees, this research suggests that employees in regional and municipal administrations may benefit from training programmes on the fundamentals of **basic psychology, trauma**, and why refugees and asylum-seekers may appear to lack motivation.

An interviewee from the security and order division at the foreigner's agency – Bitburg-Eifel found supervision and regular **peer support to be very valuable**. The interviewee also reported having had a training on **de-escalation techniques**/how to handle difficult clients, and found this to be useful.

4. Shared migration experiences

Many of the interviewees came from migrant backgrounds or had once been refugees themselves. For example, to work in the psychological services of the PSZ in Aachen one is to have a migrant background. Amongst 36 interpreters at the SETIS in Wallonia, only one was born and grew up in Belgium and the majority of the administrative staff have a migrant background.

This can be a tremendous asset in interviewees' work. This type of lived experience undoubtedly has numerous advantages including deep cultural understanding, the ability to build bridges between the newcomer and the host country, and the benefit of being better acquainted with the life trajectory of refugee clients. *"What helps me is the fact that I once learned the language myself"* (interpreter, AUL, 24 July 2018).

"I visited Afghanistan during the war and I [saw] this before and then we talk and the images come back for me. I understand the situation of those people" (Interpreter SETIS, 28 June 2018).

Another interviewee had a similar view on this topic. In his work on integrating people into the job market in Mainz he said he knew a great deal about refugee issues because he was a refugee himself (20 July 2018).

Unfortunately, this shared life experience can also have negative impacts. It puts workers at risk of **re-traumatisation** when they hear stories that bring back memories of their own difficult migratory experiences. One interpreter said that the hardest part about his job was handling **emotional aspects** because he could relate to his clients' experiences.

Emotions. To control your emotions, that's a tough job. For example, with the psychologists. We work frequently with refugees and persons who have lived a tough life. For example, in Afghanistan and Pakistan I see these problems. I visited Afghanistan during the war and I [saw] this before and then we talk and the images come back for me. I understand the situation of those people (Interpreter SETIS, 28 June 2018).

While this fits with the theme of coping with emotional strain, the situation of being a refugee who supports refugees is unique and warrants further examination. Having training programmes to prepare this population to deal with the recurrence of certain memories and feelings would help them to better cope with the difficult emotions involved in their work.

Another potential issue with having this shared experience, as reported by one interviewee, is that sometimes people who had been asylum-seekers and refugees have higher expectations of their clients. Sometimes integration and language teachers, for example, took a 'tough love' approach and, believing they understood students' situations, expected more from them than other teachers who did not share this experience. One interviewee stated that there was a feeling of "I did it, so you should do it" (Integration trainer, Red Cross, 11 October 2018). A training course about how to handle one's shared experiences, as well as understanding that each individual's migration situation/journey is unique and multi-faceted, could be beneficial.

5. CONCLUSIONS

There were several themes that were common across fields of work and across regions. These had to do with what people working with refugees wished they did better, knew more about, or reported as being important in this line of work. In some cases, training programmes exist but are not sufficient, were too general, or not targeted to the needs of a specific profession (as can be seen in appendix 3). The main training needs are seen below in figure 1, divided by profession and by degree of importance as reported by interviewees. This is followed by summaries of each training need as well as an overview of the researcher’s recommendations.

Figure 1

Self-Reported Training needs	Social interpreters	Teachers	Social workers	Healthcare Workers	Local Officials
Setting and maintaining boundaries	0	3	3	1	3
Coping with emotional strain	3	3	3	2	3
Maintaining Neutrality	3	0	0	0	0
Knowledge of the legal and migration system	1	3	0	1	0
Trauma	0	3	3	2	1
Gender differences	2	3	0	0	3
Communication skills	1	0	3	3	0
Improving Lexical skills	3	0	0	0	0
Cultural information	2	2	3	3	1
Motivating clients	0	3	1	0	2

3 very important, 2 important, 1 helpful, 0 not mentioned/already sufficient

Setting and Maintaining Boundaries

Interviewees cited knowing one’s own competencies and limits as key to their ability to do their jobs well. Some had made the mistake of getting too involved with their clients, agreeing to offer support or advice in realms where they were not experts and becoming too close to clients. Many said that with experience, they eventually learned to set better **boundaries**. The difficulty in this, especially for people working in environments they considered to be less formal – such as certain

NGOs – is that boundaries must remain flexible in order to build trust and maintain the welcoming culture. Therefore, maintaining boundaries is a complex process.

A key component of boundary making is **saying 'no'** to clients. Workers struggle because sometimes setting boundaries seems to contradict the open, welcoming environment they're trying to create. Workers understood that it's important to be able to say no in order to protect themselves, not only emotionally, but also in terms of the time commitment they make. The ability to say 'no' is key in avoiding the pitfall of 'burn out' in this type of demanding service work.

Coping with Emotional Strain

Refugee support workers and volunteers in all lines of direct contact work with refugees and asylum-seekers have to cope with a great deal of **emotional strain**. They hear stories of violence and devastation and sometimes have to grapple with the deportation of a client or are required to give negative, life-altering news. This can have a lasting impact on them and many workers struggle with 'not taking it home'. Empathy is a key characteristic that people who work with refugees and asylum-seekers have and value in themselves and in colleagues, but this also means they feel deeply the hurt of their clients and have trouble maintaining professional distance from the struggles of their clients.

Skills for Working with Traumatized Populations

Refugees and asylum-seekers have very often been **traumatized** and this can impact nearly every aspect of their lives. This means those working with refugees, even at the most superficial levels, would benefit from knowing how to provide **trauma-informed services**. Workers said skills in working with people who have been traumatized would help them in their work, including knowing what questions to ask and what questions to avoid and how to make refugees open up when necessary.

Gender Differences between Cultures

In the studied fields, workers often had to be sensitive to a key cultural difference that impacted their daily work - **gender**. They expressed concerns about the fact that some refugees and asylum seekers were not accustomed to seeing women in positions of authority which sometimes meant that female refugee support workers had issues with “asserting themselves” (interviewee from the Foreigners’ Agency, 14 August 2018). Also, workers said they needed to be sensitive in areas in which refugees and asylum-seekers would prefer to work with someone of the same gender.

Cultural and Political Information

Understanding where refugees and asylum seekers are from is always an asset for support workers and something that they tend to feel they could always improve. It’s essential for people in all areas of refugee support work to understand a refugee’s likely past, their motivations, and their current struggles.

Communication

Support workers expressed that **communication** skills are always key in their work, from knowing how best to welcome people to learning how to get the information they need from clients in order to provide services and help people with their cases. Some even mentioned the importance of body language and how to avoid looking aggressive or disinterested simply by their posture, eye contact, etc.

Emergent Training Needs / Recommendations

In addition to what interviewees explicitly stated as areas of growth or importance in their work, other themes also presented themselves through stories they told about their work and observations made throughout the course of the research. The training needs that the researcher

suggests are nearly the same across all professions and are fundamentals that can bolster many types of skills.

The first clear training topic is a **basic understanding of certain elements of psychology**. Even people who had many years of experience working with refugees and asylum-seekers wondered why – or found it frustrating that – clients seem **unmotivated**, missed appointments, and remained in their ‘bubble’. There are numerous reasons that a refugee, who has experienced a great deal of **trauma** and upheaval, may appear to be ‘unmotivated’. These underlying causes are often overlooked or misunderstood. Understanding some **basic psychology** and the effects of **trauma** could improve empathy and patience on the part of support workers.

The second recommendation is to offer training programmes in **crisis intervention and/or de-escalation techniques**. Working in refugee support services means being involved in intensely **emotional situations**. Whether giving bad news to someone, translating, or working with mixed groups of people where conflicts arise, it is valuable to understand how crises build and how they can be diffused, often before they begin. Sometimes this can be done with something as simple as paying attention to where one is standing or one’s tone of voice. Additionally, in situations where there are marked cultural differences there is increased potential for misunderstandings.

Finally, it’s important to highlight that the emotional strain of a support worker’s day does not end when they leave work. In their personal lives, they are often **faced with anti-immigrant sentiment**. They have developed different ways of dealing with negative comments from strangers, friends, and family. These techniques range from ignoring comments to engaging and trying to change people’s minds. Many interviewees seem to underestimate the impact that dealing with these attitudes has on their emotional wellbeing. The fact that these interactions were mentioned on numerous occasions, however, is evidence of their significance the potential utility of training programmes on this topic.

Despite a degree of scepticism, interviewees were generally open to having further training. Some participants who displayed scepticism were people who already had a considerable amount of experience working with newcomers or who felt they were already required to take a great deal of training. On the other hand, interviewees who had completed training programmes still spoke about these same areas as being areas of growth. Sometimes participants felt that they would best improve by simply having more experience and continuing to learn on the job. This also suggests, however, that even in key areas of growth where training programmes exist, the training programmes can be improved and further tailored to the concerns and needs of the support workers. This further suggests that **peer support** should be a key element of any ongoing training so workers can learn from one another's experiences. It will be imperative to develop case studies and simulate typical situations that can prepare workers for their practical work with refugees.

The trend of mainstreaming, as discussed in the context analysis, was clearly visible during the field research. Some interviewees, in jobs that did not specifically focus on immigration and integration issues, only recently started working with refugees. They had been engaging with refugees and asylum seekers in their work since the large inflow of refugees began in 2015. For this reason, some workers felt that the TREE project came late. Others, however, insisted that they can always improve and that systematic training programmes would be beneficial and keep new workers from repeating the mistakes of more experienced staff. A question that goes beyond the scope of this report, is how to motivate workers to take additional, optional training courses. Perhaps part of the answer lies in the very successful and popular training programmes on cultural and political information about clients' countries of origin. In all the places where these training programmes/information sessions are offered, interviewees had positive feedback and said they would like to increase specific cultural understanding of the populations they serve.

In terms of training needs, there were common trends among the different job profiles (appendix 3), and there are clear gaps in training that exist in all the sub-regions. The least numerous training offers, as reported by interviewees, were on building and **maintaining boundaries**,

coping with one's emotions, and working with **traumatised populations**. Intercultural **communication**, on the other hand, was one of the most numerous training programmes in each sub-region and is a need that appears to be more well understood. Many job profiles have the same needs, but training programmes may only be available for people in one kind of work (see chart in appendix 3). For example, training programmes specifically for employees in regional and municipal administrations were less numerous and training programmes on the legal system and rights of foreigners were less available for teachers. The TREE project will directly address these types of gaps and, based on the findings in this report and from meetings and workshops, make the needed training programmes available for workers of numerous professions in the four included sub regions of the Euregio Meuse-Rhine.

It is widely agreed that multiculturalism has all but been abandoned in integration policy, and assimilation is the new norm. Official policy definitions of integration define it as a 'two way' process with adaptation necessary on the part of newcomers as well as the host society. Despite this, assimilation policy expects/requires that migrants become members of the host society without considering their unique needs and contributions. Many governmental services then build service provision around providing support to 'a population' rather than a diverse public with diverse needs.

In this context, an important way to support integration is through the effective training of those who offer services to newcomers. These services have increasingly become the responsibility of local authorities, a trend that creates obstacles and opportunities. While this allows for services to be more targeted to local needs, it also means that there are fewer standards of practice and less impetus for service providers to collaborate. Service providers are often left creating programmes on their own rather than sharing knowledge and expertise. By creating a space for dialogue and a flexible yet common training program, the TREE project supports collaboration and the promotion of a common set of necessary skills for working with refugees. Indeed, certain aspects of the training programmes - such as basic psychology, maintaining boundaries, and

providing trauma informed services - will also be beneficial to those working with a non-migrant public.

The sub-regions all have integration policy and practice that increasingly pushes refugees and newcomers to 'independence' as quickly as possible. As a result, refugees are more quickly filtered to 'mainstream' rather than 'specialised' services. Often, however, due to the complex needs and nature of trauma, as well other issues addressed in this report, refugees still require targeted support. The trend of mainstreaming, however, leads refugees to support services from general service providers who, in many cases, have gaps in their training for working with refugees. Civil society organisations continue to fill the gap and offer services to refugees who are no longer being supported by targeted governmental programs. While these organisations are experts in providing refugee services, they are often overwhelmed and underfunded. This results in the reliance on volunteer support and an urgent need to acquire new staff and volunteers who can work on the frontline as quickly as possible. This can lead to gaps in training and competencies. The TREE training programmes will help to ameliorate these issues by offering flexible training programmes to *all* support workers, both civil society and government employees, and both employed staff and volunteers. Appropriately trained staff in all of these areas means that the burden of support can be shared by those providing both targeted and general support.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1

TREE practitioner interview guide

- *What is your role?*
- *How long have you worked here?*
- *Why did you decide/want to work here?*
- *Did you have any contact with refugees before working here?*
- *In your community, what do you think the public opinion is towards refugees?*
- *What do you wish you had known before starting this position?*
- *What do you like most about your job?*
- *What is the hardest thing about your job?*
- *What is the most important skill/personality trait you have that helps you in your work?*
- *Can you give an example of when this skill served you well in your work?*
- *What skills would you like to improve?*
- *Can you give an example of a situation when this skill would have been useful?*
- *What trainings have you had in the past that you found most valuable?*
- *What trainings were the least useful?*
- *What trainings would you like to see offered to help you work better?*
- *Would you be willing and/or able to take further trainings?*
- *What do you think are the main obstacles to refugee integration?*
- *What do you think is the hardest thing for refugees/the main obstacles when receiving your services/at your organization?*
- *What advice would you give to someone starting in your role?*

Appendix 2

Documentation of Informed Consent

The INTERREG project –TREE- aims to create a training module that will improve the capacity of those working with refugees in the Euregio Meuse-Rhine. By signing this document you consent to a voluntary interview, that content of which may be used in reports for the project partners, the European Commission and other entities, and the public at large. This information may also be used in articles in academic journals and as part of presentations at conferences and for the general public. Your name will not be used, but your position and the institution of which you are a part will be documented and may be named. With your consent, this interview may be recorded, but will only be listened to by the field researchers and a translator bound by confidentiality. You may be quoted, but under a pseudonym. You are free to refuse to answer any question you do not wish to answer. Participation is completely voluntary.

I _____ hereby give my consent.
Name

Signature

Date

Oral consent given by phone. In this case, the document will be read to the interviewee and upon consent the name and date will be documented below by the interviewer.

Interviewee Name

Interviewer Name

Date: _____